



Arkansas Department of Education

Johnny Key, Commissioner

Transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education

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Arkansas' ESSA Plan Receives High Ratings from Fordham Institute

LITTLE ROCK — In a national policy review, Arkansas' Every Student Succeeds Act plan has been recognized as one of only seven in the nation to receive a strong rating in three major categories for its new accountability system. This recognition comes from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

The institute, a non-profit education advocacy organization that conducts educational research and analysis, reviewed ESSA plans in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The organization focused specifically on the accountability systems described in the plans to see whether the state plans assigned annual school ratings that were easy to understand, encouraged schools to focus on all students and fairly measured all schools.

Arkansas' plan focuses on how the state will utilize data from multiple sources to assist districts in determining the greatest achievement gaps and equity challenges and support its districts to provide effective resources to address the gaps and their root causes. Based on Fordham's review, plans could receive either a weak, medium or strong rating in each of these categories. Arkansas, along with Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Oklahoma and Washington, received strong ratings in all three categories.

"Arkansas' ESSA plan incorporates a clear ratings system, is fair to high poverty schools and signals every kid counts," said Michael Petrilli, Fordham's president and a co-author of the report. "Its quality shows that ESSA's belief that empowering states means empowering families and schools is well-founded. Here's hoping other states follow its lead."

"This report affirms our process of listening to educators and stakeholders and creating a plan that fits Arkansas," said Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner Johnny Key. "From numerous steering committee meetings and community listening forums to multiple opportunities for feedback on the various drafts, Arkansas' plan represents countless hours of collaboration among stakeholders, not a top-down plan developed within the confines of the department. We are confident that this framework, along with ongoing meaningful stakeholder engagement at the state and local levels, will drive success for all students as we transform Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education."

To read the entire report, please visit <https://edexcellence.net/publications/rating-the-ratings>.

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