

Arkansas

State Overview

Populationⁱ: 3,013,825

Urbanizationⁱⁱ: 56.2%

Student Enrollmentⁱⁱⁱ: 484,900

Demographics ⁱⁱⁱ		
Demographic	% Student Population	% Teacher Population
Male	51.2	22.0
Female	48.8	78.0
White	61.3	82.3
Black	20.6	13.6
Latinx	12.7	‡
Asian or Pacific Islands	2.3	#
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6	‡
2+ Races	2.4	1.9

Special Populations ⁱⁱⁱ	
Population	% Students
Free- and Reduced-Price Lunch	60.5
English Learners	8.4
Special Education	14.8

Teacher Workforce

Size of Total Workforce: 33,399^{iv}

2018 Teacher Preparation Statistics ^v	
Total Completers	1,908
Traditional IHE-based Program	72.4%
Alternative IHE-Based Program	17.5%
Alternative Non-IHE-Based Program	10.1%

Teacher Workforce Reporting: The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) publishes a [Recruitment and Retention Report](#) that includes data on the supply, distribution, and attrition of public school (including public charter) teachers across the state. The report connects EPP teacher production to vacancies, teacher distribution across the state, attrition, and recruitment efforts.

The State Board of Education is also required to report on the academic critical shortage areas across the state annually. Each year Arkansas releases a [High Poverty/High Minority Report](#) that focuses on the educator equity gap in the state and includes data on teacher experience, effectiveness, and retention for all schools in the state defined as high poverty or high minority.

Teacher Prep Reporting: Every year, the state publishes an [Educator Preparation Provider Report](#). The report includes information on program pass rates, number of teachers earning a license and working in public schools, and novice teacher survey data both across the state and by program. It also includes demographic information on EPP candidates and teachers working in AR public schools, as well as retention rates.

ADE also publishes an annual EPP Quality Report, which includes all data submitted to Title II, ETS (pass rate reporting), and partnerships, minority, and shortage area information.

Vacancies: The ADE's [Recruitment and Retention Report](#) has compiled the number of teaching positions available for the 2018- 2019 school year. The Department combined the sum of vacancies, waivers, and veterans and put the numbers into two categories: shortage areas (3,247) and non-shortage areas (2,065).

Teacher Preparation Programs

Recruitment: Arkansas has many recruitment initiatives, including financial incentives, to encourage candidates to enter the teaching profession. Many of these incentives specifically target candidates of color and shortage areas.

Programs for candidates of color include:

- [Geographical Critical Needs Minority Teacher Scholarship Program](#)
- [Minority teacher and administrator recruitment plan](#)

Programs to address critical shortage areas include:

- [High-Priority Teacher Recruitment Program](#)
- [STEP](#) loan forgiveness program
- [TOP](#) tuition reimbursement

ADE has also partnered with a [number of organizations](#) to offer high school students pathways into the teaching profession.

Certification Requirements: Certification requirements include Praxis II content assessments, as well as a performance assessment, which may be fulfilled by either the Praxis Principles of Learning and Teaching exam, edTPA, or another similar assessment.

Emergency Certification: Arkansas offers emergency certificates to individuals with a college degree who can demonstrate content knowledge through test passage, relevant work experience, or at least 18 credit hours in the content. The emergency permit is valid for one year and can be extended for another year with approval by ADE.

Arkansas also allows districts to waive teacher certification requirements if they contain a charter that employs the same waiver. In the Delta, this is particularly prevalent: [23 districts](#) currently employ teachers on a licensure waiver. Districts decide their own terms for what a waiver teacher needs to do to get trained—some have no requirements, others have teachers enroll in a prep program. Some of these teachers are applying directly to the state for licensure through the PPTL route, which means they could obtain licensure without any formal training. ADE's challenge is how to get teachers on waivers appropriately trained and licensed in a way that meets the needs of urban, rural, and suburban districts alike.

Teacher Prep Program Approval and Accountability: Traditional programs at IHEs must be accredited by a national accrediting body, as well as approved by the AR Department of Higher Education Coordinating Board. New programs must submit a brief letter of intent for review by either a panel of peers or an ADE program advisor.

Alternative preparation programs go through a similar process, but require a more involved application process as they are not held to national accreditation standards. They must submit an application to be reviewed by a panel of peers, detailing program goals and needs summary, proposed curriculum, governance (IHE or non-IHE) information, entry and exit requirements, data reporting structures, and clinical experiences.

Teacher Prep Program Requirements: Arkansas requires minimum scores on Praxis Core or the ACT/SAT for program entry. The state requires specific coursework for all teacher preparation programs focused on understanding of student supports, data literacy, and pedagogical competencies. Candidates must complete a minimum of 12 weeks or 420 hours of supervised clinical practice in public or SBE approved private schools, and placements must be within the content areas and grade range of the license being sought.

Policy Landscape

Governance: The Arkansas Commissioner of Education is the chief executive of the Arkansas Department of Education. The commissioner is appointed by the Arkansas State Board of Education and approved by the governor. The state board is composed of nine members appointed by the governor to seven-year terms. Two members come from each of the state's four congressional districts. One member is selected at-large.

Union Presence: Although state law does not prohibit collective bargaining, the state does not presently recognize a single teachers' union with collective bargaining power. Only 35% of teachers are part of a teacher's union, which makes it the [smallest union membership](#) in the country.

Recent Policy Changes: [Act 170](#), enacted in early 2019, raises the minimum teacher salary statewide from \$31,800 to \$36,000. Salaries must be increased to the new minimum by 2023.

In 2017, Arkansas began overhauling [EPP admission requirements and licensure types](#). The main changes [included](#):

- Removal of the 2.7 GPA and Praxis Core admission requirements, shifting to CAEP standards (which include 3.0 cohort GPA and ACT/SAT acceptance as well as Praxis Core)
- Elementary educators must now pass the "science of reading" exam
- The adoption of program approval standards for teacher residency programs within districts
- Framework for multiple designations of licensure, providing multiple entry points into teaching as well as growth opportunities

Trends

Size and composition: Arkansas is a relatively small and rural state, with one teacher for about every 14 students. The state is somewhat diverse but has a very homogenous (white) teacher workforce. The state offers a fairly large number (for its size) of traditional and alternative EPPs both inside and outside of IHEs. Over the last few years, the number of EPPs in the state has remained consistent, while enrollment has decreased by nearly 55% since 2012. Rapid population growth and changing demographics are creating new challenges in Northwest Arkansas (a need for more bilingual teachers and training for needs of immigrant students), while the Delta is facing population loss, school consolidation, and persistent teacher shortage challenges.

Shortages and mismatches: Arkansas, like other states, is facing [critical shortages](#) in a number of subject areas and geographic locations across the state (including Special Education, STEM, and English). The DOE, through preparation of a [comprehensive recruitment and retention report](#), is working to identify strategies that strengthen access to high-quality educators who are teaching in their licensure area, diverse, and committed to remaining in their district, especially in high-poverty schools. They have also developed a "workforce stability index" that shows, at a glance, the

experience, retention, quality, and match of teachers in each LEA. This helps the state quickly identify districts that may have the most critical educator needs.

Current Focuses and Challenges: Arkansas recognizes that the critical shortages they are facing start with access and entry into the profession. They offer multiple pathways into the classroom—traditional licensure, provisional licensure for experienced professionals, and post-baccalaureate non-traditional pathways with or without earning a master’s degree (which vary in length from 1-2 years and may be offered by IHE, district, or non-profit).

[A statewide report](#) published in 2018, which contained survey results on superintendent and teacher perceptions, found that competitive pay, cost of health insurance, and scarcity of licensed educators (and high demand for specific types of licenses) were the largest barriers to strong recruitment and retention. While teachers reported that financial incentives would be the number one driving factor in working in a high-poverty or rural school (if they were not in one already), those considering leaving the profession did not cite higher pay as a top three reason why. Teachers note the stress/workload, bureaucratic barriers, and lack of respect for the profession as the top three reasons they are considering leaving teaching. When asked about preparation, the vast majority of teachers reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their education preparation courses and teaching internship.

ⁱ *United States Census Quick Facts*. (2018). Retrieved October 2019, from Census.gov: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>

ⁱⁱ Iowa State University. (2010). *Urban Percentage of the Population for States*, Historical. Retrieved from Iowa Community Indicators Program: <https://www.icip.iastate.edu/tables/population/urban-pct-states>

ⁱⁱⁱ Institute of Education Sciences. (2018). *Digest of Education Statistics*. Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/2018menu_tables.asp

^{iv} Institute of Education Sciences. (2012). *Digest of Education Statistics*. Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_209.30.asp

^v U.S. Department of Education. (2018). *2018 Title II Reports*. Retrieved from Title II: <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Home.aspx>