



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

Legislative Update for Little Rock School District

State Authority

May 31, 2020-August 31, 2020

Submitted by

Office of Coordinated Support & Service

August 31, 2020

Pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-13-112, a quarterly status report is provided for each school district currently under state authority. The following report is submitted to the State Board of Education, the Chairs of both the House and Senate Education Committees, and others prescribed by law. The current report is part of the new process of quarterly reporting under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Although a district may be under state authority for various purposes, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) believes that all systems must be fortified in order to have an effective school district. These systems are Academics, Facilities and Transportation, District Operations and Fiscal Governance, Human Capital, Student Support, and Stakeholder Communication/Family and Community Engagement. The major focus of this report will be around the Academic System due to the district being in need of Level 5 Support.

The Academic System consists of academic updates from the district based on the district plan of support. The district plan of support is based on school-level plans that were developed by the schools. These school-level plans are based on the review of data and the development of a continuous cycle of inquiry. The district support plan includes items that are responsive to the needs of the schools by the district. The ADE can then work in a collaborative manner to support the district based on items identified in the district support plan and continue to work with the districts to prioritize and identify solutions to further enhance any other systems including the use of ADE supports. ADE will further work with the districts to develop local capacity in addressing each system by developing measurable goals and monitoring progress. This is intended to be reflective in nature and a way for ADE and the districts to be purposeful in their future work together for the betterment of students.

The legislative report consists of information related to the district support plan. All subsequent reports will be updates on the monitoring of the district plan support plan and any other relevant academic information that supports the goals of the schools. In the event that the district is under state authority for fiscal reasons, the report will contain all relevant financial information.

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BACKGROUND

The Little Rock School District (LRSD) was placed under the direction of the Commissioner of Education in January 2015 as a result of being classified in Academic Distress. State statute related to schools classified in Academic Distress has given the State Board of Education the authority to administer a wide range of actions when schools or districts are classified in Academic Distress. These actions are inclusive of removal of the local school board and assignment of the overall district administration to the Commissioner of Education.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver originally classified 7 schools in the LRSD as Priority and in the lowest 5% of schools as measured by multi-year performance of students on the state accountability assessment; 16 of the schools classified in Focus status (schools that are among the 10% of schools with the widest performance gaps between all students and the aggregate performance of students from low income families, students identified with disabilities, and English Language Learners). Targeted Achievement Gap Group (TAGG) was the term used in the Flexibility Waiver to reference this aggregated set of student populations as a whole.

It should be noted that the ESEA was reauthorized by Congress in December of 2015 under the general name of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). A number of substantial changes were made during the reauthorization and states are in the process of modifying accountability systems based on the new legislation. Transition to full implementation of the new law was to occur by the start of the 2017-2018 school year, but the complexity of the challenges in developing federal rules moved that date back at least one school year. Timelines for the Arkansas full implementation are established and have been included in the Every Student Succeeds Act application recently approved by the United States Department of Education on January 16, 2018.

Academic Distress as a state classification was removed with the passing of Act 930 of 2017. This was replaced with Levels of Support as part of Act 930. The State Board of Education classified the Little Rock School District in need of Level 5 support on July 13, 2017. Priority and Focus schools were federal designations that were removed with the approval of the Arkansas ESSA plan approval on January 16, 2017. The intent of all designations (state and federal) has been to call attention to levels of student proficiency and for districts and the state agency to take action to assist schools with greater challenges in facilitating students to meet performance measures.

State statute requires quarterly progress monitoring of districts in state authority with updates provided to the legislature. The intent of the requirement for quarterly reporting is to keep both the public and the legislature informed regarding progress toward the exit criteria from state authority. This report seeks to fulfill that requirement for the LRSD which is under state authority for academic issues.

The Little Rock School District did not meet the criteria to exit Level 5 support by the end of the five-year period following the assumption of state control. In accordance with ACA 6-15-2917, the State Board of Education took action to reconstitute the district. The State Board also voted to continue Level 5 support of the district. A draft exit plan outlined in this document reflects a shift from the previous school-level criteria based on ESSA Index Scores to a set of district-level actions that will become criteria for exit from Level 5 support. Although the district may exit from Level 5 support, the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education will continue to provide support to the district based on identified needs. The updated criteria will establish what the district must demonstrate to assure the DESE, the State Board, and the community that LRSD is poised for the present and future academic success of its students.

In keeping with the idea that each school across the state will have a personalized plan, the district in consultation with the ADE will collaborate on a district support plan. A district support plan shall follow a continuous cycle of inquiry and at a minimum specify the support the public school district will provide to public schools identified pursuant to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89-10, as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-95; collaboratively establish priorities regarding goals or anticipated outcomes with the school or schools, including feeder schools as applicable; identify resources to support the established priorities; describe the time and pace of providing support and monitoring for the established priorities; and describe the measures for analyzing and evaluating that the district support was effective in improving the school performance.

Supporting Documents:

School Level Plans (Links)

[20-21 Elementary School Improvement Plans](#)

[20-21 Middle School Improvement Plans](#)

[20-21 High School Improvement Plans](#)

District Support Plan

20-21 [Ready for Learning District Plan](#)

DESE Support Plan

The DESE support plan for the Little Rock School District is linked [here](#).

The update below is the DESE update to the work that has been done in the district.

[Quarter 1 Update to DESE Support Plan](#)

[Quarter 2 Update to DESE Support Plan](#)

[Quarter 3 Update to DESE Support Plan](#)

[Quarter 4 Update to DESE Support Plan](#)-Current

ESSA School Index by School

The link [here](#) shows the updated ESSA School Index scores and each indicator for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school year.

ACT Aspire Preliminary Data

Data for schools identified in the exit criteria is linked [here](#). Due to COVID-19, not ACT Aspire test data for 19-20.

Exit Criteria/Plan

The link [here](#) contains the Draft Exit Plan. This plan has been developed collaboratively with the district and will be finalized by DESE after feedback from stakeholders including the SBE. A link to the previous Exit Criteria can be found [here](#).