

## Career Readiness Assessment Request

### **Purpose:**

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) is requesting approval from the State Board of Education to amend its assessment system to include a career readiness assessment that leads to a nationally recognized work readiness certificate to each student before he or she graduates from high school. This assessment expansion is being requested to meet [Act 319](#) of 2021 of the 93rd General Assembly.

### **Recommendation:**

Each high school will offer the ACT WorkKeys Assessment. The ADE is recommending WorkKeys to meet Act 319 for the following reasons:

- Many Arkansas schools already use the WorkKeys curriculum and assessment;
- WorkKeys will complement the ACT assessment currently offered to all Arkansas juniors; and
- Numerous Arkansas employers recognize and hire employees based on the WorkKeys nationally recognized work readiness certificate.

### **Assessment, Curriculum, and Certification:**

ACT WorkKeys consists of assessments, curriculum, and the National Career Readiness Certificate ® (NCRC)®.

Students take a battery of three **assessments**:

- Applied Math
- Graphic Literacy
- Workplace Documents

The WorkKeys **curriculum** is an instructional tool to help prepare students for the WorkKeys assessment. The curriculum also includes Essential Skills which are the employability skills that employers are seeking in quality candidates for employment.

The **NCRC** is a portable, evidence-based credential that certifies the essential problem-solving and critical thinking skills needed for workplace success. More than 26,000 employers require or recognize the NCRC nationwide. Because it is a predictor of workplace success, employers use the NCRC as a pre-employment tool to identify job candidates. Based on their scores, students may earn one of the following levels of readiness:

- Platinum: indicates the skills required for approximately 99% of ACT-profiled jobs,
- Gold: indicates the skills required for approximately 93% of ACT-profiled jobs,
- Silver: indicates the skills required for approximately 69% of ACT-profiled jobs, or
- Bronze: indicates the skills required for approximately 17% of ACT-profiled jobs.

### **Work Ready Communities in Arkansas:**

Work Ready Communities are those in which economic developers, employers, and educational institutions partner to determine skill gaps and use the WorkKeys assessment to help close the gaps. There are 26 Arkansas counties that are participating in Work Ready Communities; 16 of these counties have achieved certified Work Ready Community status. Almost 700 Arkansas employers have signed on as supporting their local Work Ready Community effort. One of the goals for a community to earn a certified Work Ready Community status is the number of NCRCs within the community. The expansion of the statewide assessment system to include WorkKeys and the NCRC will improve career readiness outcomes for students and their communities.