

Minutes
Vision for Excellence in Education and Arkansas Accountability System Steering
Committee Meeting
January 13, 2021

The Vision for Excellence in Education and Arkansas Accountability System Steering Committee (ESSA Steering Committee) met Wednesday, January 13, 2021, in the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Auditorium. Chair Newton called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Present: Ms. Ouida Newton, Chair; Mr. Anthony Bennett; Ms. Melissa Bratton; Dr. Harold Jeffcoat; Ms. Starlinda Sanders; Ms. Joyce Flowers; Ms. Michelle Hayward; Ms. Ima Etim; Senator Jane English; and Melinda Kinnison.

Absent: Representative Bruce Cozart

The meeting was live streamed and the recording was posted on the DESE website at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/every-student-succeeds-act-essa/meeting-agendas-presentations-videos--minutes>

Consent Agenda

Consideration of Approval for Minutes - November 18, 2020

Ms. Flowers moved, seconded by Ms. Sanders, to approve the November 18, 2020, minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion Items

1. Perkins V Updates - Dr. Lydia McDonald

Dr. McDonald provided an update on the yearly Consolidated Annual Report (CAR) for Perkins and CTE. The report is made up of a narrative and financial reports. Dr. McDonald said 2019- 2020 was a transition year (Perkins IV to Perkins V). Some of the highlights of the narrative report include:

1. CTE Portal - Aligns with data from ADE Data Center and LEA insights Dashboard and is accessible to eligible recipients such as CTE Coordinators and state staff.
2. Data Sharing Agreement - Access to employment, wage data, and military service information.
3. Perkins V Requirements - Track the number of CTE Concentrators in the second quarter after exiting secondary education for postsecondary education, advanced education, military service, volunteers, and employed concentrators.

Dr. McDonald also shared the following information:

Perkins funds will also support the development of the Seamless Work-Based Learning (WBL) portal. WBL will be piloted this year.

For the upcoming CAR report requirements, DCTE is working with OIE in preparation for Arkansas' Academic Performance data submission which will include reading/language arts, mathematics, and science. Some of the major accomplishments are support for non-traditional fields in current and emerging professions, special populations programming, and exposure to activities that include high-skill, high wage, and in-demand occupation.

The CAR highlights include the career development courses that provide services to 60 school districts to students in grades 7-12 with a total of 33,482 students. Jobs for Arkansas Graduates (JAG) helps at-risk students succeed in graduation, job attainment, and enrollment in a higher level of education. The JAG program has won five of five awards for the 14th year in a row.

A non-traditional program highlighted in the report was a Girl in Ag Day hosted by Southern Arkansas University. The participants were able to get hands on experience in agriculture. The School-Based Enterprise allows students to experience all aspects of marketing and managing a small business.

The Arkansas STEM Coalition hosted a Girl Power in STEM event, with several universities offering similar events.

The DCTE collaborates with the Computer Science Office to offer CTE Computer science programs to students and participate in the Technology Student Association (TSA).

Post-secondary schools offer twenty-three programs that encourage non-traditional enrollment including nursing, Cisco Network Associate, ARC Welding, and Criminal Justice.

Funds are used to reach out to previously incarcerated individuals. The program this past year was in ServSafe manager certification programs. 400 incarcerated individuals were provided the opportunity to participate in that program. Participants ranged from Little Rock, West Memphis, Texarkana, Osceola, and Fayetteville.

Funding also supported five projects at the Arkansas School for the Deaf to help enhance the AG program, support teacher PD, provide rabbit equipment, implement a Driver Ed Course, provide computers for the graphic design program, and a touch TV for the Business Finance class.

Professional Development for CTE teachers - each program area has a new teacher opportunity to help support and provide resources to new teachers in the field and their

specific program. DCTE supports include sessions at the annual Arkansas Department of Education Summit, a CTE playbook and blended learning courses, a Facebook live series for each occupational area, and micro-credentialing for CTE teachers which helps improve and enhance teacher quality and retention efforts.

Some start-up grants are funded with state dollars. Applications are submitted through a state up grant process with a scoring rubric. DCTE coordinators and DCTE meet annually to discuss the program's applications and state needs. The decision-making process ensures high-need counties and previous year's funding. School districts with higher needs who traditionally have not received start-up grants were able to receive funding.

76% of participants in the College and Career Coach program were Freshmen and sophomores. 89% of Juniors received college planning service and 92% of Seniors received assistance with applying for financial aid.

Ms. Sanders gave accolades to Dr. McDonald and the program. She then asked if DCTE has a list of non-traditional career fields.

Dr. McDonald stated Dr. Kremers and Dr. Airola should get all the kudos. Yes, there is a list of non-traditional career fields. The link is available at [NON-TRADITIONAL CROSSWALK](#)

Dr. Jeffcoat asked about the start-up grants. What is the percentage of the applications that are approved?

Dr. Kremers commented that it depends on the expense of the programs and which programs are approved. CTE state start up percentage is 61% of applications were funded for 2021-2022.

Ms. Kinnsion asked if there is any program we are patterning with post-secondary education such as discovery degrees (careers and pathways that most people do not know about).

Dr. McDonald commented yes, DCTE does look at the needs of the state and the local community. Each area does a local need assessment of the community and they collaborate with business leaders in the community.

Dr. Kremers stated that DCTE follows the national cluster and trends are based on the labor market. Arkansas students can partake in the state career exploration. CARES Act funding has a three-year contract with Workbay.

Ms. Coffman noted that many of the metrics used in the ESSA Index are also included in the Perkins V accountability reporting. Ms. Coffman said during the initial stakeholder meetings to design the Arkansas ESSA School Index methodology, one of the things that the stakeholders wanted to include was CTE. This data are being studied, and

preliminary data have been collected. DESE is working very closely with OIE and DCTE to determine when to recommend adding CTE data to the ESSA index.

2. ESSA Updates - Ms. Deborah Coffman

Ms Coffman said DESE received one public comment regarding the proposed ESSA Addendum. She asked the committee to support submission of the addendum.

Ms. Ida moved, and Dr. Jeffcoat seconded the approval to send the addendum to the US Department of Education. The motion passed unanimously.

3. ESSA Advisory Group Reports

A. Educator Equity and Effectiveness- Ms. Karli Saracini

Ms. Saracini discussed the Career Continuum and shared the following table:

Educators Continued Education

None	137,922
Early Career Professional Educator	3,210
Career Professional Educator	74
Master Professional Educator	378
Lead Professional Educator	31
Master Professional Educator and Lead Professional Educator	9

Ms. Saracini provided information about the Alternate Assessment Plan (AAP) which is an option for a performance assessment rather than taking a test. Teachers have to make yearly progress on the performance assessment. Provisional licenses issued under this plan were 26 and in progress were three totaling 29. Programs represented included the following: two traditional, 21 Arkansas Professional Pathway Educator Licensure (APPEL), five Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT), and one Provisional Professional Teaching License (PPTL). 22 districts were represented from all areas of the state, Fayetteville to Blytheville to Eldorado to Dewitt, and 12 licensure areas with elementary K-6 occurring more frequently.

The first-time licensure fee was waived through December 2020-April 2021. One hundred eleven fees have been waived to date. Ten different institutes of Higher Ed represented 106 of the 111 fees waived. The remaining five are from reciprocity.

Ms. Etim asked Ms. Saracini to expand on Higher Ed and reciprocity.

Ms. Saracini commented that the state has 10 Higher Ed institutes that have been recommended for licensure. There are about 21 Higher Ed institutes. There are a few students that haven't graduated due to COVID and are graduating in January. Reciprocity would be someone coming in from another state seeking to get a first time teaching license from Arkansas.

Ms. Newton asked Ms. Saracini to describe more about the Alternate Assessment Plan (AAP).

Ms. Saracini commented the AAP program would be for someone who is close to passing the Praxis; it is a performance-based assessment that takes about a year. It involves tasks and uploaded teaching videos. The video is scored through a vendor. The assessment could be compared to a portfolio but is more task oriented. A coach is provided to help them through the intense process. DESE is partnering with the Higher ED institute and the district to provide support to this individual going through the AAP.

Dr. Jeffcoat asked if they still have to take the Praxis?

Ms. Saracini commented, yes, teachers must still take the Praxis and be within two SEMs (Standard Error Measurements).

Ms. Newton asked how teachers can find out about this program?

Ms. Saracini commented this program is district led. Higher Ed institutes and other alternate prep programs are involved in this program as well. It is for districts that believe in that individual and want to support him/her to keep them in the classroom.

Ms. Newton asked if it has been with a partnership through the prep program and the district?

Ms. Saracini commented yes, you have to have a classroom while you do the AAP to show your proficiency in that content.

Ms. Coffman commented to Ms. Newton about putting the ESSA advisory groups in perspective. The approved Arkansas ESSA plan is our contract with the U.S. Department of Education (USED) in exchange for federal funds. USED considers the ESSA plan as our consolidated application for federal funds. As a part of that approved plan we must outline our commitment to ensure rigorous academic standards and alignment to the assessment system. This is why Ms. Horn and her team are coming back to give us an assessment report. Regarding equitable access to excellent educators, Ms. Saracini provides us with those updates. The approved Arkansas ESSA plan also includes reporting to the public through the ESSA School Index,

Accountability-at-a-Glance, and the School Report Card available on My School Info. Each part contributes to the whole approved plan thus making each advisory report so informative toward meeting our commitment.

B. Assessment- Ms. Rachel Horn

Ms. Horn shared assessment updates. Since the last meeting, efforts have focused on communication. The required district-wide training will be held virtually next week. Information will be shared regarding the Spring assessment with district testing coordinators. Testing will be conducted onsite this Spring. Several districts have reached out about being creative to keep students safe during onsite testing. The assessment unit is eager to partner with districts to meet their local needs. A partnership has been formed with the Family and Community Engagement team to develop a toolkit for communicating with families about the importance of being onsite for testing and to communicate a strong, consistent message about keeping students safe. The toolkit will include a flyer and FAQ.

C. Accountability- Ms. Tammie Reitenger

Ms. Reitenger met with the ESSA Accountability Advisory Team and shared some information about school report cards. Private review for districts was open from January 5-12, 2021, with the public release scheduled for January 19th. The final official release is April 15th. A toolkit has been created for the districts in communicating with families concerning the school report. The toolkit also included a one page fact sheet for indicators of the School Report Card. The school A-F rating system will be presented during the Legislative session requesting a pause from rating for the 2020-2021 school year.

Some concerns noted by parents and teachers include students being labeled based on virtual or onsite, the varying levels of learning (virtual or onsite) differing from district to district, and potential exposure to COVID-19 while testing.

5. 2020 Graduation Report - Dr. Denise Airola and Ms. Tammie Reitenger

Ms. Reitenger shared the state graduation rate. These numbers are available on the School Report Card on the DESE website. For the 2020 year, the four year cohort graduation rate is 88.8%, and the five year cohort rate is 89%. There is a slight increase in the four year cohort and the five year cohort averages from the previous year.

Dr. Airola stated comparing the five year rate can be a little confusing. The way that the five year works is by comparing diagonally; an improvement can be noted in the 2017 four year cohort and the 2018 five year cohort. A business rule was implemented in 2019 to bring the state in compliance with USED guidance. If a student's drop code says they are transferring to another school but they don't show up in that school, we aren't going to drop the student but we will ask the district why they never showed back up. ([ESSA Graduation Rate Guidance Jan 6, 2017 \(PDF\)](#))

Ms. Kinnison mentioned an article that talked about states having higher graduation

rates due to relaxed standards for graduation. Does any of that apply to our Arkansas graduation rates?

Dr. Ariola commented that the graduation standards are the same in Arkansas. The only impact would be that if the student was on track in a subject in the 3rd quarter, they could not lose traction in the 4th quarter. There did not seem to be any standout data as far as something caused by COVID. What OIE found was that 2017-2018 and 2019-2020 had similar increases and decreases of data. Everything was pretty similar to what we have seen in prior years.

Ms. Coffman stated at the bottom of the document is a URL leading to the Federal Guidance for graduation rate. Graduation rate isn't determined by Arkansas but by the Federal Guidance. Graduation is consistent across the U.S. and is monitored heavily by the Federal Government too. Schools must keep up with a student when they come into 9th grade until they leave. School districts are improving with records retention and the archival of those reports.

Dr. Jeffcoat asked how Arkansas fares compared to the other states.

Dr. Ariola stated that the national average is somewhere around 83% so we fare better. The only way states may differ is how they handle significantly cognitive disabled students within their system. Arkansas is on a path to have that roll out in 2023. We are above average and would guesstimate we are in the top 30% with our graduation rate.

Ms. Coffman added a statement that as part of accountability we are required to report any school with a below 66.67% graduation rate. Most schools that are reporting that percent are providing alternative method schools, and those schools that are being redesigned.

6. Waiver of Title IV - Deborah Coffman

Ms. Coffman provided information on the Title IV waiver that was submitted and received last school year in November. The Title IV waiver gives school districts the ability to spend more money on technology and have a little more freedom in the decision making of spending those funds. The waiver was put out for public comment and no comments were received.

A waiver request was submitted on January 5th. The US Department of Education has received it and is in the queue to be reviewed. Due to transfers and changes in the US Department of Education, the process has been delayed.

Ms. Newton asked which funds this applied to and the year.

Ms. Coffman responded that the money for 2021 is this year's funds. You have a two year window with federal funds which should be tied to the school's or district's needs assessment.

7. Plan for Next Meeting

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 2021.

Adjournment

Dr. Jeffcoat moved, seconded by Ms. Sanders, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned.

Minutes recorded by Lindsey Stroud.

Ouida Newton, Chair