

**Minutes**  
**Vision for Excellence in Education and Arkansas Accountability System**  
**Steering Committee Meeting**  
**September 21, 2021**

The Vision for Excellence in Education and Arkansas Accountability System Steering Committee (ESSA Steering Committee) met Tuesday, September 21, 2021, in the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Auditorium. Dr. Jeffcoat called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.

Present: Dr. Harold Jeffcoat, Ms. Starlinda Sanders, Ms. Joyce Flowers, Senator Jane English, Ms. Melissa Bratton, Ms. Ima Etim, Representative Bruce Cozart

Absent: Ms. Ouida Newton, Ms. Melinda Kinnison, Ms. Michelle Hayward, Mr. Anthony Bennett

The meeting was live-streamed, and the recording was posted on the DESE website at [Division of Elementary and Secondary Education - Offices - Public School Accountability - Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) - Meeting Agendas, Presentations, Videos & Minutes](#)

## **II. Consent Agenda**

### **Consideration of Approval for Minutes - April 28, 2021**

Ms. Flowers moved, seconded by Ms. Starlina Sanders, to approve the April 28, 2021 minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

## **III. Action Agenda**

### **III.1 Advisory Reports**

#### **III.1.a ESSA Addendum - Tiffani Grayer**

The Arkansas ESSA Plan addendum was released for public comment on May 4, 2021, and approved on August 20, 2021. The addendum shifts the school identification timeline forward by one year due to missing 2020 testing data. Arkansas will use data from 2018, 2019, and 2021 to notify schools of TSI, ATSI, or CSI status.

Act 89 of 2021 suspended school ratings (letter grades) for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years.

The ESSA Index Score will provide an adjusted and unadjusted score. If an LEA tests at least 95% of their students, the adjusted and unadjusted scores will be the same. If an LEA tests less than 95%, the denominator is adjusted. Both scores are included in the ESSA School Index to highlight the importance of testing 95% of students.

### **III.1.b. ESSA School Index Timeline - Tiffani Grayer**

The ESSA School Index will open for private viewing on My School Info from September 27, 2021, to October 4, 2021. Authorized users must log in with their TRIAND username and password. The public viewing of the ESSA School Index begins on October 15, 2021, on My School Info.

DESE will notify schools with consistently underperforming subgroups that they require TSI/ATSI/CSI using 2018, 2019, and 2021 testing data.

A private viewing of the School Report Card is available from January 5-12, 2022, on My School Info. The final release of the School Report Card will be available on April 15, 2022.

Board members asked clarifying questions about report release dates, how community members can access information, and accountability notification letters.

### **III.1.c. Federal Program Waiver approved - Deborah Coffman**

The US ED issued a federal funds waiver, allowing schools to carry over Title I funds and extend 2019 funds for an additional year. DESE submitted a waiver request on August 9, 2021, and was approved on August 25, 2021. Ms. Coffman explained that federal funds are intended to be used in their identified school year, but some schools had unspent funds due to the pandemic because they could not carry out the original budgeted plan.

### **III.1.d. Assessment Update - Sheree Baird and Rachel Horn**

Arkansas administered the ACT Aspire assessment to approximately 97% of its 3-10 grade students. Each student takes five content assessments. The DESE Assessment team noticed significant increases in the number of students tested each week of the testing window. The Office of Student Assessment highly encouraged school districts to test early in the testing window. Ms. Baird praised the diligence of schools, testing coordinators, students, and families in surpassing the 95% tested goal.

DESE is in the process of selecting a new state assessment to put in place for the 2022-2023 school year. ACT Aspire assessments for grades 3-10 are moving to a different platform, and no additional product development will occur on the ACT Aspire summative assessment.

The educator focus group consists of 28 educators, led by Dr. Denise Airola (OIE), Crystal Beshears (OIE), and Hope Worsham (DESE). During the stakeholder meetings, group members evaluated high-quality assessments, reviewed federal and state requirements, attended vendor presentations, participated in content subgroups meetings, and synthesized feedback from a statewide survey.

The committee identified four priorities based on early feedback. The succeeding assessment should align with the Arkansas academic standards, involve Arkansas educators in the test development process, demonstrate greater transparency in design and scoring, and provide an aligned system to provide instructional support.

Moving forward, OIE will provide a report to DESE summarizing the stakeholder feedback. DESE began the Request for Proposal Process (RFP), which utilizes stakeholder feedback. The RFP will be released in fall 2021. Educator applications for the RFP committee will be released soon. DESE's goal is to have a new assessment for the 2022-2023 school year; however, it may be 2023-2024, depending on the procurement timeline.

Board members asked questions about focus group selection, testing format, testing vendors, and ACT Aspire usage in other states.

### **III.2 Perkins V Report - Ross White**

DCTE made updates to the Perkins Advisory Committee and Policies and Procedures. The Perkins Advisory Committee aims to provide high-quality CTE in Arkansas through ongoing feedback and expertise, alignment with workforce needs, and compliance with the Arkansas ESSA plan. The advisory committee meets quarterly and comprises internal and external stakeholders.

*Policies and Procedures for Career and Technical Education* have been updated. The updates align with government transformation, Perkins V, clearly defined terms, and a tiered support process.

### **Closing Remarks**

Ms. Coffman stated that all ESSA-related information is available on DESE's website. Ms. Coffman conveyed confidence in the accountability system and presented the opportunity to use the system to direct conversations about supporting students and districts throughout the pandemic. While there has been a loss of instructional time, accountability information highlights what educators have been able to do and allows districts to reallocate resources to fill in gaps.

Dr. Jeffcoat expressed that this is a time of excitement for Arkansas, and he is proud of the leadership and hard work from all stakeholders.

#### **IV. Adjournment**

Ms. Flowers moved, seconded by Representative Cozart, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

*Minutes recorded by Michelle Harpe.*

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Ouida Newton, Chair