

New Version

## **Arkansas's Accountability Formula Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

Starting with the 2023-2024 school year, Arkansas moved to a new accountability system aligned to state educational priorities: Achievement, Growth, and Postsecondary Readiness to ensure every student is ready for what comes next.

This document contains answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about Arkansas's new accountability formula. For full details on how the new accountability formula is calculated, please refer to the 2024-2025 business rules linked [here](#).

Other resources to help the public better understand the new formula can be found on the [School Ratings](#) page of the Public School Accountability section of the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) website.

# Arkansas's Accountability Formula

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *Table of Contents*

#### Transition to a New Formula

- Why did Arkansas create a new accountability formula?
- What was the process for creating the new accountability formula?
- Will I still be rated and scored under the old formula?

#### Overview of the New Formula

- What does the new formula measure?
- What is the highest score a school can earn?
- How did ADE determine the number of points needed for each letter grade?
- How will I access my results under the new formula?
- Is School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) still part of my score?
- How will my score be determined if I am missing a component of the formula?
- My school serves both elementary/middle and high school grades. How will it be scored?
- Is the state formula the same as the formula used for federal accountability?
- How will the new formula ensure that small and/or rural districts will not be disadvantaged?
- Are highly mobile students included in the accountability formula?

#### Achievement

- How is Achievement calculated?
- Is ACT Aspire still used to calculate my scores?
- Is English Language Proficiency (ELP) included in the Achievement indicator?
- Are DLM assessment results included in Achievement?
- What is the difference between the performance levels on the new ATLAS assessment?
- How will the transition to ATLAS affect my scores?
- How are middle school students who took End of Course (EOC) assessments included in Achievement?

#### Growth of All Students and Growth of Lowest Quarter

- How is the Growth of All Students calculated?
- Which students are included in the Growth of Lowest Quarter indicator?
- How is the Growth of Lowest Quarter indicator different for high schools?
- What happens if multiple students at the score cut-off for the lowest 25% have the same score?
- Will the growth indicators include English Language Proficiency (ELP)?

#### Success Ready Graduate

- What is Success Ready Graduate, and how is it calculated?
- How will the Success Ready Graduate indicator change moving forward?
- Do the changes in the accountability formula change whether students have to take the ACT?
- How will students who complete the Alternate Pathway to Graduation be included?

#### Moving Forward

- When will scores under the new formula be released?
- Where will my rating and score be reported? Is it public?
- When will district letter grades be determined?
- Where can I find additional information about the new accountability formula?
- Who can provide additional information about the new accountability formula?

## Arkansas's Accountability Formula Frequently Asked Questions

### *Transition to a New Formula*

#### **Q: Why did Arkansas create a new accountability formula?**

A: Arkansas has introduced a new assessment system called the Arkansas Teaching, Learning & Assessment System (ATLAS), which will be used to measure student achievement starting in Spring 2024. With this change, the state also updated how schools are evaluated. The goal is to create a simpler, clearer accountability system that reflects what matters most for students. By working together, educators, families, community members, and policymakers developed a shared vision of excellence that aligns with state priorities.

#### **Q: What was the process for creating the new accountability formula?**

A: The new system was developed with input from educators, community members, and experts. In Summer 2023, nearly 400 Arkansas educators and community members participated in listening sessions to share their ideas on improving the current system. A special group of Arkansas education leaders, called the Accountability Work Group, was formed to help design the new formula. Additionally, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) visited every Education Service Cooperative in the state to gather feedback from superintendents and other stakeholders.

#### **Q: Will I still be rated and scored under the old formula?**

A: No, schools will no longer be given a letter grade using the old formula. The new system began with simulated results for the 2023-2024 school year to set a fresh baseline for public school ratings moving forward and publicly released 2024-2025 grades in fall of 2025.

### *Overview of the New Formula*

#### **Q: What does the new formula measure?**

A: The new formula is focused on achievement, growth, and postsecondary readiness. One-third of each school's rating is based on the extent to which students have demonstrated mastery on ATLAS assessments in ELA, math, and science. Two-thirds of elementary and middle school ratings and more than one-third of high school ratings will be based on the extent to which students are meeting their individualized growth targets each year. High school scores will additionally measure whether students are graduating on time and whether students are demonstrating postsecondary readiness for enlistment,

## **Arkansas's Accountability Formula Frequently Asked Questions**

enrollment, or employment. For more information on what is measured in the new formula, please refer to the new accountability formula business rules available [here](#).

### **Q: What is the highest score a school can earn?**

A: The highest score a school can earn is 900. To earn an "A," schools must earn at least 523.09 (Elementary schools), 519.16 (Middle schools), or 532.00 (High schools) points. Under the new accountability formula, an "A"-rated school is one where, on average, most students master grade-level content on ELA, math, and science assessments, meet their growth targets, and graduate demonstrating readiness for postsecondary paths. For more information on the points needed to earn each letter grade, please refer to the business rules [here](#).

### **Q: How did ADE determine the number of points needed for each letter grade?**

A: The ADE developed the point scale for letter grades in partnership with local educators and national experts through a standard setting process. The scale is set to ensure each letter grade gives a clear picture of school performance and focuses Arkansas schools on moving students toward meeting grade level expectations.

### **Q: How will I access my results under the new formula?**

A: ADE released simulated results using the new formula for the 2023-2024 school year to school and district leaders in April 2025. District superintendents can download these simulated results in their [Digital Locker](#). Moving forward, school and district leaders will be able to access their results through [Myschoolinfo](#), which will be refreshed in fall 2025 with an enhanced reporting platform.

### **Q: Is School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) still part of my score?**

A: No. In an effort to simplify and focus, the new formula removes distracting, redundant, and unnecessary indicators and focuses on Achievement, Growth, and Readiness. Moving forward, Science Achievement and Growth are elevated within the Growth & Achievement indicators, and student achievement on assessments that signal postsecondary readiness (e.g. AP/IB/CC) is reflected in the new Success Ready Graduate indicator.

### **Q: How will my score be determined if a school is missing a component of the formula (i.e., school has less than nine measures)?**

A: Schools may have fewer than nine measures if any of the measures have fewer than 15 students in the denominator for the measure. If the school does not meet the minimum N size of 15 for a measure in the current year, up to three years of data are used for the calculation in order to meet the minimum N size of 15. In cases where this process still

## **Arkansas's Accountability Formula Frequently Asked Questions**

does not result in a minimum N size of 15, schools' ratings are assigned using proportionate cut scores based on the number of measures for which the school has met the minimum N. For more information on how scores will be calculated for schools with less than nine measures, please refer to the "Special Schools" section of the new accountability formula business rules found [here](#).

### **Q: My school serves elementary, middle and high school grades. How will my school be scored?**

A: Any schools that include Grade 12 will receive scores calculated using the formula for high schools. Any school that contains 9th grade only will be paired with the 10-12 campus for a full data set. For more information on how scores will be calculated based on a school's grade configuration, please refer to the new accountability formula business rules available [here](#).

### **Q: Is the state formula the same as the formula used for federal accountability?**

A: ADE is working to revise the federal ESSA accountability formula in response to the new state formula. More details will be available in the coming months.

### **Q: How will the new formula ensure that small and/or rural districts will not be disadvantaged?**

A: To provide districts the necessary time to adjust to the Success Ready Graduate indicator in the new formula, ADE will use a transition plan for the 2023-2024, 2024-2025, 2025-2026, and 2026-2027 school years. This will allow schools to begin implementing the state's new [Success Ready Graduates](#) pathways and ensure students earn meaningful postsecondary credits or credentials that will prepare them for a career after graduation.

### **Q: Are highly mobile students included in the accountability formula?**

A: In the new formula, highly mobile students will not be included in the Achievement, Growth of All Students, and Growth of Lowest Quarter indicators. For more information on how the accountability formula will account for highly mobile students, please refer to the new accountability formula business rules available [here](#).

## ***Achievement***

*Achievement scores show how well students in the school are learning the required grade-level content in ELA, math, and science, as measured by the ATLAS exams.*

## **Arkansas's Accountability Formula Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q: How is Achievement calculated?**

A: Schools earn points for achievement based on the percentage of students who achieve proficiency (Level 3 or Level 4) on the ATLAS assessment for ELA, math, and science. Students taking the alternate assessment with a DLM score of "At Target" (Level 3) or "Advanced" (Level 4) are also included.

### **Q: Is ACT Aspire still used to calculate school scores?**

A: No, students no longer take the ACT Aspire assessment, and it is no longer used in Arkansas's accountability formula. In the Spring of 2024, Arkansas students in grades 3-10 took exams using the Arkansas Teaching, Learning & Assessment System (ATLAS), which will be used to calculate achievement and growth indicators in the new accountability formula.

### **Q: Is English Language Proficiency (ELP) included in the Achievement indicator?**

A: No, English Language Proficiency (ELP) is not included in Achievement. It is, however, included in the Growth of All Students indicator in combination with English Language Arts growth results.

### **Q: Are Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessment results included in Achievement?**

A: Students identified as needing alternate assessments in ELA, math, or science will have their DLM results included in the Achievement indicator. For more information on how scores will be calculated for students taking alternate assessments, please refer to the new accountability formula business rules available [here](#).

### **Q: What is the difference between the performance levels on the new ATLAS assessment?**

A: The ATLAS assessment has four student performance levels. Students scoring in Level 4 demonstrate an advanced understanding of the knowledge and skills required of grade-level standards. Students scoring in Level 3 demonstrate a proficient understanding, students in Level 2 demonstrate a basic understanding, and students in Level 1 demonstrate a limited understanding. In the new accountability formula, schools will earn points in the Achievement indicator for students who earn Level 3 and Level 4 on the ATLAS assessment in ELA, math, and science. More information on ATLAS is available [here](#).

### **Q: How will the transition to ATLAS affect my school rating?**

A: ATLAS scores from the 2023-2024 school year set a new baseline for student academic achievement in the state. Prior to the release of these scores, ADE engaged an educator committee to set guidelines for each performance level of the ATLAS assessment. The

## Arkansas's Accountability Formula Frequently Asked Questions

guidelines signal to schools where they are excelling and where gaps in student learning exist. Moving forward, all schools in the state will earn school performance ratings based on the number of students scoring in level 3 and 4 on the ATLAS exams. More information on the ATLAS assessment can be found [here](#).

### **Q: How are middle school students who took End of Course (EOC) assessments included in Achievement?**

A: For the 2024-2025 school year, results from students in middle school who took EOC exams are included in Achievement for the building in which the student is enrolled. For more information on how school scores will be calculated, please refer to the new accountability formula business rules available [here](#).

### ***Growth of All Students and Growth of Lowest Quarter***

*The Growth measure signals if students are making progress year across years as expected based on the scores they have previously earned. Growth of the lowest quarter helps schools measure if their academic support efforts are working to ensure that students who are the furthest behind are making progress toward their academic goals.*

### **Q: How will Growth of All Students be calculated?**

A: Growth of All Students will continue to be calculated using the same student-centered, value-added model as in previous years. Schools will earn points based on the percentage of all students who met their growth target as determined by Arkansas's Value Added Model (VAM).

### **Q: Which students are included in the Growth of Lowest Quarter indicator?**

A: Students scoring in the lowest 25% of ATLAS scores in ELA, math, and science for each grade level served by the school based on their prior year scores are included in this indicator. These students are identified for each subject and grade individually, meaning a unique set of students is identified for each tested subject and grade in the building. For more information on how these indicators will be calculated, please refer to the new accountability formula business rules available [here](#).

### **Q: How is the Growth of Lowest Quarter indicator different for high schools?**

A: Growth of Lowest Quarter calculates growth for low-performing students in ELA, math, and science. While elementary and middle schools can earn up to 100 points for each subject, or 300 total points in this indicator, the high school formula calculates the average points earned for each subject, meaning schools can earn up to 100 total points.



## Arkansas's Accountability Formula Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: What happens if multiple students at the score cut-off for the lowest 25% have the same score?**

A: If multiple students have the same score at the cut-off for the lowest 25%, then ADE will include all students at that score threshold in the Growth of Lowest Quarter indicator. For example, if 30 out of 100 students score 1042 on the prior year ELA ATLAS assessment, then all 30 students would be included in the measure, despite this exceeding 25% of students in that grade and content area.

### **Q: Will the growth indicators include English Language Proficiency (ELP)?**

A: The ELA growth measure will include data for English Learners who took the ELPA21 assessment. English Learners are included in the Growth of All Students indicator by proportionally including their ELP growth scores with their ELA growth scores. However, ELP growth will not be included in the Growth of Lowest Quarter indicator, which will focus on ELA, math, and science only.

## **Success Ready Graduate**

*The mission of a high school is to prepare students for life after graduation. This means helping them earn the necessary credits to graduate and guiding them toward paths that lead to success. Whether students choose to enroll in college or a specialized program, join the military, or step into a job that pays a sustainable wage right after high school, the goal is to ensure they are ready for their future opportunities.*

### **Q: What is Success Ready Graduate, and how is it calculated?**

A: At the high school level, every student should graduate ready for what comes next. Accordingly, the new formula for high schools will measure two things in the Success Ready Graduate indicator: students graduating on time, and students demonstrating postsecondary readiness for enlistment, enrollment, or employment, as defined by earning a diploma with merit or distinction outlined in the [Success Ready Pathways](#).

The Success Ready Graduate indicator is a lagging indicator, which means that it awards points to schools based on data from the previous year's graduating cohort. For example, for the Success Ready Graduate indicator calculated for 2023-2024 simulated results, the Graduation Rate and Merit & Distinction measures were calculated based on the adjusted Class of 2023 graduation cohort.

### **Q: How will the Success Ready Graduate indicator change moving forward?**

A: In the new formula, schools will earn points for graduation rate based on a four-year cohort, rather than a four- and five-year cohort as under the previous formula. Additionally, schools will earn points for students graduating on time with diplomas of

## **Arkansas's Accountability Formula Frequently Asked Questions**

Merit and Distinction, as defined by [Success Ready Pathways](#). As these pathways are being launched, schools will earn points through the 2027-2028 school year for students who graduate on time and meet any of the following criteria:

- Earned 9 or more concurrent credit hours;
- Was a concentrator in an H2 pathway;
- Completed 3 or more AP or IB courses; or,

For more information on how schools can earn points for students graduating with Merit and Distinction, please refer to the new accountability formula business rules available [here](#).

### **Q: Do the changes in the accountability formula change whether students have to take the ACT?**

A: College admissions exams can open doors for students, and scores are good for five years, meaning they could be valuable even if students are not sure they want to transition to college immediately after graduation. Arkansas will continue to offer the ACT to all high school students in their 11th or 12th grade years. While the new formula allows students to take high school EOC courses (e.g. Algebra I) in middle school to allow them to prepare for the rigors of high school, students who take early assessment options for math or science (e.g. taking the Algebra EOC exam in 8th grade) must take the ACT during high school to meet federal requirements for assessment participation in high school.

### **Q: How will students who complete the Alternate Pathway to Graduation be included in the Success Ready Graduate indicator?**

A: Students who complete the Alternate Pathway to Graduation will be included in both the Graduation Rate and Merit & Distinction measures. For more information on how the Alternate Pathway to Graduation will be included, please refer to the business rules available [here](#).

## ***Moving Forward***

### **Q: When will scores under the new formula be released?**

A: ADE released simulated results using the new formula for the 2023-2024 school year to school and district leaders in April 2025. District superintendents can download these simulated results in their [Digital Locker](#). New performance ratings will be assigned and published for the 2024-2025 school year in Fall 2025.

## **Arkansas's Accountability Formula Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q: Where will my rating and score be reported? Is it public?**

A: Simulated school scores for the 2023-2024 school year were released to school and district leaders in April of 2025. District superintendents can download these simulated results in their [Digital Locker](#). School scores for the 2024-2025 school year will be made publicly available on [MySchoolInfo](#). School and district leaders will have access to scores prior to public release. In Fall 2025, ADE will release a new, redesigned school report card website that will present school information and performance results simply for parents, families, educators, and school leaders.

### **Q: When will district letter grades be determined?**

A: ADE is currently working to create a formula for assigning district letter grades and elevating what matters most for school districts in Arkansas. More information will be available in the coming months.

### **Q: Where can I find additional information about the new accountability formula?**

A: For more information on Arkansas's new accountability formula, please visit the [School Letter Grade](#) page of the Public School Accountability section of the ADE website.

### **Q: I still have questions. Who can provide additional information about the new accountability formula?**

A: For more information and resources on Arkansas's new accountability formula, please visit the [ADE Accountability website](#) and contact your local educational cooperative for support.

If additional questions remain about Arkansas's new accountability formula, please contact Hope Worsham [Hope.Worsham@ade.arkansas.gov](mailto:Hope.Worsham@ade.arkansas.gov).