

2023-24 Arkansas Merit Teacher Incentive Fund Eligibility Categories

Demonstrating outstanding growth in student performance

What are the eligibility requirements for this category?

Teachers will receive bonuses in this category if:

- They have a three year (2021, 2022, and 2023) average student growth score across all subjects in the top 5% of all teachers statewide.
- They hold a current Arkansas Teaching License
- They have an annual rating of effective or highly effective in the Educator Effectiveness System

OR

- They have a three-year (2021, 2022, and 2023) average student growth score in the same tested subject area (ELA, Math, Sci) that is in the top 25% of all teachers in that subject area statewide.
- They hold a current Arkansas Teaching License
- They have an annual rating of effective or highly effective in the Educator Effectiveness System

What is a growth score?

A teacher's growth score is the average of all students' growth scores assigned to that teacher. Student growth scores are calculated by DESE using students' prior state assessment score history to compare the annual growth of students with similar prior learning and growth trajectories. Students who grow more than those with a similar test score history have growth scores greater than 80, while those who grow less have growth scores less than 80. Measuring students' growth reinforces the idea that all students can learn and can demonstrate learning regardless of where they are on the achievement continuum.

A teacher's yearly average growth score is created by averaging across subjects and weighting by number of students. District and building administrators can view teacher average growth scores for 2022 and 2023 in the Teacher Value-Added Measures Modules in [LEA Insights](#).

A teacher must meet all of the following criteria to receive a growth score:

- Serve as primary teacher of record for a course linked to tested subjects or grade levels for the testing year.
 - Growth scores will not be limited to primary teachers of record in 23-24 because the [DESE Roster Verification System](#) allowed districts to link any educator to students.

- Instruct at least 10 students in the same tested subject. Note: highly mobile students are removed from a teacher's student count.

Teachers serving as mentors to aspiring teachers participating in yearlong residencies

Educator preparation program candidates are not required to complete a yearlong residency until spring 2027. However, DESE has worked with educator preparation programs who have already begun offering yearlong residencies to identify eligible teachers.

What are the eligibility requirements for this category?

- Evidence of mentoring a yearlong resident
- A minimum of three years of teaching experience
- A standard license with a Lead or Master Designation
- An annual rating of effective or highly effective in the Educator Effectiveness System
- Evidence of participation in DESE recognized coaching training
- If the teacher has an average student growth score based on three years of data, that score must show students are meeting expected growth on average (≥ 80).

Teachers in an area identified as experiencing a critical shortage

For the 2023-24 school year, shortages are divided into three categories:

- Subject area
- Geographical area
- Lead or Master licensure designation

Subject shortage areas

- Computer Science
- Foreign Language
- Secondary Math
- Secondary Science
- Special Education

Subject shortage areas were calculated based on data from the past three school years (i.e., 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23). Need for each subject is calculated using the number of unlicensed teachers and teacher attrition in the subject area, as well as the number of candidates in the educator preparation pipeline for that subject area. Special education is included as a federal and state focus area.

What are the eligibility requirements for this category?

- Serve as primary teacher of record for a course linked to an eligible subject shortage area or be assigned an eligible special education job code.
- Hold an Arkansas Teaching License

- Demonstrate positive impact on student growth
 - If the teacher has a three-year average student growth score, then:
 - The three year average student growth score must show students are meeting expected growth on average (≥ 80) **AND**
 - They must have an annual rating of effective or highly effective in the Educator Effectiveness System.
 - If the teacher does not have a three-year average student growth score, then they must have an annual rating of highly effective in the Educator Effectiveness System.

Geographical shortage areas

- Arkansas River ESC
- Great Rivers ESC
- Pulaski Co. Schools
- Southeast ESC
- Southwest ESC
- [Other districts identified as high need](#)

Geographical shortage areas were calculated based on data from the past three school years (i.e., 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23). Need for each geographical area is calculated using the number of unlicensed teachers and teacher attrition in the geographical area, as well as the number of candidates in the educator preparation pipeline projected to be employed in the geographic area.

What are the eligibility requirements for this category?

- Serve as primary teacher of record or hold a special education, library media specialist, or school counselor job code in an eligible geographic shortage area
- Hold an Arkansas Teaching License
- Have an annual rating of effective or highly effective in the Educator Effectiveness System
- If the teacher has an average student growth score based on three years of data, that score must show students are meeting expected growth on average (≥ 80).
- Demonstrate positive impact on student growth
 - If the teacher has a three-year average student growth score, then:
 - The three year average student growth score must show students are meeting expected growth on average (≥ 80) **AND**
 - They must have an annual rating of effective or highly effective in the Educator Effectiveness System.
 - If the teacher does not have a three-year average student growth score, then they must have an annual rating of highly effective in the Educator Effectiveness System.

Master and Lead Designated Teachers

Currently, around 1,300 individuals hold these designations. These designations are required to mentor yearlong residents (approx. 2,000 needed by 2026-27) and are needed to meet student placement requirements outlined in the LEARNS act. Students not meeting readiness standards in Math and/or ELA can be placed with a Master Professional Educator.

What are the eligibility requirements for this category?

- Hold an Arkansas Teaching License with a Lead and/or Master Professional Educator Designation
- Have an annual rating of effective or highly effective in the Educator Effectiveness System
- If the teacher has an average student growth score based on three years of data, that score must show students are meeting expected growth on average (≥ 80).
- Demonstrate positive impact on student growth
 - If the teacher has a three-year average student growth score, then:
 - The three year average student growth score must show students are meeting expected growth on average (≥ 80) **AND**
 - They must have an annual rating of effective or highly effective in the Educator Effectiveness System.
 - If the teacher does not have a three-year average student growth score, then they must have an annual rating of highly effective in the Educator Effectiveness System.