

MILESTONES

Navigating Licensure Updates — Key Takeaways

Licensure in a Post-Waiver World · 2026 Arkansas Department of Education Summit



Bottom line: Waivers are gone. Every unlicensed teacher of record now needs a named, monitored plan to full licensure — and most are already in classrooms, partway through the pipeline. A completion-focused approach moves them across the finish line.

1 · THE NEW LEGAL LANDSCAPE

- **Act 304 of 2025:** Beginning 2025–26, licensure waivers are no longer available to public school districts. It replaces Act 1240 waivers, School of Innovation waivers, and Emergency Teaching Permits (ETPs) — reframing the question from “waive the requirement” to “plan the path to meeting it.”
- **LEARNS Act (Acts 2023, No. 237):** Reshaped how educators are recruited, prepared, and supported — including yearlong residencies (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-2901 et seq.). It also set a classroom-teacher minimum base salary of \$50,000 beginning 2023–24 (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-2403).
- **Tiered licensure system:** Aspiring Teacher permit, provisional, standard, and advanced licenses — including Lead Educator and Master Educator Designations (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-402(c); 6 CAR pt. 180). The standard license is renewable and valid five years (6 CAR § 180-501).
- **Right to Read Act (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-429):** Science-of-reading knowledge is now built into licensure. First-time K–6 and special education K–12 candidates must pass a stand-alone science-of-reading assessment (§ 6-17-402(c)(2)); alternative-pathway candidates must pass the same assessment to convert a provisional license to a standard license.
- **EPP reading audits:** Educator preparation programs must publicly document how they teach reading using scientific, structured-literacy methods, and are audited on a three-year rotation through the Science of Reading Audits.
- **Guidance:** Commissioner’s Memo LIC-25-011, “Teacher Licensure Plans for 2025–2026,” is the operational playbook districts use to implement Act 304 — defining who needs a plan, how to request one, the annual approval cycle, and the three-year limit.

Documenting reading proficiency: Proficiency marked in AELS as (SIS) is district-entered data and cannot be used for licensure. Only (EPP) or (AELS) markings — documented through Phase I and Phase II of an approved Proficiency Pathway — support licensure. Observations occurring after an individual starts a program or tests out do not count as Phase II.

2 · THE DATA — UNLICENSED TEACHERS & CRITICAL GAPS

- **Small share, concentrated need:** Roughly 3% of teachers of record are unlicensed and teaching under a Teacher Licensure Plan.
- **By content area:** Hardest-to-fill areas are special education, secondary math and science, and world languages.
- **By region:** Rural and high-need districts — and Geographic Shortage Areas — carry the largest share of TLPs.
- **By pathway stage:** Most have entered a pathway but have not yet cleared testing or clinical requirements.

The opportunity: Most “unlicensed” educators are already in classrooms, partway through the pipeline — which is exactly why a completion-focused strategy works.

3 · A COMPLETION-FOCUSED STRATEGY

- **Start with who is already here:** Focus first on educators teaching under Teacher Licensure Plans and provisional licenses.
- **Map every candidate to a named pathway** with a clear finish line (6 CAR pt. 180).
- **Remove friction at the stall points:** testing, clinical placement, and paperwork.
- **Pair every candidate with a trained mentor** and structured support (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-2902).
- **Track progress against milestones,** not just enrollment — success is a full standard license, earned on time.

4 · PROGRESS POINTS TO FULL LICENSURE

- 1 Entry** — Admission to an approved program/pathway; provisional license issued (6 CAR § 180-301; § 6-17-409).
- 2 Background clearance** — Criminal records + Child Maltreatment Central Registry checks (§ 6-17-410).
- 3 Testing** — Content, pedagogy, and the science-of-reading assessment (§ 6-17-402(c)(2)).

4 Clinical experience — Supervised practice, culminating in the year-long residency (§ 6-17-409(c)(2)).

5 Full licensure — Standard license issued; renewable for five years (6 CAR § 180-501).

Note: *Alternative programs add a step — EPP recommendation for a provisional license before full licensure. Aspiring Teachers meeting all Aspiring Teacher Permit requirements may serve as teacher of record at full salary.*

The year-long residency — the capstone clinical experience.

A full school year of mentored, in-classroom practice, authorized as a traditional or alternative preparation pathway (§ 6-17-409(c)(2); § 6-17-2902; LEARNS Act).

The resident / aspiring teacher

- Serves the yearlong residency as teacher of record, supported by a trained mentor.
- Bridges theory and practice while contributing to a real classroom — strengthening first-year retention.
- Paid the \$50,000 minimum base salary for classroom teachers (§ 6-17-2403).

The mentor teacher (State Board requirements)

- Lead or Master Educator designation on license (preferred).
- A minimum of three (3) years of teaching experience.
- Effective Teacher summative evaluation + coaching training.

5 · WHO A LICENSURE PLAN IS FOR

A Licensure Plan is the bridge to full or additional licensure. In every scenario, the individual must hold a bachelor's degree.

- Any individual teaching in a public or charter school who does not hold a current teaching license (absent a charter waiver).
- Any individual serving as a school counselor or library media specialist who does not hold a license.
- Any licensed educator teaching outside their licensed content area.
- Any educator who is not eligible for a provisional license.

6 · THE THREE LICENSURE PLANS

One framework, three audiences — each a structured, monitored route to full licensure.

TLP Teacher Licensure Plan	ALP Additional Licensure Plan	ALCP Administrator Licensure Completion Plan
For unlicensed teachers. The primary replacement for waivers and ETPs under Act 304.	For licensed teachers teaching out of area, while completing added program requirements for a new content area.	For licensed teachers serving as administrators, while completing administrator licensure requirements.

- **Approved annually** by the DESE Licensure Office; granted to both the individual and the district.
- **Maximum of three (3) years** total; the district monitors progress toward full licensure and notifies DESE each year the individual is still employed.
- **ALP / ALCP — what changed:** only the monitoring of progress. Districts determine and monitor yearly progress; the individual must be eligible for a standard license at the end of three (3) years.
- **No testing for add-on licensure** if an approved program of study was completed within the last ten (10) years and the EPP recommends the candidate for licensure.

7 · TLP ESSENTIALS — ELIGIBILITY, TIERS & TIME

Eligibility to be placed on a plan:

- Pass all required Arkansas background checks within the last year.
- Hold a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Submit a completed Arkansas Qualified Teacher (AQT) form for core subjects: math, ELA, science, social studies, elementary K-6, or special education K-12.

Tier 1 AQT

Individuals who ARE Arkansas Qualified Teachers.
Placed on a Tier 1 plan with up to three (3) years to reach full licensure.

Tier 2

Not yet AQT — 2025–26 only

A temporary status: one (1) year to reach AQT, renewable for a second and third year.

Unavailable moving forward.

Time deductions: *In special education, no more than three (3) years total under any exception/provisional license while working toward a standard license, and the individual must be enrolled in a special education licensure program (retroactive under IDEA). Years on a Long-Term*

Substitute (SpEd) or an Emergency Teaching Permit are deducted from the three-year maximum. A TLP cannot be held by anyone who has ever held a provisional license.

8 · OTHER PATHWAYS & EXCEPTIONS

Routes to a standard license

- **Traditional** — bachelor's-level prep at an IHE (6 CAR § 180-302).
- **Alternative programs** — for degree-holders entering teaching (§ 6-17-409).
- **Registered Apprentice** — work-based, mentored routes.
- **National programs** — Teach For America, Arkansas Teacher Corps.
- **MAT** — six-hour rule: provisional-eligible after six hours (except SpEd).
- **Reciprocity** — for educators licensed in other states (§ 6-17-403).

Work-based & exceptions

- **PPTL** — Provisional Professional Teaching License: 3-yr license; 3+ years verified content-area work experience.
- **HQP** — Highly Qualified Professor: master's + 3 years as teacher of record at an accredited IHE.
- **ATP** — Aspiring Teacher Permit: teacher of record during a yearlong residency ($\leq$ one academic year, § 6-17-402(c)(1)(G)); superintendent applies before the teacher starts.
- **LTS** — Long-Term Substitute: only for leave/medical/catastrophic/deployment; not to fill a true vacancy.
- **ETL** — Effective Teacher Licensure: teach one grade above/below the evaluated grade.

9 · ASPIRING TEACHER PERMIT — REQUIREMENTS

For a teaching vacancy — not a substitute. The superintendent (or designee) applies before the teacher starts; aspiring teachers are full teachers of record paid the \$50,000 minimum base salary (§ 6-17-2403).

The aspiring teacher

- Cleared background checks.
- Meets all IHE internship/residency requirements.
- Passing scores on all content assessments required for licensure (including Foundations of Reading for Elementary K-6).
- IHE has a signed MOU/support plan with the district.
- Recommended for employment as teacher of record in the appropriate area (after DESE approval).

The mentor teacher

- Assigned by the district, in the same school building.
- Lead or Master Educator designation on license.
- A minimum of three (3) years of teaching experience.
- Effective Teacher summative evaluation.
- Coaching training.

10 · ACTION STEPS & THE DISTRICT PORTAL

District & school leaders

- Audit every permit and provisional teacher; map each to a completion plan.
- Protect time and assign trained mentors for residents and provisional teachers.
- Build “grow-your-own” partnerships with preparation providers.
- When hiring: confirm AQT status, prior LTS/ETP or provisional history, and check “Ethics Violations” in LEA Insights (superintendent).

Preparation providers

- Make testing and clinical placement on-time, not last-minute.
- Publicly document science-of-reading preparation (§ 6-17-429).
- Use residency partnerships to co-develop and retain candidates.

The District Portal (AELS)

- TLPs, ALPs, ATPs, and ALCPs are requested through the District Portal; TLPs also appear in AELS.
- **Educator Search** — find an individual and add an exception or plan request.
- **District Exception Plans** — view all active plans and status.
- **Manage Admins** — add the individuals who can submit plans and exceptions.

How a plan moves

- District submits the plan; DESE works with the individual (or the candidate uses the Licensure Booking Page) to complete it.
- Signed by the individual, then the district; a copy is filed at the district and in AELS.
- **Statuses:** Unsubmitted · Processing · Approved · District Action Required.
- After year three, the individual must be eligible for a provisional license.

Questions? Office of Educator Preparation & Licensure · Arkansas Department of Education

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