

# Arkansas Teacher Workforce

[Josh McGee, Ph.D.](#)

Associate Professor and Endowed Chair in Education  
Accountability and Transparency

[Office for Education Policy](#)  
[Department of Education Reform](#)  
University of Arkansas

[Sharlee Crowson, Ed.S.](#)

Educator Workforce Data Manager

[Office of Educator Effectiveness and Licensure](#)  
Division of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Arkansas Department of Education



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY  
& SECONDARY EDUCATION

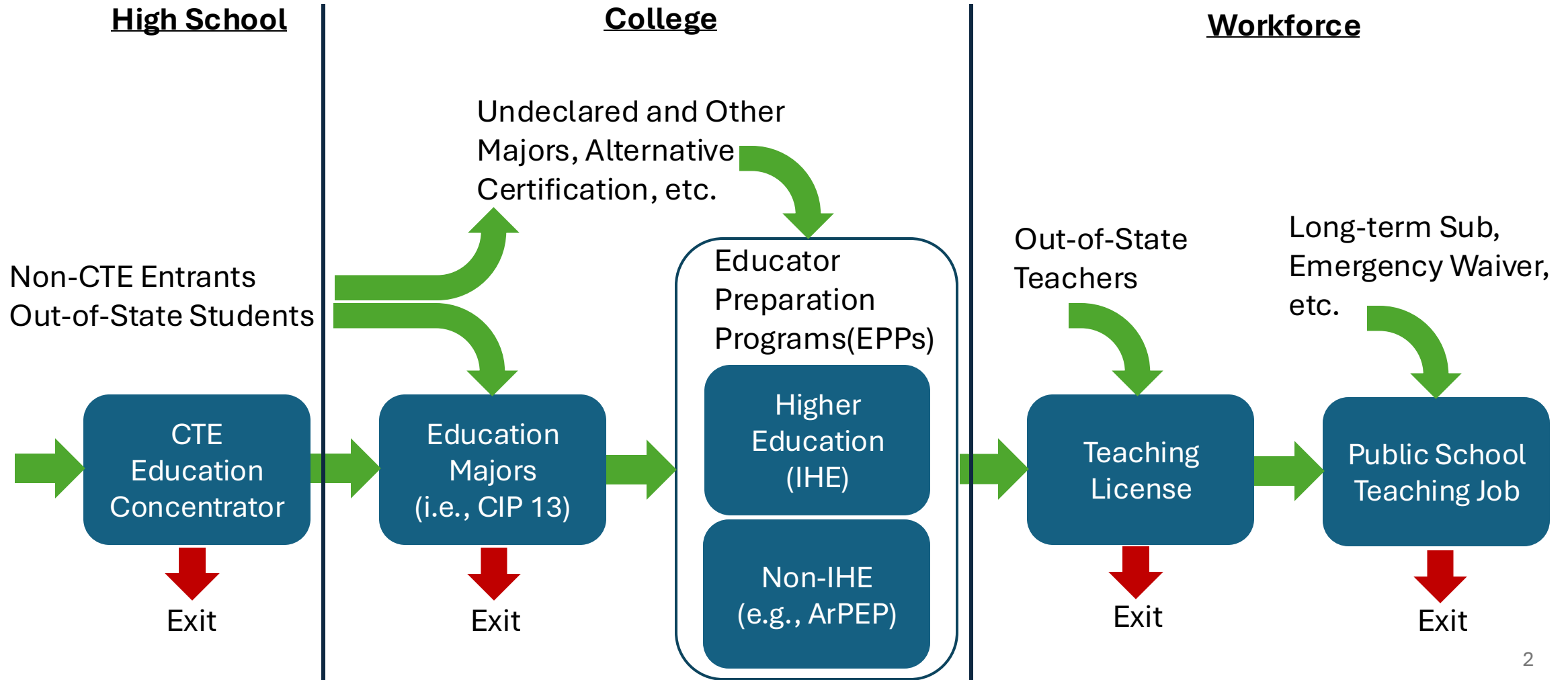


UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS

College of Education  
& Health Professions  
*Education Reform*



# The teacher pipeline is a complex system with many on- and off-ramps.



# Research-Practice Partnership

- We need to use data and evidence to understand this complex system and make positive improvements.
- For three years, DESE has partnered with the U of A Department of Education Reform Office for Education Policy to access no-cost data and research support.
- Researchers investigate policy-relevant questions using high-quality data and provide advice on policy design and implementation.
- Teacher workforce reports and data resources:
  - [DESE Educator Workforce Data](#)
  - [OEP Teacher Pipeline](#)

# Our goal is to help Arkansas use data and evidence to strengthen the teacher workforce.

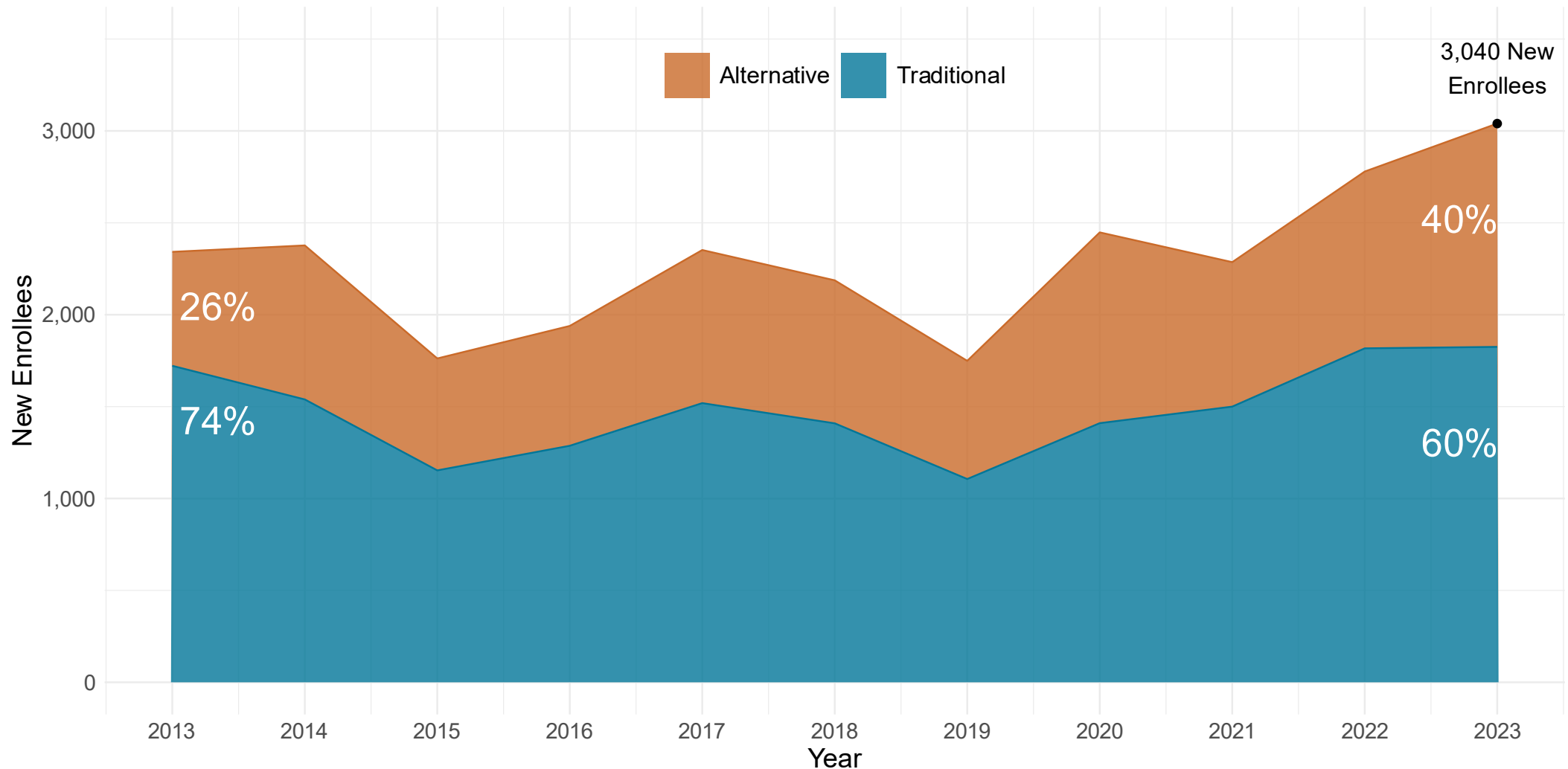
- Describe the teacher pipeline from high school through higher education and into the classroom;
- Explain how the pipeline has changed over time;
- Investigate how licensure policies influence teacher supply;
- Highlight the leaks and potential barriers in the pipeline;
- Offer recommendations to strengthen the teacher workforce; and
- Help Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) set goals and monitor progress.

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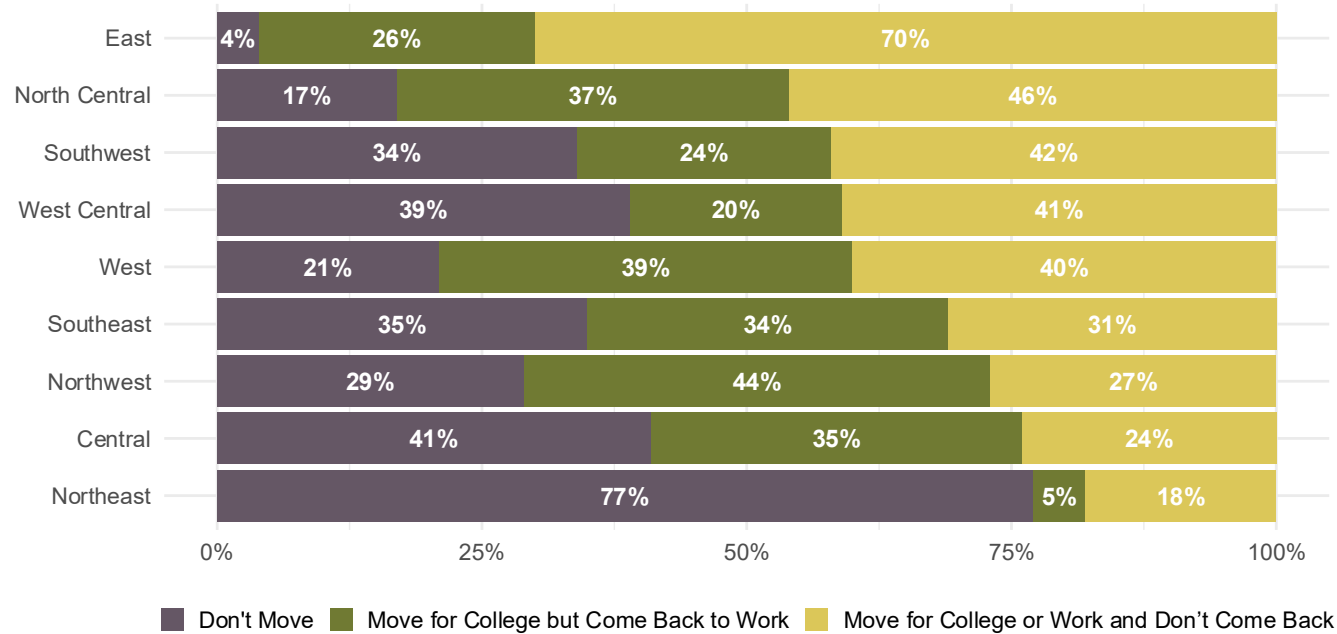
# Early Pipeline

# Alternative EPPs are enrolling an increasing share of new EPP entrants.

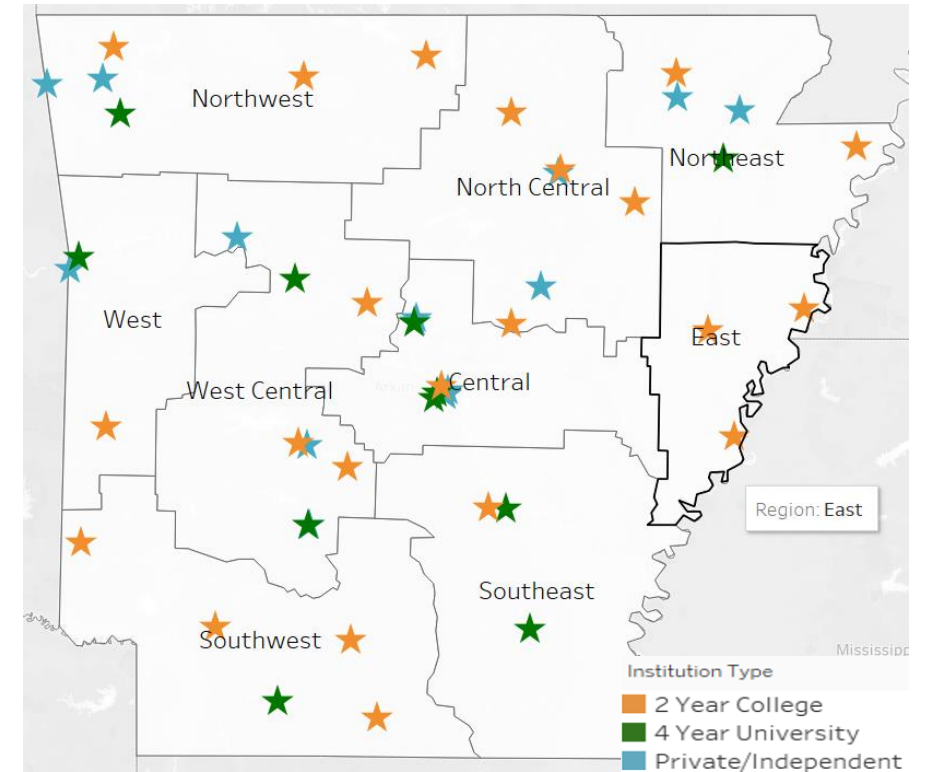


# Future educators often migrate from the eastern Arkansas for college and do not return.

Migration from High School to College and Employment for those Working in Education Services



There are no 4-Year Postsecondary Institutions in the East Region





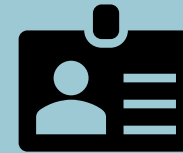
# Despite high completion and licensure rates, many EPP enrollees don't become teachers within six years.



77% of enrollees complete within three years



66% of enrollees pass the licensure exam on their first attempt



79% of completers are licensed within one year



68% of completers are employed as a teacher within three years

While 84% of traditional EPP enrollees complete within 3 years, only 65% of alternative EPP enrollees do so.

Approximately 40% of those who initially enroll in an Arkansas EPP are not licensed and employed as a teacher 6 years later.

# EPP State Review

- Elevate key pieces of data and program experiences that align with Arkansas's vision for high quality preparation.
- Provide EPPs with performance reports containing multiple years of data related to recruitment, completion, and supporting workforce needs.
- Publish a public facing EPP State Review Data Dashboard

## Overview

The Arkansas Educator Preparation Program (EPP) State Review sets a shared vision and bar for high-quality educator preparation to ensure teacher candidates are ready to meet students' needs on day one.

## EPP Type

EPP Type  
Alternative

## Performance Level Based on Average Score

**Exceeds:**  
Avg.  $\geq 2.67$

**Meets:**  
 $2.67 > \text{Avg.} \geq 1.67$

**Approaching:**  
 $1.67 \geq \text{Avg.} > 0.67$

**Below:**  
 $0.67 \geq \text{Avg.}$

## EPP State Review Score Overview

Program	Overall Performance Level	Average Performance Score	Standard 1	Standard 2	Standard 3
Harding University	Meets	2.33	Meets	Meets	Exceeds
Southern Arkansas University	Meets	2.33	Meets	Meets	Exceeds
Arkansas State University	Meets	2	Exceeds	Approaching	Meets
University of Central Arkansas	Meets	2	Approaching	Meets	Exceeds
University of Arkansas-Fayetteville	Meets	2	Meets	Meets	Meets
ArPEP/APPEL	Meets	2	Approaching	Meets	Exceeds
Arkansas Teacher Corps	Approaching	1.67	Approaching	Meets	Meets
University of Arkansas-Monticello	Approaching	1.67	Approaching	Meets	Meets
Arkansas Tech University	Approaching	1.67	Approaching	Approaching	Exceeds
Henderson State University	Approaching	1.67	Approaching	Meets	Meets
John Brown University	Approaching	1.67	Approaching	Meets	Meets
Teach for America	Approaching	1.33	Meets	Approaching	Approaching
University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff	Approaching	1.33	Below	Meets	Meets
University of Arkansas-Little Rock	Approaching	1	Approaching	Approaching	Approaching
Williams Baptist University	Approaching	1	Approaching	Approaching	Approaching
American Board (ABCTE)	Below	0.33	Approaching	Below	Below

The Arkansas Educator Preparation Program State Review Dashboard is a joint project of the Arkansas Department of Education Division of Elementary and Secondary Education and the University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform Office for Education Policy.



# Retention

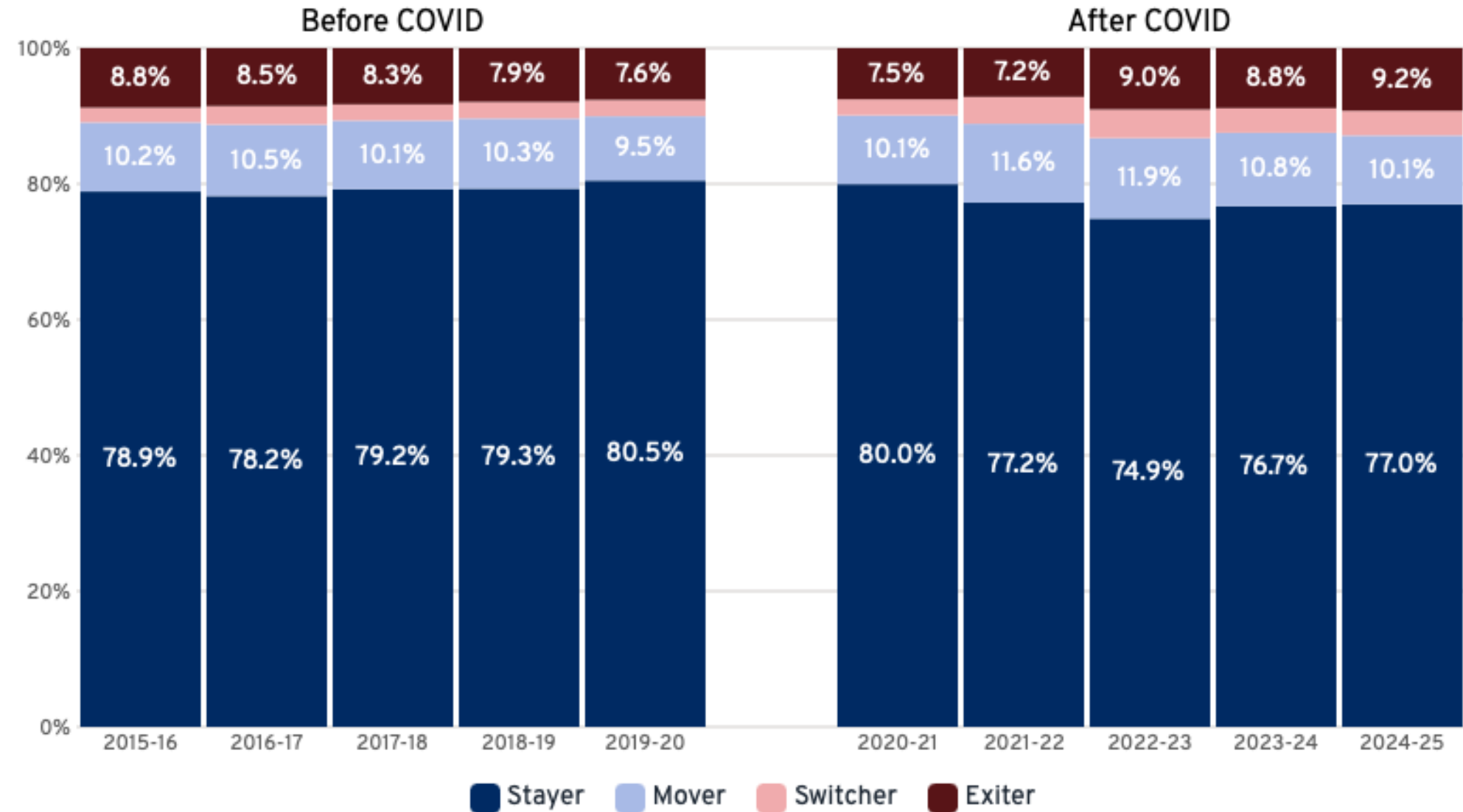
# Arkansas teacher retention is still below pre-pandemic rates.

- Check out our [blog post](#) on Arkansas Teacher Retention for the 2024-25 school year.
- Teacher retention has recovered after a dip following the pandemic.
- Teacher retention is only slightly below pre-pandemic levels.
- Retention rates vary across districts and subject areas, with the southern and eastern regions experiencing the lowest retention.
- Middle school teachers notably show decreased retention rates across subject areas.

To distinguish between different types of turnover, we use the following four terms:

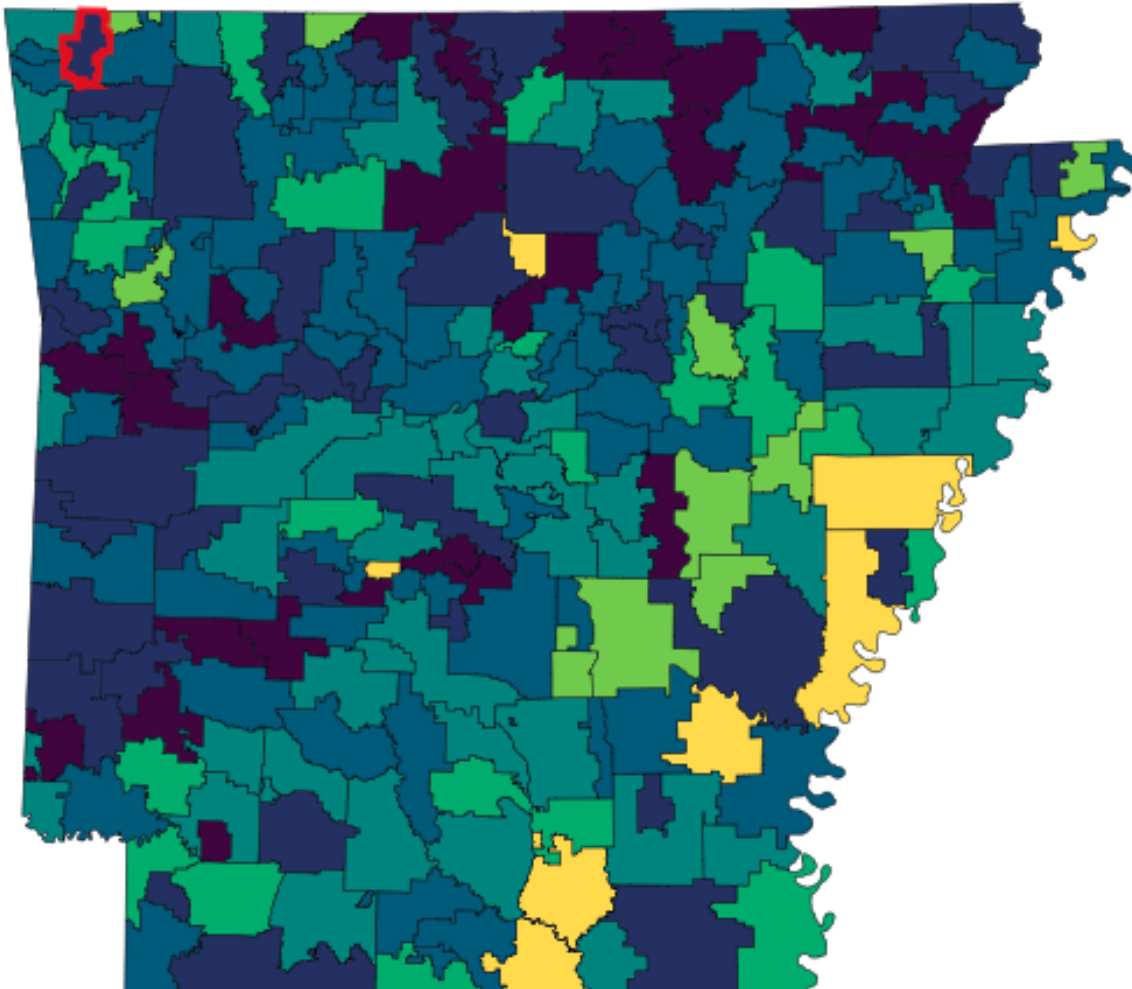
- **Stayers** are teachers who remain teaching in the same school(s) from one year to the next.
- **Movers** leave their current school(s) to teach in another school or district.
- **Switchers** change from a teaching to a non-teaching role in the Arkansas education workforce from one year to the next.
- **Exiters** are teachers who leave the Arkansas education workforce entirely.

# Teacher Retention by Year and Outcome



# Average Teacher Retention by District

## 2024-25 Retention Rates by District



### Bentonville

Teachers 2024: 1,189

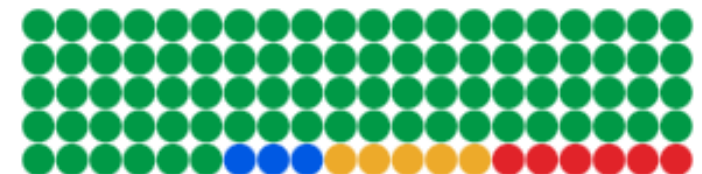
Teachers 2025: 1,169

Out of 1,189 teachers in 2024, **1,020** stayed for 2025, a retention rate of **85.8%**. Of those that left:

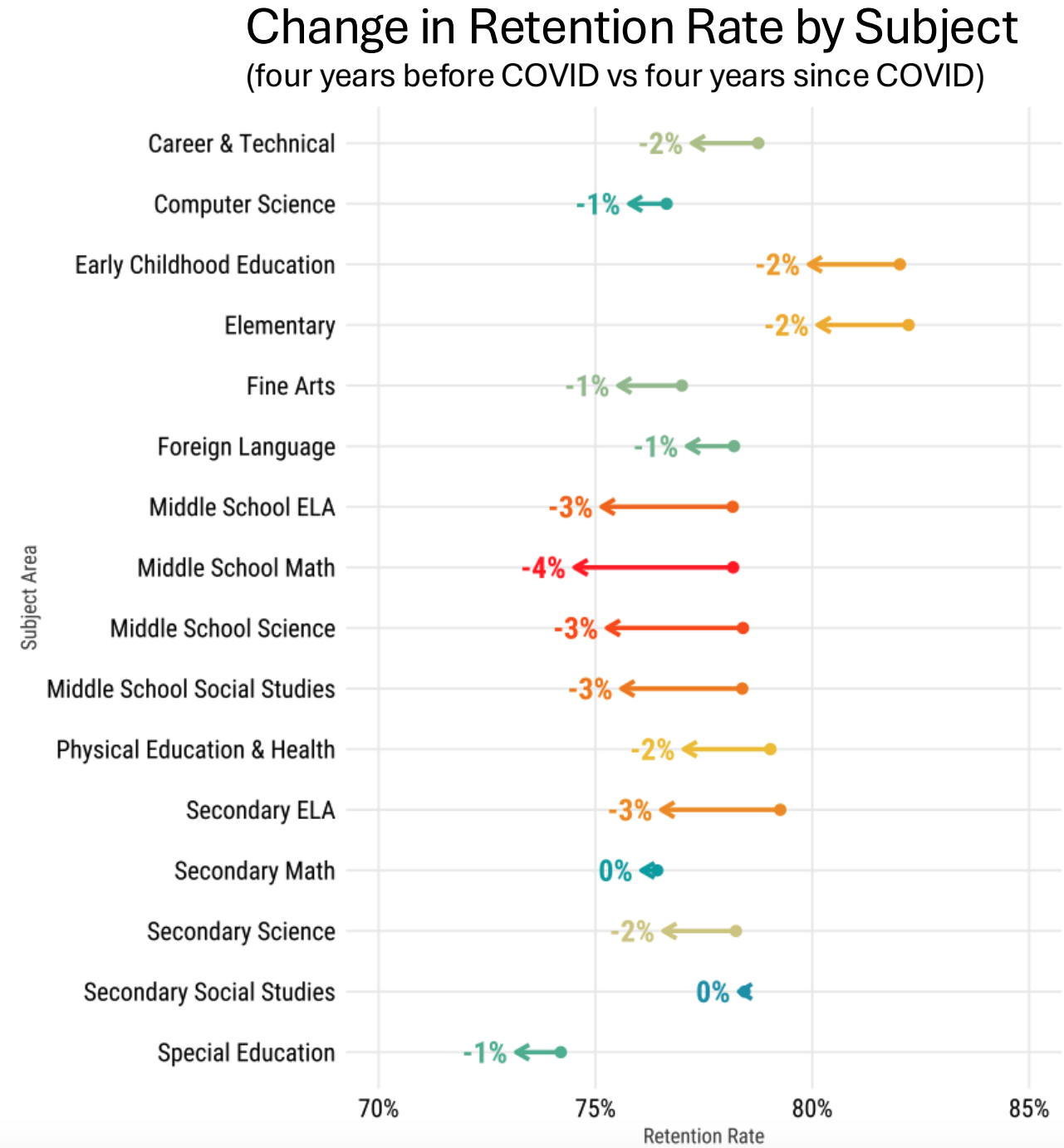
- 31 (3%) moved to other schools
- 62 (5%) switched to non-teaching roles
- 76 (6%) exited the teaching workforce

With 105 new teachers, this makes a net change of **-20** teachers for the district.

These dots represent the teachers following each pathway:



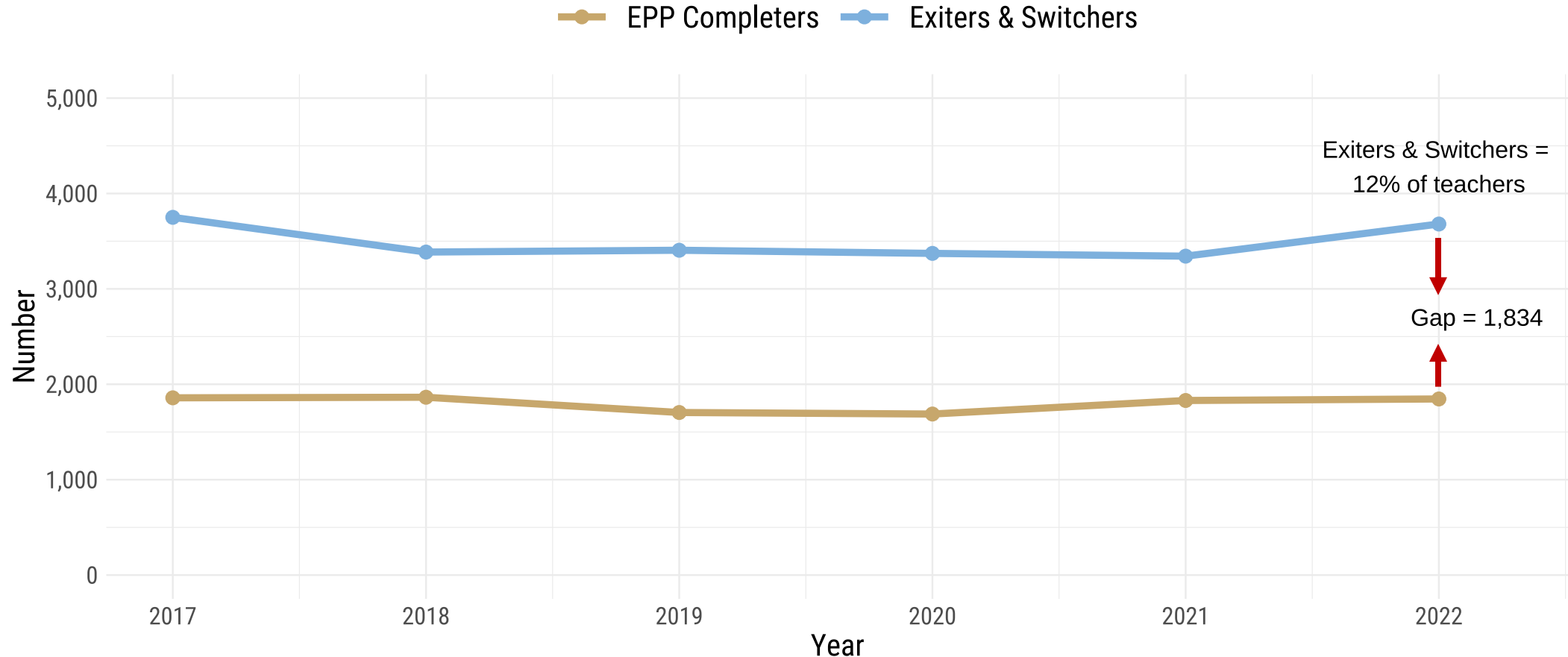
Middle school subjects experienced the largest declines in retention





# Arkansas educator preparation programs (EPP) produce about 1,800 fewer teachers than the number who leave the classroom

EPP Completers vs. Exiters & Switchers  
2017 through 2022 School Years



# Shortage Areas

# Arkansas's teacher shortage area lists are data-driven and based on need.

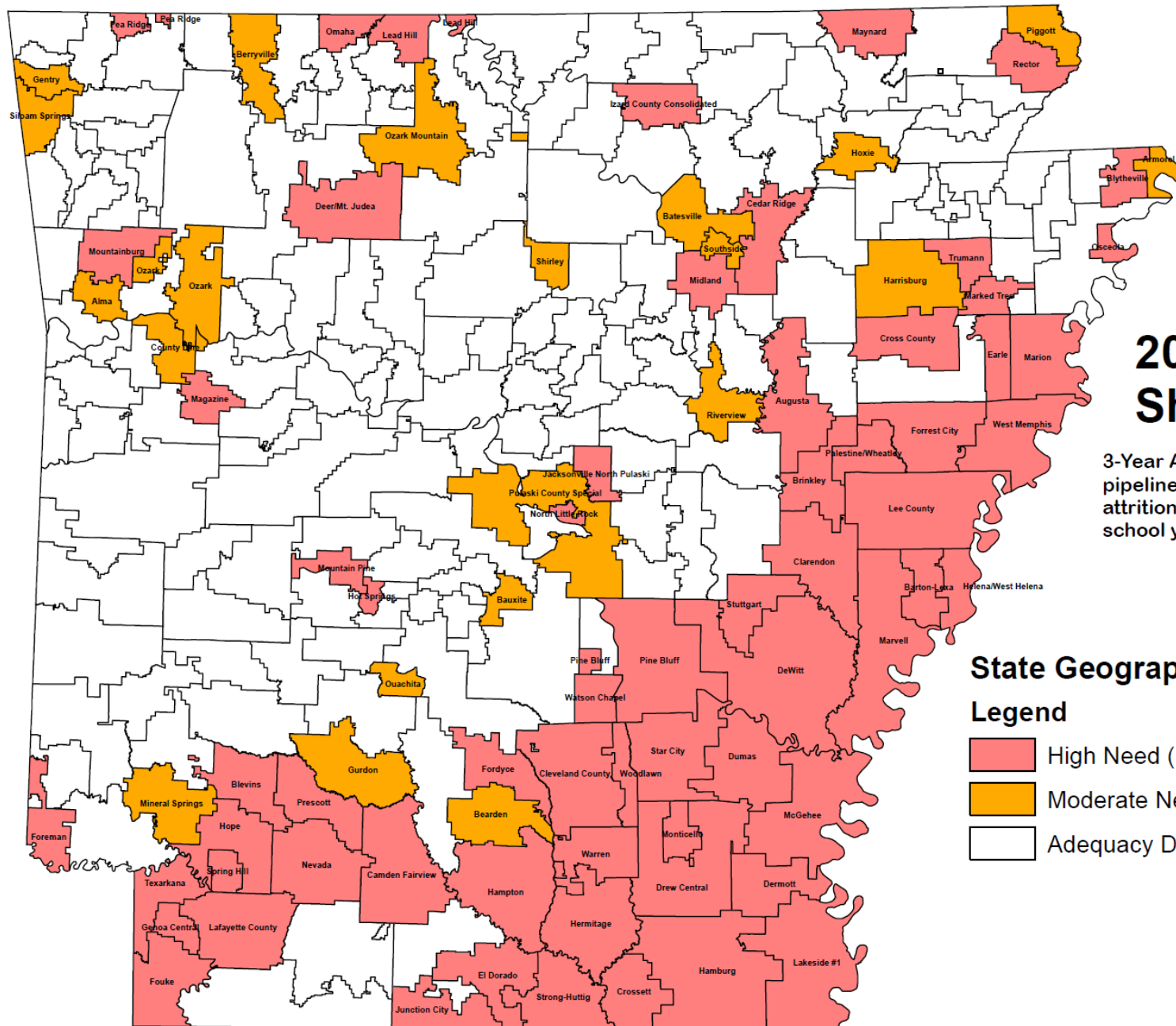
- ADE collaborates with the University of Arkansas Office for Education Policy to create the shortage area lists.
- The shortage area lists are based on data from the past three school years (i.e., 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24).
- For each subject area, we count:
  - Total Teachers,
  - Demand – sum of unlicensed teachers, attrition, and deceased, and
  - Supply – educator preparation program pipeline.

# We calculate percentage need and rank subjects to determine shortage areas.

- Percentage Need =  $\frac{\text{Demand} - \text{Supply}}{\text{Total Teachers}}$
- Federal shortage areas are the subjects with the most need up to the point where the cumulative number of needed positions equals 5% of total teaching positions.
- State shortage areas are based on the following thresholds for percentage need:
  - High ( $\geq 20\%$ )
  - Moderate ( $\geq 15\%$ )
  - Low ( $< 15\%$ )

Below is the 2024-2025 subject area list.

High ( $\geq 20\%$ need)	Moderate ( $\geq 15\%$ )	Low ( $< 15\%$ )
Secondary Science*	Middle School Science*	Physical Education and Health
Foreign Language*	Middle School ELA	Elementary
Secondary Mathematics*	Secondary English Language Arts	Library Media Specialist
	Middle School Social Studies	Counselor
	Middle School Math*	
	Fine Arts	
	Special Education*	
	Career and Technical	
	Secondary Social Studies	



## 2025-2026 Geographic Shortage Districts

3-Year Averages based on supply (educator preparation pipeline) and demand (unlicensed teachers and teacher attrition) during the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 school years.

### State Geographic Shortage Areas

#### Legend

- High Need ( $\geq 20\%$  of teachers) or in a High Need Coop
- Moderate Need ( $\geq 15\%$  Need)
- Adequacy Districts ( $< 15\%$  Need)

LEARNS Salary Increases

# We are studying how the LEARNS salary increases affect teacher recruitment and retention.

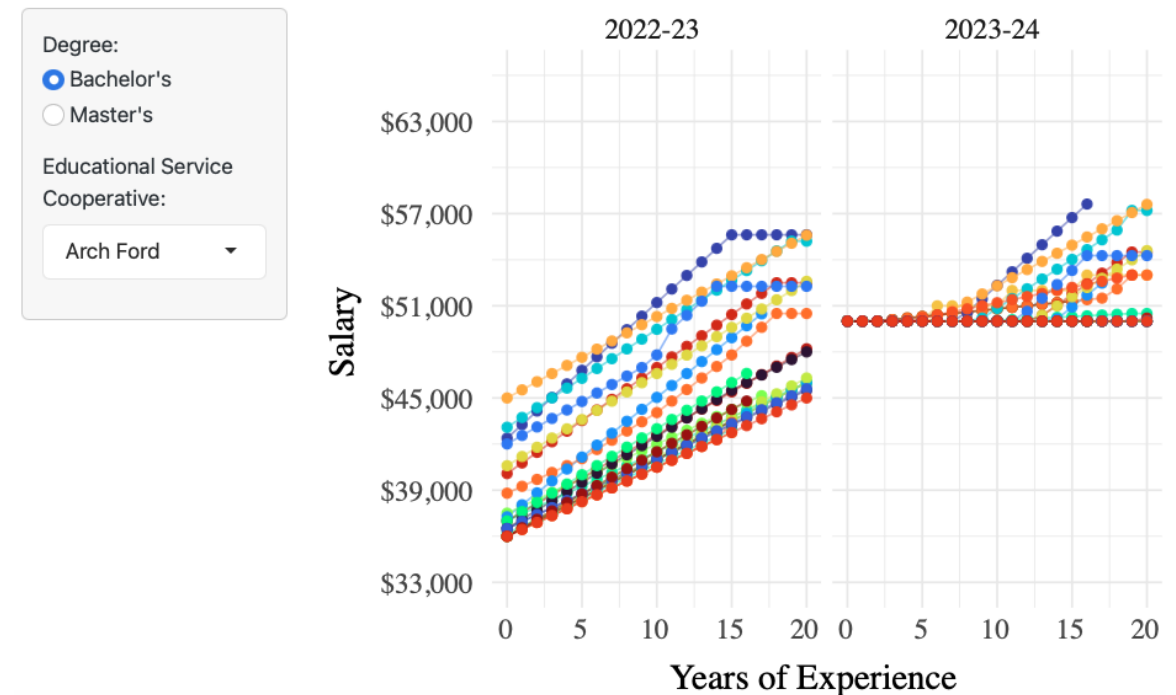
- LEARNS made the following teachers' compensation changes:
  - increased the state's minimum teacher salary from \$36,000 to \$50,000,
  - guaranteed all teachers a minimum raise of \$2,000,
  - removed the minimum teacher salary schedule,
  - and relaxed other salary schedule requirements in state law.
- The state provided new funds for the required salary increases, resulting in nearly **\$183 million in new state education funding, a ~6.5% increase from 2022-23.**
- The LEARNS salary increases provided more resources to rural and higher-poverty districts and reduced starting pay differences across the state.



# We are collecting data to better understand how districts are changing pay and how teachers respond.

- Districts now have additional flexibility to continue with traditional salary schedules or to implement more creative approaches.
- Teacher Salaries Under the Arkansas LEARNS Act
  - [Research Brief](#)
  - [Blog Post](#)
- [Administrators' Views of Teacher Salary Changes Under the Arkansas LEARNS Act](#)

*District Salary Schedule Scatter Plots*



# Merit Pay

LEARNS established the merit pay program to recognize and reward Arkansas's outstanding educators.

- The primary goals of the program are to:
  - ***retain high-performing teachers*** in classrooms across Arkansas and
  - ***enhance teacher recruitment and retention*** in priority and critical shortage areas.
- Research supports the idea that merit pay can have a positive impact on student outcomes by changing who enters and stays in teaching.
- In 2025, a total of 4,283 teachers received bonuses, an increase of 1,346 educators over the previous year.
- The average bonus was \$3,325.






# The Merit Pay program provides annual bonuses of up to \$10,000 across multiple categories.

- For 2025, the legislature and department allocated \$14.24 million for the program.
- The eligibility categories include those who:
  - Demonstrate outstanding growth in student performance;
  - Teach in critical shortage areas; and
  - Serve as a mentor to aspiring teachers participating in yearlong residencies.
- All K-12 classroom teachers, special education teachers, library media specialists, and school counselors were eligible.

# 2025 Merit Pay Criteria and Bonus Levels

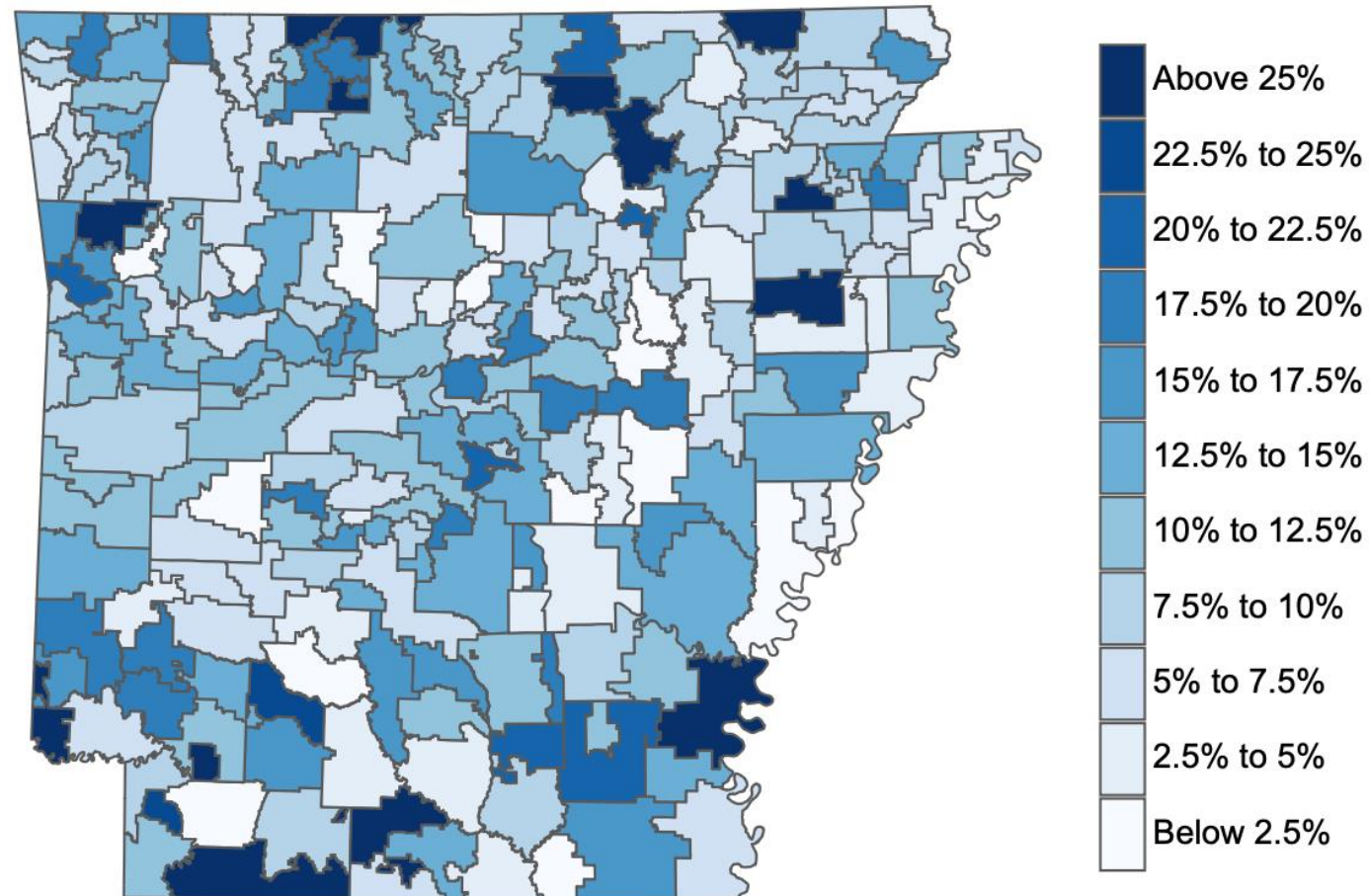
Criteria	Bonus
<b>Demonstrate outstanding growth in student performance.</b>	
Top 0.5% 3-Year Average Student Growth Score Across Subjects	\$10,000
Top 1% 3-Year Average Student Growth Score Across Subjects	\$9,000
Top 5% 3-Year Average Student Growth Score Across Subjects	\$6,000
Top 25% 3-Year Average Student Growth Score in ELA, Math, or Science	\$3,000
<b>Teach in subject, geographic, and other shortage areas.</b>	
Subject Shortage Area	\$2,500
Geographic Shortage Area	\$1,500
Lead or Master Designation Shortage Area	\$1,500
<b>Serve as a mentor to aspiring teachers participating in yearlong residencies.</b>	
Mentor for a Yearlong Resident	\$3,000

# Teachers could receive bonuses in multiple categories.

	Student Growth Bonus	Subject Shortage Bonus	Geographic Shortage Bonus	Lead/Master Designation Bonus	Total Bonus
 <b>Ms. Ozark</b> Secondary math teacher in a subject and geographic shortage area, top 25% in student growth in math	✓ \$3,000	✓ \$2,500	✓ \$1,500		<b>\$7,000</b>
 <b>Coach Buffalo</b> Secondary science teacher in a subject shortage area with a Lead/Master designation		✓ \$2,500		✓ \$1,500	<b>\$4,000</b>
 <b>Mrs. Delta</b> Special education teacher in a geographic and subject shortage area		✓ \$2,500	✓ \$1,500		<b>\$4,000</b>
 <b>Ms. Mockingbird</b> Secondary math teacher in a geographic and subject shortage area, top 5% in student growth	✓ \$6,000	✓ \$2,500	✓ \$1,500		<b>\$10,000</b>
 <b>Mr. Diamond</b> Foreign language teacher in a geographic and subject shortage area, Lead/Master designation		✓ \$2,500	✓ \$1,500	✓ \$1,500	<b>\$5,500</b>

Bonus recipients were widely distributed, with higher concentrations in geographic shortage areas.

Percentage of 2024-25 Teachers Receiving a Bonus



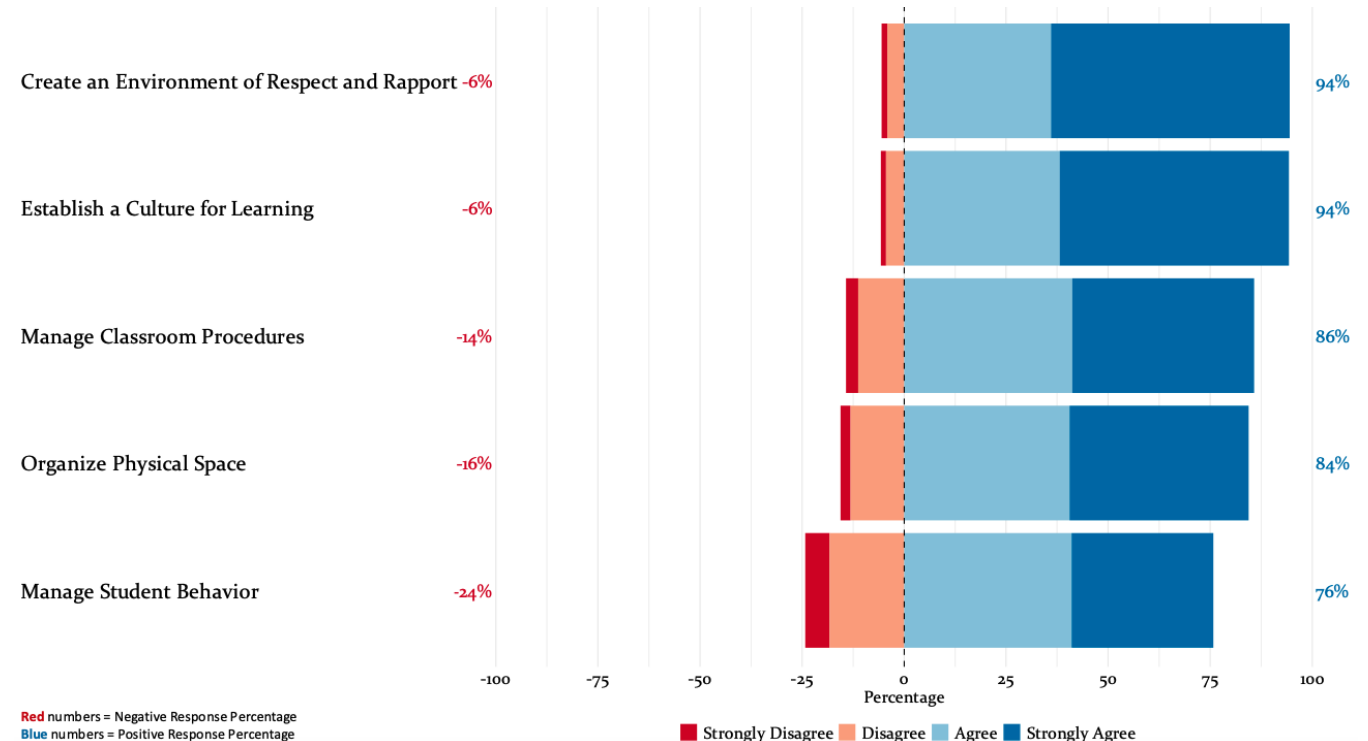
# Surveys



# We administer several surveys to aspiring teachers, classroom teachers, and their supervisors.

- The goal of these surveys is to better understand how prepared and supported teachers feel, and to monitor teacher wellbeing and working conditions.
- [Educator Preparation Program \(EPP\) Completer Survey Report](#)
- [Educator Preparation Program \(EPP\) Completer Supervisor Survey Report](#)
- [Novice Teacher Survey Report](#)
- [Wellbeing and Working Conditions in the Arkansas Teacher Workforce](#)

My EPP prepared me to:





Josh B. McGee

[JoshMcGee@uark.edu](mailto:JoshMcGee@uark.edu)