

ARKANSAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
REGULAR SESSION 2027

HOUSE BILL NO. \_\_\_\_\_

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**AN ACT**

TO MODERNIZE SECONDARY SCHOOL ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS; TO REDUCE RIGID STATE-MANDATED COURSE REQUIREMENTS WHILE PRESERVING CONSTITUTIONAL ADEQUACY; TO EXPAND CAREER, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND WORKFORCE PATHWAYS; TO STRENGTHEN INSTRUCTION IN CIVICS AND PERSONAL FINANCE; TO PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY FOR SMALL AND RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

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**SECTION 1. Legislative Findings and Purpose.**

(a) The General Assembly finds that:

- (1) Article 14 of the Arkansas Constitution requires the State to maintain a general, suitable, and efficient system of public education.
- (2) The purpose of public education includes preparing students for productive employment, economic independence, civic participation, and informed self-government.
- (3) Existing accreditation standards impose uniform mandates that disproportionately burden small and rural school districts.
- (4) Career, technical, entrepreneurial, and workforce pathways are of equal educational value.
- (5) Meaningful instruction in government and civic responsibility promotes informed civic engagement.

(b) Purpose. It is the intent of the General Assembly to preserve educational adequacy, reduce rigid accreditation mandates, expand career and workforce pathways, mandate high-value civics and finance instruction, and ensure that public college enrollment is not the default outcome.

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**SECTION 2. Preservation of Requirements.**

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to reduce statewide academic standards, graduation requirements, instructional time, federal compliance, or student eligibility for admission to institutions of higher education.

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**SECTION 3. Accreditation Pathways Established.**

DESE shall recognize multiple instructional pathways including Postsecondary Academic Readiness, Career and Technical, Entrepreneurship and Business, and Public Service or Military Readiness. Each high school shall offer not fewer than two pathways, which shall be afforded equal standing.

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**SECTION 4. Reduction and Substitution of Mandated Courses.**

Districts may substitute career, technical, entrepreneurial, or workforce-aligned instruction for state-mandated academic courses not required by federal law, provided graduation requirements are met.

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**SECTION 5. Required High-Value Core Instruction.**

Public high schools shall require core instruction in entrepreneurship, expanded Arkansas and United States civics, and extended personal finance and taxation education. Civics instruction shall include structured exposure to the legislative process through optional engagement with sitting members of the Arkansas General Assembly or approved instructional materials.

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**SECTION 6. Small and Rural District Flexibility.**

Districts with fewer than 1,200 ADM may satisfy requirements through integrated, shared, regional, virtual, or cooperative instruction and shall not lose accreditation solely due to low-enrollment courses.

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**SECTION 7. Accountability and Reporting.**

DESE shall establish outcome-based metrics, monitor pathway completion, and report biennially to the General Assembly.

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**SECTION 8. Rulemaking.**

DESE shall promulgate rules necessary to implement this Act.

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**SECTION 9. Severability.**

If any provision is held invalid, remaining provisions shall remain in effect.

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**SECTION 10. Effective Date.**

This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2028, for application to Fiscal Year 2028–2029 and beyond.