

Arkansas Teacher Merit Pay – Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible for teacher merit pay?

Teachers are eligible for merit pay only if they meet all required eligibility criteria. Eligibility is verified by confirming the educator is licensed in the area they teach, meets the definition of a teacher, has an annual rating based on a minimum of four components, and has an approved high-impact student growth artifact when required. Teachers cannot have been on an intensive support plan or have a code of ethics violation during the current school year.

What growth score is required to qualify for merit pay?

Teachers with a three-year teacher growth score of 0.80 or higher must have at least an Effective annual rating. Teachers without a three-year teacher growth score must have a high-impact student growth artifact and a Highly Effective annual rating. Teachers with a growth score below 0.80 are not eligible for merit incentive bonuses. Teachers with an Unsatisfactory or Progressing annual rating are also not eligible.

What if a teacher does not yet have a three-year average growth score?

Teachers without a three-year teacher growth average may qualify through subject-area or geographic shortage pathways or by mentoring a year-long resident. In this scenario, a student growth artifact must be approved in EES and have a highly effective annual rating.

Are teachers with growth scores below 0.80 eligible if they teach in a shortage subject area?

No. Teachers with a growth score below 0.80 are not eligible for merit incentive bonuses, regardless of subject-area designation.

What documentation is required for teachers who mentored a year-long resident teacher?

Teachers who mentored a yearlong resident teacher from a DESE approved program must have an annual rating based on two observations and an approved high-impact student growth artifact, unless they already have a qualifying three-year composite growth score.

Is there anything districts must submit to ensure Experienced Mentor Teachers receive merit pay if they mentor a year-long resident?

No. Districts do not need to submit special forms. ADE requests lists from preparation programs and pulls licensure, ratings, and eligibility data directly from state systems.

What is required for K–2 teachers who do not have ATLAS growth data?

K–2 teachers without ATLAS growth data must qualify using an annual rating based on at least four components and two observations. Refer to previous questions regarding whether the teacher has or does not have a three-year average teacher growth score.

What is the deadline for merit pay–related submissions?

The deadline to submit merit pay data in EES is April 30. Data is pulled May 1, and entries made on May 1 are not included. Annual ratings are time-stamped and confirmed by email.

Are annual ratings required even if a teacher is not pursuing merit pay?

Yes. Annual ratings are required for all teachers by April 30, regardless of merit pay participation as part of Act 808. Student growth artifacts are required only for merit pay eligibility when no three-year teacher growth score exists.

Can teachers be told they are eligible without confirming documentation?

No. Eligibility must be confirmed by verifying licensure, evaluation ratings, and required documentation before being communicated.

Are teachers like Gifted and Talented or Reading Interventionist eligible?

All teachers are eligible if they meet merit pay eligibility requirements.

If I am eligible, will I automatically receive the incentive payment?

No. The number of eligible teachers may exceed the funding allotted for the program or thresholds for growth.