

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**Arkansas A.C.C.E.S.S. Portal**  
*Arkansas ACCESS · Building on the Success of Arkansas LEARNS*

**ADE COMMISSIONER'S MEMO**

|                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>MEMO #</b>                                                                      | <b>OIT-27-002</b>                                                                                                                 |
| <b>TO</b>                                                                          | LEA* Superintendents; LEA* School Counselors; High School Principals — for distribution to High School Senior Students & Families |
| <b>FROM</b>                                                                        | Office of the Secretary, Arkansas Department of Education   ADE                                                                   |
| <b>DATE</b>                                                                        | July 24, 2026   #August 16, 2026   #September 8, 2026                                                                             |
| <b>MEMO TOPIC</b>                                                                  | Communications Plan — Launch of the Arkansas A.C.C.E.S.S. Portal for LEA Counselors and High School Seniors, 2026–2027            |
| <b>AUTHORITY</b>                                                                   | LEARNS Act 237 of 2023; Act 340 of 2025 (Arkansas ACCESS — Eligibility)                                                           |
| *LEA – Local Education Agency <span style="float: right;">#: Modified Dates</span> |                                                                                                                                   |

**Purpose**

The Arkansas Department of Education is pleased to announce the launch of the Arkansas A.C.C.E.S.S. Portal, a single, statewide universal college application that fulfills the Eligibility pillar of Arkansas A.C.C.E.S.S. Arkansas A.C.C.E.S.S Portal grants provisional admission to students who meet the baseline admissions requirements of participating in Arkansas institutions of higher education (IHE) replacing multiple, repetitive applications with one streamlined process.

This memorandum in the form of ADE Commissioner’s Memo directs LEA school counselors and provides the communications plan for reaching High School Senior Students and their families ahead of the 2026 – 2027 application cycle. Counselors are the front-line guides for this rollout, and their early engagement is essential to a smooth, stress-free experience for every Arkansas senior.

**Action requested:** Superintendents and principals are asked to route this memo to all high school counseling staff and to support the student communications.

**Key Dates for K-12**

| Timing                            | Message / Content                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Channel & Owner                                                  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Phase I<br>Aug 1, 2026            | Counselors <i>may</i> log on early to review Student Rosters and Alignments and get acclimated to the portal before students arrive.                                                                                   | LEA Counselors<br>LEA/District Coordinators                      |
| Phase II<br>Aug 17 – Sep 30, 2026 | AR ACCESS Portal opens for High School Seniors & Counselors: registration, profile creation, Trust Center / Triand handshake, and My Backpack document uploads. (Early release this year to ease the first-time rush.) | Counselors + Students<br>AR ACCESS Program Office                |
| Oct 1, 2026                       | Students begin submitting their My AR ACCESS Portal application to their chosen institutions.                                                                                                                          | Students<br>AR ACCESS Program Office + IHEs                      |
| Customizable Close-Day            | Each institution sets its own AR ACCESS application closing date to match its deadlines; counselors should track each college's Close-Day with their students.                                                         | Counselors + Students<br>Each IHE: Institute of Higher Education |

## Audience 1 — LEA School Counselors + Career Coaches

**Primary objective:** Equip counselors to guide seniors through registration, the Trust Center / Triand handshake, and document uploads — positioning them as the trusted, front-line support for students.

### Core Messages

- You get early access. Log on as early as August 1, 2026, to review your Student Roster and Alignments and get comfortable before students arrive.
- One application, less paperwork. AR ACCESS Portal replaces multiple separate applications with a single statewide universal application, with automated transcript handling.
- You're the guide. Help seniors complete the 7-Step Game Plan — from registration through the Trust Center identity claim to a completed My Backpack.
- Early Phase I this year. The window opens August 17 — earlier than usual — specifically to ease the first-time rush and spread-out support demand.
- Fee relief to your students. Application fees are waived for up to 5 State-approved applications, easing cost barriers for Arkansas families.

### Channels & Tactics

| Timing                 | Message / Content                                                                                                                                     | Channel & Owner                                      |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-launch (early Aug) | Counselor onboarding kit: quick-start guide, 7-step student walkthrough, Trust Center / Triand FAQ, and a printable 10 Point Checklist for Counselors | Email via LEA/district counseling coordinators       |
| Aug 1                  | Early-access announcement: log in, verify Student Rosters and Alignments, and resolve data issues early.                                              | Email + AR ACCESS Portal INFO Center + Resources tab |
| Aug 17 – Sep 30        | Weekly office hours and a counselor helpdesk; classroom-ready flyer and a step-by-step student handout for advisory sessions.                         | Webinars/Video Resources + downloadable Resources    |
| Oct 1 onward           | Submission-window reminders and nudges for students with incomplete My Backpacks; Close-Day tracking per college.                                     | Email + counselor dashboard                          |

### LEA Career Coaches\*

- School-level Career Coach can now access AR ACCESS Portal. They will need to be coded correctly as AR ACCESS Coordinator on ADE Statewide Information System (SIS) Portal.
- Additionally, LEA Insights: Career Coach Module can be leveraged to send invite-based access for Career Coaches by LEA.

### Call to Action

- **Log on from August 1 to verify your Student Roster and Alignments.**
- **Schedule advisory sessions during Aug 17 – Sep 30 to walk seniors through the 7 steps before the October 1 submission window.**

## Audience 2 — High School Senior Students & Families

**Primary objective:** Drive on-time registration and complete submission-ready applications, communicated in a plain, encouraging, student-friendly voice.

### Core Messages

- One application. Many colleges. Apply once through AR ACCESS Portal and reach multiple Arkansas colleges — no repeating the same forms.
- Save on fees. Application fees are waived for up to 5 State-approved applications.
- A stress-free, 7-step game plan: (1) Register, (2) Build your Profile, (3) Claim your identity in the Trust Center, (4) Review & complete My AR ACCESS application, (5) Explore Colleges, (6) Add documents to My Backpack, (7) Submit.
- Your info is protected. Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) secures your account, and transcripts are handled automatically.
- Faster answers. Targeting towards simpler and faster admission processing and notifications.

### Channels & Tactics

| Timing                   | Message / Content                                                                                                               | Channel & Owner                                               |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aug 17 launch (Phase II) | "Apply once, reach many" launch campaign — kickoff assembly announcement, social graphics, and a short how-to video: Resources. | Counselors + school social media + AR ACCESS Portal Resources |
| Aug 17 – Sep 30          | Step-by-step prompts guiding registration, Trust Center claim, and My Backpack uploads; peer + family FAQ.                      | In-portal guidance + INFO Center + email/SMS reminders        |
| Countdown (late Sep)     | "Submissions open Oct 1" countdown; checklist to confirm the application is submission-ready.                                   | Social + counselor advisories + portal banner                 |
| Oct 1 onward             | "Submit your My AR ACCESS application" reminders; nudges for incomplete Backpacks up to each college's Close-Day.               | Email/SMS + portal notifications                              |

### Call to Action

- **Register and complete Steps 1–6 between August 17 and September 30, 2026.**
- **Submit your My AR ACCESS application starting October 1 — and check each college's (IHEs) Close-Day.**

*\* Commissioner's Memo: Minor Update (08/07/2026)*

## Shared Resources & Coordination

### Key links

- [AR ACCESS Portal](#)
  - [Explore Colleges](#)
  - [INFO Center](#)
  - [RESOURCES Tool Kit](#)
  - [10-POINT Checklist](#)
- [Arkansas ACCESS](#)

### Coordination Principles

- Consistency: counselors and students receive the same facts, tailored in tone and depth to their role.
- Sequencing: counselors first (Aug 1), students at Phase II (Aug 17), submissions Oct 1, closing on each college's custom Close-Day.
- Single source of truth: the INFO Center and Resources Toolkit tabs host authoritative guides, FAQs, and downloadable materials referenced across all channels.
- Feedback loop: the Program Office support desk collects issues from counselors and students and feeds fixes back into portal content and FAQs.

## Memo Updates — AR ACCESS Portal

### AR ACCESS Portal - Release Plans\*\* | Updated on August 16, 2026

- ADE Office of Information Technology has created a new page in the form of AR A.C.C.E.S.S. Release Plans to capture and display the on-going requested additional features post-launch from IHEs and LEAs. A total of 45 new change requests has been added as part of July and August release versions: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3.
- Use the link to track the updates using the URL: <https://araccessportal.adhe.edu/info/release-plans>

### AR ACCESS Portal - Release Plans\*\* | Updated on September 08, 2026

- A new dedicated resource in the form of the **7-Steps Application Submission Checklist** has been added on the “Resources tab” for LEAs: Students + Counselors.
  - Access the new resources using the Resources Toolkit module using the URL: [AR ACCESS Portal | Resources](#)
  - ADE Office of Information Technology has created a new page in the form of AR A.C.C.E.S.S. Release Plans to capture and display the on-going requested additional features post-launch from IHEs and LEAs: Counselors + Students. A total of 61 new change requests has been added as part of July; August and, September release versions: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, **1.4**, **1.5**.
  - Use the link to track the updates using the URL: <https://araccessportal.adhe.edu/info/release-plans>
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## Questions and Queries — AR ACCESS Portal

Questions regarding this Commissioner's Memo may be directed to the AR A.C.C.E.S.S. Program Office (Team) via the INFO Center or via E-mail: [ARaccessportal@ADE.Arkansas.Gov](mailto:ARaccessportal@ADE.Arkansas.Gov)



### Issued by the ADE Office of the Secretary

Arkansas Department of Education  
Division of Higher Education  
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