



Newsletter From Rep. Matthew J. Shepherd

District 97

May 2, 2025

2025 Education Legislation

In the 2025 Regular Session, the Arkansas House of Representatives passed a series of impactful laws to improve education statewide, prioritizing students, teachers, and school communities.

We began with Act 909, which boosts per-pupil funding by 5% to \$8,162 for the 2025–2026 school year, including health insurance costs. For 2026–2027, the funding is set at \$8,037, with insurance paid separately. To further support student well-being, Act 123 guarantees all public school students a free breakfast each day, regardless of income.

Creating focused learning environments was another priority. Act 122, the Bell to Bell, No Cell Act, limits student use of personal devices during school hours, reducing distractions. Act 474 places a temporary hold on school letter grade evaluations, allowing time to roll out a new accountability system aligned with the LEARNS Act.

Act 573 requires the display of the Ten Commandments in public school buildings. Act 478 mandates instruction on the moral and religious beliefs of the Founding Fathers, while Act 134 calls for updated social studies standards that compare America’s constitutional republic to other forms of government, including communism and autocracy. Act 400, the Religious Rights at Public Schools Act of 2025, provides clarity on the freedoms afforded to students and staff regarding religious expression.

Teacher support was also addressed. Act 878 increases the classroom supply tax deduction for teachers from \$500 to \$1,000. Literacy efforts received a boost with Act 195, tripling the maximum literacy tutoring grant from \$500 to \$1,500, if funding allows.

Act 229 requires all public schools to provide age-appropriate firearm safety instruction starting in the 2025–2026 school year. The Teacher and Student Protection Act (Act 565) introduces stronger protections against repeated violent or abusive behavior in schools. Additionally, Eli’s Law (Act 908) mandates the installation of audio recording devices in locker rooms by 2027–2028 to enhance student safety.

2025 EDUCATION LEGISLATION

ACT 474 PLACES A TEMPORARY PAUSE ON THE CURRENT LETTER GRADE DESIGNATIONS USED TO EVALUATE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.	ACT 123 GUARANTEES ALL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS RECEIVE ONE FREE BREAKFAST EACH SCHOOL DAY.	ACT 909 INCREASES PUBLIC PER-PUPIL FUNDING TO \$8,162 FOR THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR.
ACT 878 INCREASES THE INCOME TAX DEDUCTION ALLOWED FOR A TEACHER'S CLASSROOM INVESTMENT.	ACT 122 THE BELL TO BELL, NO CELL ACT. BANS STUDENTS FROM USING CELL PHONES AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING SCHOOL HOURS.	