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Accent

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Liberty-Eylau ISD seeks partners to foster academic improvements

MALLORY WYATT
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA, Texas — The Liberty-Eylau Independent School District Board of Trustees on Thursday presented its improvement plan, including announcing organizations could apply to partner with the district to help boost student scores and academic outcomes.

Board President Trevelyan Hodge opened the public hearing, but no one had signed up for comment.

“Through this process, the district will have an option to solicit applications for qualified organizations, such as open-enrollment charter schools, institutions of higher education or nonprofit organizations, seeking to partner with the district to help operate campuses under Texas Education Code section 11.174,” Hodge said.

Hodge said the goal is to design innovative school models and access specialized resources or state benefits.

“Tonight’s hearing is designed to fulfill our commitment to the community, transparency and to gather input from parents, then from community members, regarding the type of school models and partnership our community desires before the

official application window is live,” Hodge said.

Superintendent Jeff Wright said regardless of its accountability score, the district will always seek to improve.

“If we have a 90, we’re still not satisfied, because we want to be in 91, 92, 93. No matter what the scores are, we’re going to continuously work to improve LEISD in every facet that we can,” he said.

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ARKANSAS

Letter grades for schools see improvement

State leaders credit 2025-26 progress to LEARNS Act

JOSH SNYDER
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Letter grades for Arkansas schools and school districts improved in the 2025-26 school year, with more of each receiving A’s and B’s, and fewer receiving F’s, state officials announced on Thursday.

The letter grades, available on the Arkansas Department of Education website, are based on the 2025-26 school year results from the Arkansas Teaching and Learning Assessment System, or ATLAS, which all public school students in grades 3-10 are required to take. Results from the end-of-year-exam, released in June, showed improvements across grade levels and subject areas.

The state’s grading system for schools and districts takes into account how many students are meeting standards in math, science and English language arts on the ATLAS, as well as how many students are demonstrating growth in those areas. It places specific emphasis on the growth of the lowest-performing 25% of students.

For high schools and for school districts, graduation rates are also factored into the letter grades.

This is the second year in which the state has released grades for districts. There were 254 districts in Arkansas in 2025-26, a number that includes open-enrollment charter school networks:

- 26 received A’s, up from 23 in 2024-25;
- 115 received B’s, up from 98 in 2024-25;
- 87 received C’s, down from 98 in 2024-25;
- 17 received D’s, down from 24 in 2024-25; and
- Nine received F’s, down from 11 in 2024-25.

Education Department Secretary Jacob Oliva said 7,800 students are attending a school in the 2026-27 school year that was previously D- or F-rated but now has an A, B or C.

Oliva attributed the higher grades to the LEARNS Act, the K-12 education law Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders championed and signed into law in 2023.

“At the end of the day, LEARNS is working,” Oliva said.

State lawmakers approved changes last year to how letter grades are assigned to public schools and

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Trump announces Medicaid drug-pricing program



President Donald Trump speaks with South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden, from left, Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Mehmet Oz, administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves and Abe Sutton, director of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation, listen during an event about healthcare Friday in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington. President Trump announced that all 50 states will join in on a program set to provide Most Favored Nation pricing to some drugs within the Medicaid program, bringing the net price of selected drugs down to prices paid in certain other countries. The Trump administration claims that Medicaid will save billions on prescription drug costs as a result of the plan, dubbed the Medicaid “GENEROUS” model. Experts say the savings are unclear since the content of the deals isn’t public. See the story on Page 5A. (AP photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

Texarkana man donates restored computers to Salvation Army to help residents find jobs

SHARDA JAMES
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA, Ark. — A local man put his passion for technology to good use, giving unwanted computers a new purpose while helping community members who need access to technology to find work.

“My parents would always tell me, ‘Philip, you need to put your love for technology to good use,’” Philip Judice said.

Judice, owner of Philip’s Computer Repair, said one of his customers recently moved out of state and had 10 computers she no longer needed. Judice said he was unsure what to do with the machines until the customer suggested restoring them and donating them to a shelter.

“I called the Salvation Army, and they were so excited,” Judice said. “I told them, give me about a week and I’ll have them ready.”

Judice was able to restore eight of the 10 computers, but only five could be placed in the computer lab at the Salvation Army Center of Hope because of limited space. Three of them will be used for resume building, and the remaining

See **COMPUTERS**, Page 5A



Billy Restelle, left, and Philip Judice set up one of five computers Tuesday at the Salvation Army Center of Hope in Texarkana, Ark. Judice donated the computers to help residents build resumes, search for jobs and complete other employment-related tasks. (Staff photo by Sharda James)



A commuter is silhouetted against the evening sky in this 2026 photo in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Heat-related illness is on the rise across the United States. (Smiley N. Pool/The Dallas Morning News/TNS)

Study: Climate change may have contributed to a quarter of ER visits for heat-related illness from 2018-25

WILLIAM TONG
THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

DALLAS — Across the country, at least a quarter of emergency room visits for heat-related illness may be attributable to human-caused climate change, researchers from Climate Central, a nonprofit group, estimate in a new study.

Published in the September issue of Climatic Change, a scientific journal, the researchers’ peer-reviewed analysis suggests climate change contributed to about 27% of heat-related ER visits in the U.S. during warm seasons from 2018 through 2025.

Heat-related illness is on the rise across the United States. Yale School of Public Health researchers found that heat-related deaths increased by more than 50% between 2000 and 2020.

“Our healthcare system is pretty strained, when we think of emergency medicine in particular,” said Kristina Dahl, vice president for science at Climate Central. “This data is giving us a baseline that we know we’d be building on if we continue warming our planet.”

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