

2019 Progress Report on Grade-Level Reading in Arkansas

SUMMER 2019

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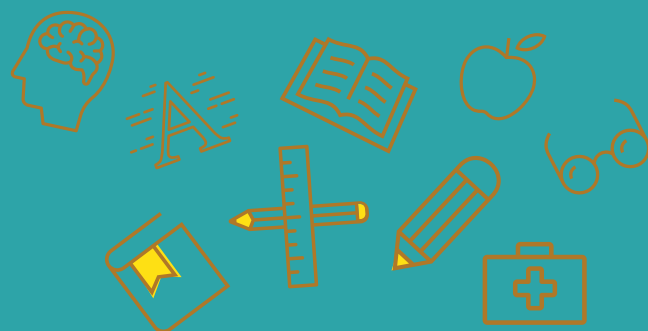
FULL SPEED AHEAD

Moving the Needle on Grade-Level Reading in Arkansas

Progress Report 2019



INTRODUCTION



OUR GOAL: **ALL ARKANSAS CHILDREN WILL READ ON GRADE LEVEL** BY THE END OF THIRD GRADE.

The Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (AR-GLR) was launched in 2011 to move the needle on education outcomes in Arkansas by focusing on third-grade reading proficiency. AR-GLR and its partners have been recognized nationally as an effective model to enhance early literacy outcomes. AR-GLR is a collaborative effort that includes over 25 organizations that believe the only way to make measurable progress on grade-level reading is to work collectively with families, educators, policymakers, and business leaders around the state.

AR-GLR is managed in partnership with Arkansas Community Foundation and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation. AR-GLR is part of the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading that includes more than 390 communities in 44 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Canada.

Why Third Grade?

Third grade is a pivotal point for cognitive development and academic learning. Through third grade, children are **learning to read**. After that, they are **reading to learn**. Children who aren't reading proficiently by this point can fall behind, since they may have trouble comprehending more complicated reading material for history, English, science, and math. **By the end of the 2018-2019 school year, just 38.3 percent of all Arkansas third graders were reading on grade level, according to the ACT Aspire.**¹ For some subgroups of students, the rates are even lower. **Only 21.6 percent of black students were reading on grade level, compared to 43.5 percent of their white peers, a gap which has grown by 2 percent over the past four years.**²

Students who do not master reading by the end of third grade are less likely to graduate high school and pursue higher education and more likely to live in poverty.³



Our Strategies: How We Get There

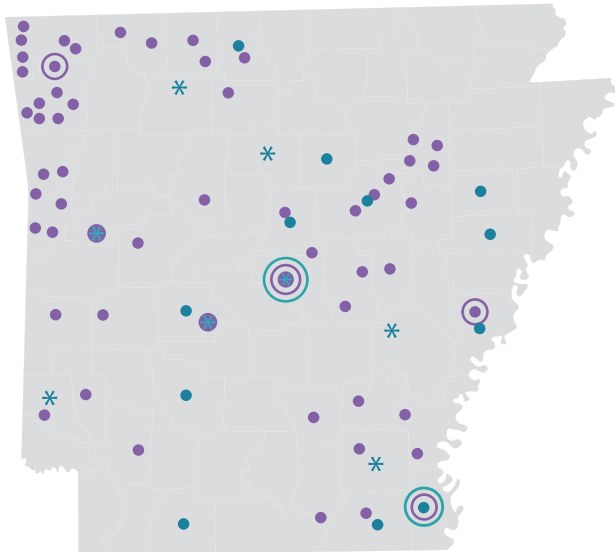
- **Build Local Capacity** – Support local models that increase third-grade reading proficiency through five key impact areas:
 - o Strengthen Family and Community Engagement
 - o Improve School Readiness
 - o Improve Classroom Instruction
 - o Reduce Chronic Absence
 - o Stop Summer Learning Loss
- **Enhance Public Policy** – Develop legislative and administrative policy solutions to increase third-grade reading proficiency.
- **Increase Public Will** – Increase public awareness of the importance of grade-level reading and move key audience - parents, educators, business leaders, and policymakers - from awareness to action.



KEY STRATEGIES

- ✓ BUILD LOCAL CAPACITY
- ✓ ENHANCE PUBLIC POLICY
- ✓ INCREASE PUBLIC WILL

Where We Work



- **Community Solutions Initiative**
Community-school partnerships to engage parents and communities around local grade-level reading challenges
- **Make Every Day Count**
Partnerships with schools and districts to reduce chronic absence
- * **Summer Learning Initiative**
Community-school partnerships to reduce summer learning loss
- **Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing**
Community partnerships to engage parents in their children's vocabulary development
- **Aspire Frameworks**
Partnerships in Arkansas Community Foundation affiliate communities to increase third grade reading levels



WHAT IT TAKES TO HELP CHILDREN READ ON GRADE LEVEL



Family Engagement

Parents, family leaders, and caregivers are a child's first teachers and most important advocates. High-quality home visiting programs provide parents with resources so they can help their children build vocabulary and learn other early literacy skills. Parents can ensure children attend school regularly, keep learning through the summer, and work with Parent Teacher Associations and other community groups to engage and empower families to advocate for all children. Children have the greatest chance at success when all of their needs are addressed comprehensively and in partnership with their families.

Child Health

Three healthy meals a day, a good night's sleep, and a routine and calm atmosphere at home are needed for children to succeed in school. A child with a chronic health issue like asthma or diabetes or who lacks health or dental care may find it difficult to attend school every day or remain focused in the classroom. Children with developmental delays may need additional supports. Children may need help with social and emotional health needs such as learning how to cope, self-regulate, and mediate conflict. Prenatal care, well-child visits, developmental screenings, breakfast and lunch programs, after-school and summer meals programs, and school-based health centers can ensure children are healthy and able to focus on their learning.

School Readiness

Students entering kindergarten with vital skills - vocabulary, letter recognition, number sense, and social-emotional skills - are more likely to read proficiently by the end of third grade. Less than half of Arkansas kindergartners are considered ready for school.⁴ A child's learning begins at birth and happens at home and in early care and education settings. Some children, especially those from low-income backgrounds, have limited access to books and early care programs that prepare them for success in school. In Arkansas almost 40 percent of four-year olds from low-income families do not have access to pre-K.⁵

Classroom Instruction

A child spends six to seven hours a day in the classroom during the academic year. Elementary teachers must be trained in the science of reading and have the skills to implement and use teaching methods that meet the diverse needs of students. As many as one in five students have dyslexia or other learning disabilities. Children should be assessed and provided the support needed to be successful in school.



AS MANY AS **ONE IN FIVE** STUDENTS HAVE DYSLEXIA OR OTHER LEARNING DISABILITIES.

School Attendance

Attendance is critical to academic success. When children attend school regularly in kindergarten, they are more likely to read proficiently by the end of third grade. In Arkansas 16 percent of kindergarteners are chronically absent, which means they miss 10 percent or more of the school year for any reason, including excused absences and suspensions; that is 18 days of school or just two days a month. The rate of chronic absence for students from low-income families is twice as high as those from higher-income families. Black students are also more likely to be chronically absent and Hispanic students are less likely to be chronically absent when compared with their white peers.⁶

Summer Learning

Summer either can be a time of academic enrichment or learning loss for children. By not participating in a high-quality summer program, children risk losing two to three months of reading skills. With a reported average cost of \$234 a week, most available programs are unaffordable for low-income families.⁷ Many programs that are free or low-cost offer USDA-sponsored meals to help address the needs of the whole child—physical, social, emotional, and cognitive.

School Resources

School districts have access to a range of resources that include state formula funding and state and federal funding for English Language Learners and low-income students. School leaders make tough decisions about how to spend those funds, but some leave money unspent, and current allowable expenditures are too broad and not backed by research. As of the end of the 2017-2018 school year, Arkansas school districts had a balance of \$19 million in the state fund designated for low-income students.⁸ Districts that do not spend their available funds effectively may need help building their capacity to do so.

Community Engagement

Schools cannot move the needle on grade-level reading alone. All aspects of the community—businesses, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and individuals—have a role in providing support systems for children and families to succeed. Individuals and organizations in the community can support grade-level reading by increasing public awareness of the importance of literacy; advocating for more resources; volunteering in schools; and supporting early childhood, summer and after-school programs, programs that provide access to books, and efforts to provide access to health care.



2030 MILESTONES



To achieve our goal of all children reading on grade-level by the end of third grade, we have established accountability milestones with AR-GLR partners as our state moves full speed ahead toward third grade reading proficiency for every Arkansas student. For each measure, we have presented a baseline number, current data, and a goal for 2030. In the case of high school graduation, we have set milestones for 2040, as it will take about ten years for third graders in 2030 to reach their senior year in high school. Where possible we have included a breakdown of data points by race and income to identify inequities that should be addressed through our work.

THIRD GRADE READING			
Measure	2015–2016	2018–2019	2030
3rd graders meeting reading readiness benchmark on the state assessment, which is currently the ACT Aspire ⁹	35% (overall) 20% (black) 27% (Hispanic) 40% (white)	38.3% (overall) 21.6% (black) 28.4% (Hispanic) 43.5% (white)	80% (for all sub-groups)
Measure	2015	2017	2030
4th graders reading proficient or above according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress ¹⁰	31% (overall) 17% (black) 23% (Hispanic) 38% (white) 23% (low-income) 43% (higher income) Arkansas ranks 38 out of 52 states	31% (overall) 14% (black) 22% (Hispanic) 39% (white) 23% (low-income) 48% (higher income)	Arkansas ranks in the top 25 states



CHRONIC ABSENCE ¹¹			
Measure Kindergarten students missing 10 percent or more of the school year	2014–2015 16% (overall)	2016–2017 17% (overall)	2030 5% (overall)
Measure Third graders missing 10 percent or more of the school year	2014–2015 10% (overall)	2016–2017 11% (overall)	2030 5% (overall)
Measure Eighth graders missing 10 percent or more of the school year		2016–2017 14% (overall)	2030 5% (overall)
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION ¹²			
Measure High school graduation rate (4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate)	2013–2014 87% (overall) 81% (black) 84% (Hispanic) 89% (white) 83% (low-income) 91% (higher income) Arkansas ranks 20 out of 51 states	2017–2018 89% (overall) 86% (black) 86% (Hispanic) 91% (white) 87% (low-income) 91% (higher income)	2040 94% (overall) Arkansas ranks in the top 10

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS ¹³			
Measure Children on ARKids A and Medicaid receiving a well-child exam	2013 48%	2017 50%	2030 80%
BETTER BEGINNINGS ¹⁴			
Measure Number of child care slots having a Tier 3 or higher Better Beginnings Rating	2014–2015 Infants and Toddlers 6,102 3- and 4-year olds 35,046	2018–2019 Infants and Toddlers 7,481 3- and 4-year olds 36,118	2030 Infants and Toddlers 34,500 3- and 4-year olds 89,000 All slots are Tier 3
Measure Number of Early Head Start and Head Start slots having a Tier 3 or higher Better Beginnings Rating	2014–2015 Early Head Start 1,033 Head Start 5,203	2018–2019 Early Head Start 1,825 Head Start 5,597	2030 Early Head Start 2,303 Head Start 7,430 All slots are Tier 3
HOME VISITING ¹⁵			
Measure Number of funded home visiting slots	2016–2017 6,263	2018–2019 6,693	2030 10,000

SCHOOL YEAR AND SUMMER MEALS ¹⁶			
Measure Percent of eligible districts adopting the Community Eligibility Provision	2016–2017 40%	2018–2019 57%	2030 70%
Measure Statewide ratio of free and reduced-price school breakfast to lunch participation	2016–2017 63.5%	2018–2019 67%	2030 70%
Measure Number of USDA summer meals served	2016 Meals served 2.4 million	2018 Meals served 1.7million	2030 Meals served 3 million
ACCESS TO BOOKS			
Measure Children receiving books through Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library ¹⁷	2014 10,000/month	2019 30,031/month	2030 191,000/month
Measure Children receiving books through Reach Out and Read ¹⁸	2015 40,000	2018 34,000	2030 95,000

SUMMER AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM PARTICIPATION			
Measure Children that participate in an afterschool program ¹⁹	2009 9%	2014 13%	2030 35%
Measure Households with at least one child in a summer learning program ²⁰	2009 17%	2014 21%	2030 30%
NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH ACT EXPENDITURES ²¹			
Measure NSLA Set Aside for Summer/After-school, PreK, and Tutoring	2014 \$0	2018 \$4.3 million	2030 All increases to base funding allocated to summer/after school, pre-K or tutoring
Measure NSLA expenditures on pre-K	2012–2013 \$7.9 million 4.0% of NSLA expenditures	2017–2018 \$8.4 million 3.7% of NSLA expenditures	2030 5% of NSLA expenditures
Measure NSLA expenditures on Tutoring	2012–2013 \$4.0 million 2.0% of NSLA expenditures	2017–2018 \$5.2 million 2.3% of NSLA expenditures	2030 5% of NSLA expenditures
Measure NSLA expenditures on After-school	2012–2013 \$4.3 million 2.2% of NSLA expenditures	2017–2018 \$2.9 million 1.3% of NSLA expenditures	2030 5% of NSLA expenditures

Measure	2012–2013	2017–2018	2030
NSLA expenditures on Summer Learning	\$2.5 million 1.2% of NSLA expenditures	\$2.6million 1.1% of NSLA expenditures	5% of NSLA expenditures
TITLE I EXPENDITURES ²²			
Measure	2014–2015	2017–2018	2030
Title I expenditures on After-school	\$2.8 million 1.82% of Title I expenditures	\$2.8 million 1.75% of Title I expenditures	5% of Title I expenditures
Title I expenditures on pre-K	\$2.2 million 1.44% of Title I expenditures	\$1.9 million .95% of Title I expenditures	5% of Title I expenditures
Title I expenditures on Summer Learning	\$2.4 million 1.57% of Title I expenditures	\$2.4 million 1.18% of Title I expenditures	5% of Title I expenditures
POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ACT			
Measure	2014	2018	2030
Funding for the Positive Youth Development Act	\$0	\$0	\$5 million

EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS



Literacy Instruction Rises to Meet the Needs of Students

The Reading Initiative for Student Excellence (R.I.S.E.) began in 2017 with the commitment to transform literacy instruction in Arkansas. As part of R.I.S.E., the Department of Education is strengthening literacy instruction based on the science of reading by investing in teacher training through R.I.S.E Academies and creating new pathways for teachers to achieve new certifications that are required by law.

At Augusta Elementary, teachers use a science of reading approach that includes multi-sensory techniques and manipulatives during daily extended literacy lessons. Students are taught new phonemes, or the sounds letters or groups of letters make, through hands-on techniques such as looking at three dimensional objects and tracing letters in the air or sand. They use these new skills to decode unfamiliar words by translating groups of letters back into the sounds that they represent.

All kindergarten through second grade teachers in Augusta have attended R.I.S.E. Academies and implement the principles in the classroom by layering resources including Connections: OG in 3D® literacy curriculum; Lexia, a web-based program that offers differentiated literacy instruction; and Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum to reinforce phonemes through auditory training. Teachers have a daily planning period while the students enjoy physical education class.

Complementing their strong literacy instruction, an afterschool program is offered to all students three days a week where students receive academic support from certified teachers, a hot meal, and transportation home.

Arkansas Students See Legislative Wins In and Out of the Classroom

The 2019 legislative session created some key improvements for education for students in Arkansas, including the following.

- To teach literacy based on the science of reading, teachers need appropriate professional development, curriculum, and materials. **Act 83** ensures teachers are trained to teach literacy based on science of reading methods and districts adopt evidence-based curriculum.
- **Act 170** will raise the minimum teacher salary to \$36,000 by 2022. This salary increase will help retain and attract talented educators.



AUGUSTA ELEMENTARY
DIVES DEEP INTO THE
SCIENCE OF READING.



- Beginning in the fall of 2019, Arkansas elementary students will get 40 minutes of recess each day as a result of **Act 641**. Recess helps students focus while they are in the classroom, improves social skills, and reduces childhood obesity.
- **Act 1089** will require a reading assessment and dyslexia screening be given to any young person committed to the Division of Youth Services. If an assessment shows a young person is reading below grade-level they will be provided with evidence-based reading instruction and appropriate dyslexia interventions.

BehaviorHelp for our Little Learners

Social and emotional development are key components of early care and education yet children, disproportionately African Americans and males, are being suspended or expelled rather than being given the opportunity to develop those skills. To reduce this practice in Arkansas, the Arkansas Department of Human Services/Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) convened a workgroup that designed BehaviorHelp. With BehaviorHelp, teachers have a single point of entry for training, technical assistance, and mental health consultation provided by DCCECE, Arkansas State University, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS).

Since 2016 BehaviorHelp has received 644 requests related to challenging behavior, mostly for aggressive or disruptive classroom actions. Eighty-one percent of the children referred were males, and half had experienced trauma such as abuse, neglect, divorce, or parent incarceration. Of the 602 cases that have been closed, only three percent of students were expelled and 86 percent of teachers would recommend the service.

A key component of BehaviorHelp is Project PLAY (Positive Learning for Arkansas' Youngest), funded by DCCECE, which provides free mental health support for the children, teachers, and centers in Arkansas. Early childhood education mental health consultants from UAMS visit centers and classrooms to identify practices and policies that improve care and relationships between children and teachers. Topics include communication with parents, classroom schedules, and challenging child behaviors.

If a teacher has concerns about a specific child's behavior, a consultant from Arkansas State University will provide technical assistance including classroom observations and working with the teacher on strategies to support social and emotional learning and reduce disruptive classroom behavior as well as identify other professional development opportunities.



**BEHAVIORHELP BUILDS
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL
SKILLS AND REDUCES
EXPULSIONS.**



Helping Children Thrive Long Term

Experiencing trauma in the earliest years of life can have an impact on all aspects of development as well as long-term health outcomes. The Arkansas Department of Human Services/Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) is working to address the high rate of children in the state experiencing trauma. A \$3.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families will be used to educate and train parents and staff who work with trauma in children from birth to age five on the long-term effects of trauma.

This funding will be used to streamline work in Arkansas around “adverse childhood experiences” or ACEs, in early childhood education. ACEs are stressful or traumatic events that affect children and have a lasting impact on health and well-being. Nearly 30 percent of children in Arkansas have encountered two or more of these traumatic or stressful events that could impact their lifelong health and well-being, such as language delays, limited coping skills, and cardiovascular disease. This compares to 20 percent of children nationwide.²³ Positive experiences and protective factors can prevent ACEs and reduce the negative long-term impacts of ACEs. “Young children in Arkansas are experiencing trauma at an alarming rate, and it is critically important that we train early childhood staff and others to help children process and overcome these traumas,” said DCCECE Director Tonya Williams.

SafeCare: Strengthening Parenting Skills Through Home Visiting

A safe and healthy home environment is critical to the emotional, physical, and rapid brain development that occurs during a child’s early years. With the goal of strengthening families so children can safely remain at home and families can be more resilient while also preventing entry into foster care, the Arkansas Department of Human Services/Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) partnered with Arkansas Children’s Hospital Arkansas Home Visiting Network to launch SafeCare.

SafeCare serves families with children under the age of six by providing a specially-trained home visitor to strengthen parent-child interaction, home safety, and child health. In up to 18 weekly visits, a home visitor assists parents in providing structure and routines as well as keeping children as healthy as possible and knowing when symptoms require a doctor or emergency room visit. Parents are also provided with books, thermometers, child safety locks, and other tools to create a safe home environment.

The evidence-based program is funded by Medicaid and if followed properly and consistently, should result in increased child safety, improved parent-child communication and problem solving, and reduced physical abuse and neglect. So far, the program has launched in five of the 10 DCFS regions, with plans to be statewide by the end of 2019.



For more examples of progress, go to www.ar-qlr.net/solutions/bright-spots.



CALL TO ACTION

Achieving the goal of all Arkansas children reading on grade level by the end of third grade will require families, educators, business leaders, and policymakers to come together with shared determination. Everyone has a role to play.

<p>Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk, read, and sing to your children from birth, to support early brain development and strong vocabularies. • Bring more books into your home by enrolling your children in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library. • As children are learning to read, ask them to read aloud to you each day. • Make sure children are in school every day, except when they are sick, even in pre-K and kindergarten, when the foundations of reading are being taught. • Access free and affordable resources such as public library summer reading programs to keep children reading over the summer. 	<p>Educators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create welcoming environments where parents see staff that look like them and speak their language. • Provide increased professional development opportunities for educators and curriculum based on the science of reading and implement with fidelity. • Use data-driven practices to differentiate instruction so that all children learn to read. • Use attendance data to identify children who are at risk of being chronically absent and develop proactive strategies for keeping them in school. • Partner and pool resources with nonprofits to provide summer learning programs.
<p>Business Leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support AR-GLR by contributing to the fund housed at the Arkansas Community Foundation. • Expand programs like Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library and Reach Out and Read that provide books for families to read at home. • Support public investment in quality pre-K, science of reading based reading instruction, and afterschool and summer learning programs. 	<p>Policymakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support increased investment to raise the quality of early care and education programs, and make them accessible to more children. • Ensure that all teachers are trained in the science of reading and schools and districts implement curriculum with fidelity. • Provide financial resources for summer learning programs.

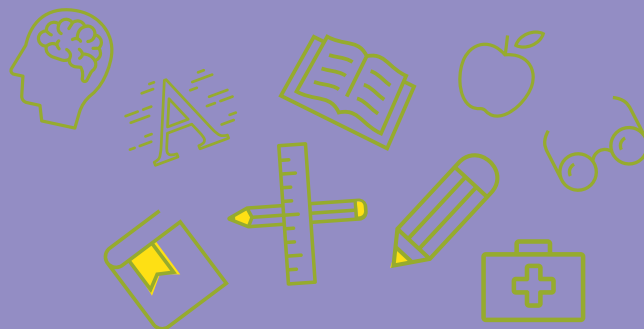
Learn how you can do your part for the Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

Web: www.ar-glr.net

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ENDNOTES

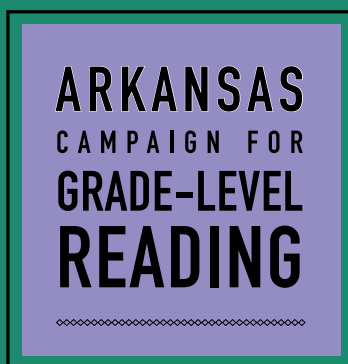


- 1 2018 - 2019 ACT Aspire Preliminary Scores. <http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/learning-services/student-assessment/test-scores/year?y=2019>
- 2 2018 - 2019 ACT Aspire Preliminary Scores. <http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/learning-services/student-assessment/test-scores/year?y=2019>
- 3 Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families' analysis of Arkansas school attendance data.
- 4 Analysis of Qualls Early Learning Inventory data.
- 5 ForwARd Arkansas analysis of data provided by Arkansas Head Start, Arkansas Department of Education and American Community Survey.
- 6 Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families' analysis of Arkansas school attendance data.
- 7 Afterschool Alliance, "America After 3PM": http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/detail.html#s/AR/summer/p_of_children_in_programs_2014
- 8 Analysis of Arkansas Department of Education expenditure data for NSLA funds in 2017-2018.
- 9 Arkansas Department of Education: <http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/learning-services/student-assessment/test-scores/year?y=2016> and <http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/learning-services/student-assessment/test-scores/year?y=2019>
- 10 National Center for Education Statistics: <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2015/pdf/2016008AR4.pdf> and Arkansas Department of Education: http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/Learning_Services/NAEP/NAEP_2017_update_AR.PDF
- 11 Analysis of ADE data by Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
- 12 Arkansas Department of Education, <https://adesandbox.arkansas.gov/project?v=fMTc0ZjVhNzJiMDY0MD-kzMGJjOWQzN2ZmNGRkYzkzMTI>
- 13 Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services: <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/benefits/epsdt/index.html>
- 14 DHS, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office
- 15 Arkansas Home Visiting Network
- 16 Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance analysis of ADE and DHS data
- 17 Arkansas Imagination Library
- 18 Reach Out and Read Arkansas
- 19 http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Special_Report_on_Summer_052510.pdf and America After 3PM Summer Learning, Arkansas Findings
- 20 http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Special_Report_on_Summer_052510.pdf and America After 3PM Summer Learning, Arkansas Findings
- 21 AR-GLR analysis of NSLA expenditure
- 22 AR-GLR Analysis of data provided by ADE; Funds used for After-school programming may include tutoring.
- 23 Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, National Survey of Children's Health, Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health.

AR-GLR PARTNERS



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