



For more information, contact:  
Angela Duran, Campaign Director  
aduran@ar-qlr.net  
Web: [www.ar-qlr.net](http://www.ar-qlr.net)  
Twitter: @ArkansasQLR  
Facebook: ARGradeLevelReading

# FULL SPEED AHEAD

2018 Progress Report on Grade-Level Reading in Arkansas

SPRING 2018



# INTRODUCTION



## OUR GOAL IS THAT **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 Advocates for Children and Families, Arkansas Community Foundation, and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation. AR-GLR is part of the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading that includes over 360 communities in 43 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 2016-2017 school year, just 37 percent of all Arkansas third graders were reading on grade level, according to the ACT Aspire.**<sup>1</sup> For some subgroups of students, the rates are even lower. **Only 22 percent of black students and 29 percent of Hispanic students were reading on grade level, compared to 42 percent of their white peers.**<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>



## Our Strategies: How We Get There

### Key strategies of the campaign include:

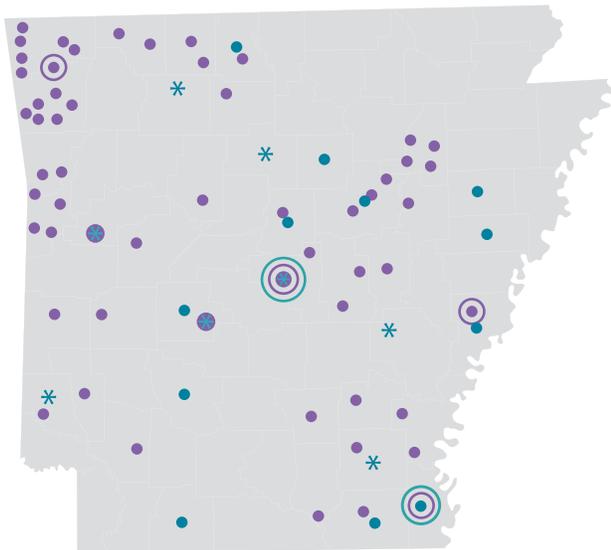
- **Build Local Capacity** - Support local models that increase third-grade reading proficiency through five key impact areas:
  - o Strengthen Family and Community Engagement
  - o Improve School Readiness
  - o Improve Classroom Instruction
  - o Reduce Chronic Absence
  - o Stop Summer Learning Loss
- **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



## 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 than their white peers.<sup>6</sup>

## 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. **Only 21 percent of Arkansas students have access to high-quality programs.** With a reported average cost of \$234 a week, most available programs are unaffordable for low-income families.<sup>7</sup> 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 2016-2017 school year, **Arkansas school districts had a balance of \$20.2 million in the state fund designated for low-income students.**<sup>8</sup> 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 and ACT scores, we have set milestones for 2040, as it will take about ten years for 3rd graders in 2030 to reach their senior year in high school. Where possible we have included a breakdown of data points by race and family to identify inequities that should be addressed through our work.

THIRD GRADE READING			
Measure	2015–2016	2016–2017	2030
3rd graders meeting reading readiness benchmark on the state assessment, which is currently the ACT Aspire	35% (overall) 20% (black) 27% (Hispanic) 40% (white)	37% (overall) 22% (black) 29% (Hispanic) 42% (white)	80%
4th graders reading proficient or above according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress	2015 31% (overall) 17% (black) 23% (Hispanic) 38% (white) 23% (low-income) 43% (higher income) <sup>9</sup>  Arkansas ranks 38 out of 52 states	2017 31% (overall) 14% (black) 22% (Hispanic) 39% (white) 23% (low-income) 48% (higher income) <sup>10</sup>  Arkansas ranks 39 out of 52 states	2030 Arkansas ranks in the top 25 states



CHRONIC ABSENCE <sup>11</sup>			
Measure	2014–2015	2016–2017	2030
Kindergarten students missing 10 percent or more of the school year	16%	17%	5%
Third graders missing 10 percent or more of the school year	10%	11%	5%
Eighth graders missing 10 percent or more of the school year		14%	5%
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION			
Measure	2013–2014	2015–2016	2030
High school graduation rate (4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate)	87% (overall) 81% (black) 84% (Hispanic) 89% (white) 83% low-income 91% (higher income) <sup>12</sup>	85% (overall) 78% (black) 85% (Hispanic) 87% (white) 82% (low-income) 91% (higher income) <sup>13</sup>	94%
	Arkansas ranks 20 out of 51 states	Arkansas ranks 25 out of 51 states	Arkansas ranks in the top 10

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS <sup>14</sup>			
Measure	2013	2016	2030
Children on ARKids A and Medicaid receiving a well-child exam	48%	48%	80%
BETTER BEGINNINGS <sup>15</sup>			
Measure	2014–2015	2016–2017	2030
Number of child care slots having a Tier 3 or higher Better Beginnings Rating	Infants and Toddlers 6,102	Infants and Toddlers 8,123	Infants and Toddlers 34,500
	3- and 4-year olds 35,046	3- and 4-year olds 41,470	3- and 4-year olds 89,000
			All slots are Tier 3
Measure	2014–2015	2016–2017	2030
Number of Early Head Start and Head Start slots having a Tier 3 or higher Better Beginnings Rating	Early Head Start 1,033	Early Head Start 1,394	Early Head Start 2,303
	Head Start 5,203	Head Start 6,218	Head Start 7,430
			All slots are Tier 3
HOME VISITING			
Measure	2016–2017	2017–2018	2030
Number of funded home visiting slots	6,263	7,817	10,000

ACCESS TO BOOKS			
<b>Measure</b> Children receiving books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library <sup>16</sup>	<b>2014</b> 10,000/month	<b>2017</b> 20,000/month	<b>2030</b> 191,000/month
<b>Measure</b> Children receiving books through Reach Out and Read <sup>17</sup>	<b>2015</b> 40,000	<b>2017</b> 40,000	<b>2030</b> 95,000
SCHOOL YEAR AND SUMMER MEALS <sup>18</sup>			
<b>Measure</b> Percent of eligible districts adopting the Community Eligibility Provision	<b>2016–2017</b> 40%	<b>2017–2018</b> 57%	<b>2030</b> 62%
<b>Measure</b> Statewide ratio of free and reduced-price school breakfast to lunch participation	<b>2016–2017</b> 63.5%	<b>2017–2018</b> 67%	<b>2030</b> 70%
<b>Measure</b> Number of USDA summer meals served	<b>2016</b> Meals served 2.4 million	<b>2017</b> Meals served 1.4 million	<b>2030</b> Meals served 3 million

**SUMMER AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM PARTICIPATION**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2030</b>
Children that participate in an afterschool program <sup>19</sup>	9%	13%	35%
Households with at least one child in a summer learning program <sup>20</sup>	17%	21%	30%

**NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH ACT EXPENDITURES**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2030</b>
NSLA Set Aside for Summer/After-school, PreK, and Tutoring	\$0	\$4.3 million	All increases to base funding allocated to summer/after school, pre-K or tutoring
<b>Measure</b> NSLA expenditures on pre-K	<b>2012–2013</b> \$7.9 million 4.0% of NSLA expenditures	<b>2016–2017</b> \$6.9 million 3.1% of NSLA expenditures	<b>2030</b> 5% of NSLA expenditures
<b>Measure</b> NSLA expenditures on Tutoring	<b>2012–2013</b> \$4.0 million 2.0% of NSLA expenditures	<b>2016–2017</b> \$3.8 million 1.7% of NSLA expenditures	<b>2030</b> 5% of NSLA expenditures
<b>Measure</b> NSLA expenditures on After-school	<b>2012–2013</b> \$4.3 million 2.2% of NSLA expenditures	<b>2016–2017</b> \$4.3 million 1.9% of NSLA expenditures	<b>2030</b> 5% of NSLA expenditures

<b>Measure</b> NSLA expenditures on Summer Learning	<b>2012–2013</b> \$2.5 million 1.2% of NSLA expenditures	<b>2016–2017</b> \$2.4 million 1.1% of NSLA expenditures	<b>2030</b> 5% of NSLA expenditures
<b>TITLE I EXPENDITURES<sup>21</sup></b>			
<b>Measure</b> Title I expenditures on After-school	<b>2014–2015</b> \$2.8 million 1.82% of Title I expenditures	<b>2016–2017</b> \$2.8 million 1.82% of Title I expenditures	<b>2030</b> 5% of Title I expenditures
<b>Measure</b> Title I expenditures on pre-K	<b>2014–2015</b> \$2.2 million 1.44% of Title I expenditures	<b>2016–2017</b> \$1.9 million 1.23% of Title I expenditures	<b>2030</b> 5% of Title I expenditures
<b>Measure</b> Title I expenditures on Summer Learning	<b>2014–2015</b> \$2.4 million 1.57% of Title I expenditures	<b>2016–2017</b> \$2.4 million 1.52% of Title I expenditures	<b>2030</b> 5% of Title I expenditures
<b>POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ACT</b>			
<b>Measure</b> Funding for the Positive Youth Development Act	<b>2014</b> \$0	<b>2017</b> \$0	<b>2030</b> \$5 million

# EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS



## Seeing Reading Scores RISE

The Arkansas Department of Education launched R.I.S.E. (Reading Initiative for Student Excellence) in January 2017 to emphasize the importance of building a culture of reading, increase access to books at home, educate parents about the importance of reading, and increase professional development for educators on how to teach reading.

More than 350 schools have been named R.I.S.E. schools and strengthened core reading instruction by participating in the R.I.S.E. Academy or offering another pathway for teachers to learn the science of reading. Ten of these schools received the 2018 Outstanding R.I.S.E. Arkansas School Award. These schools are already seeing an increase in reading scores, with three schools showing double-digit gains for the 2015-2016 third grade class on the 2017 ACT Aspire: Asbell Elementary in Fayetteville, Midland Elementary, and Poyen Elementary.

The first R.I.S.E. Academies were in summer of 2017, when kindergarten through second grade teachers learned how to integrate phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and, comprehension in their reading instruction. In 2018, trainings will be available for third through sixth grade teachers.



THREE R.I.S.E. SCHOOLS  
HAD **DOUBLE-DIGIT**  
**GAINS** IN READING  
SCORES.

## Moving the Needle on Chronic Absence Leads to State Policy Change

In 2013, AR-GLR partnered with Attendance Works to create a learning community around chronic absence for schools and districts in three of our five Community Solutions Initiative communities: Marvell-Elaine, Pulaski County, and Springdale. We provided them with research on the impact and prevalence of chronic absence, tools for calculating their schools' chronic absence rates, and strategies for reducing those rates. Based on early success reducing chronic absence in those districts, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) invited AR-GLR and Attendance Works in 2016 to extend the learning community to districts around the state. By spring 2018, 55 districts had analyzed their chronic absence data and developed plans for reducing their chronic absence rates.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the federal legislation that replaced No Child Left Behind. One of the requirements of the new law is that states include a School Quality/Student Success (SQ/SS) indicator in their accountability plans. Based on the successful use of chronic absence measures by a fifth of the districts in the state, ADE proposed to the U.S.



Department of Education that chronic absence be one of the SQ/SS indicators. Arkansas received approval of its plan in January 2018. Every school in the state will now track chronic absence and be able to use the data as an early warning indicator to reach students who are likely to fall behind academically.

## **Increasing Access to Early Intervention and Behavioral Health Services for Young Children**

Several new initiatives in Arkansas promise an increase in screenings to identify developmental delays and behavioral issues for children and services to meet those children's needs.

The Arkansas Home Visiting Network (AHVN) administers developmental screenings for children in the families they serve. AHVN has partnered with First Connections, which provides supports and services for families and their children, birth to age three with developmental delays. Now families identified by screeners as needing services will be linked to First Connections.

The Behavioral Health Transformation at the Department of Human Services created a new service array for children from birth to age three, which increases the chance a child will be appropriately diagnosed and referred for evidence-based treatment. One of the new services offered allows for Medicaid reimbursement of dyadic treatment of children with their parents or caregivers. The Behavioral Health Transformation package received legislative approval in 2016, and implementation began in July 2017.

Early childhood education programs have been able to build their capacity related to social and emotional health as part of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences' Project Play. Licensed mental health professionals provide training to child care and pre-K teachers and administrators on behavior management, child development, and mental health as well as supporting individual children and families with screening and referrals.

## **Feeding Kids with Community Eligibility Provision**

The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance works with districts across the state to make sure children are well-nourished and ready to learn by participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). This provision allows high-need schools to serve a free breakfast and lunch to all students. Participating schools no longer need to collect and process applications for free and reduced lunch, so many realize administrative cost savings in addition to eliminating the stigma for students receiving a free lunch, or a family not qualifying for a free meal but not being able to afford lunch every day. Currently 57 percent of eligible districts in Arkansas have adopted CEP.

It takes more than lunch for a student to learn, but some districts who adopted the program in 2015-2016 saw significant improvement in their reading scores the next year. Nevada School District and Bradford School District increased the percentage of third graders scoring ready in reading on the ACT Aspire by 32% and 27%, respectively. Fourth graders scoring ready in reading rose 13% in both Drew Central School District and Mineral Springs School District.



**MEDICAID NOW  
COVERS BEHAVIORAL  
HEALTH SERVICES  
FOR INFANTS AND  
TODDLERS AND THEIR  
CAREGIVERS.**



## Springdale Named All-America City

In June 2017, the City of Springdale earned the prestigious All-America City Award for its community-wide civic engagement efforts to help more young children achieve grade-level reading proficiency and early school success. Springdale was one of just 15 communities nationwide to win the award from the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the National Civic League.

Through community-wide partnerships, Springdale has:

- Reduced chronic absenteeism rates by nearly 70 percent at Monitor and Parson Hills elementary schools. Both elementary schools informed parents about the importance of good attendance, monitored attendance data for patterns and trends, established a positive and engaging school climate, and reached out to parents personally when a student missed school.
- Increased the percentage of rising first through fourth graders not losing ground over the summer from 81 percent in 2014-2015 to 89 percent in 2015-2016. Through Feed Your Brain, students have the opportunity to read bilingual books and learn reading techniques to encourage learning over the summer months.
- Increased parent engagement through Parents Taking Leadership Action, which provides parents interactive lessons in their native language aimed at strengthening parent-school communication, increasing educational awareness, and enhancing the leadership potential of parents from diverse populations.

## Keeping Kids Learning During the Summer

The Summer Learning Initiative (SLI), funded by Arkansas Community Foundation, provides grants to innovative summer learning programs around the state run by nonprofit-school partnerships that increase reading proficiency for children in pre-K through third grade. The Arkansas Out of School Network, one of AR-GLR's key summer learning partners, provides technical assistance to the grantees and connects them to the broader network of summer and afterschool programs. In 2017, five programs around the state received grants as part of the SLI: Booneville School District, Mount Judea Area Alliance, Hot Springs Family YMCA, Ouachita Children's Center/ Hot Springs School District, and Park Avenue Elementary School in Stuttgart.

At Park Avenue Elementary School in Stuttgart, more than 100 incoming kindergarten through fourth grade students took part in a five-week long summer learning camp. Students who did not attend pre-K or who were assessed as reading one to two grades below grade level were invited to attend the camp, which focused on both literacy and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math). On average, students increased their reading scores over the summer. Incoming first graders increased their scores between the end of the school year and the end of the summer camp by 14 percent, and incoming second graders increased their scores by 11 percent.



For more examples of progress, go to [www.ar-qlr.net/solutions/bright-spots](http://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><b>Families</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talk, read, and sing to your children from birth, to support early brain development and strong vocabularies.</li><li>• Bring more books into your home by enrolling your children in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library.</li><li>• As children are learning to read, ask them to read aloud to you each day.</li><li>• 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.</li><li>• Access free and affordable resources such as public library summer reading programs to keep children reading over the summer.</li></ul>	<p><b>Educators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create welcoming environments where parents see staff that look like them and speak their language.</li><li>• Provide increased professional development opportunities for educators on how to teach reading, raising the quality of instruction for all children.</li><li>• Use data-driven practices to differentiate instruction so that all children learn to read.</li><li>• Use attendance data to identify children who are at risk of being chronically absent and develop proactive strategies for keeping them in school.</li><li>• Partner and pool resources with nonprofits to provide summer learning programs.</li></ul>
<p><b>Business Leaders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support AR-GLR by contributing to the fund housed at the Arkansas Community Foundation.</li><li>• Expand programs like Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library and Reach Out and Read that provide books for families to read at home.</li><li>• Support public investment in quality pre-K, evidence-based reading instruction, and afterschool and summer learning programs.</li></ul>	<p><b>Policymakers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support increased investment to raise the quality of existing pre-K programs, and make them accessible to more children.</li><li>• Ensure that all teachers are trained in evidence-based practices for teaching reading.</li><li>• Provide financial resources for summer learning programs.</li></ul>

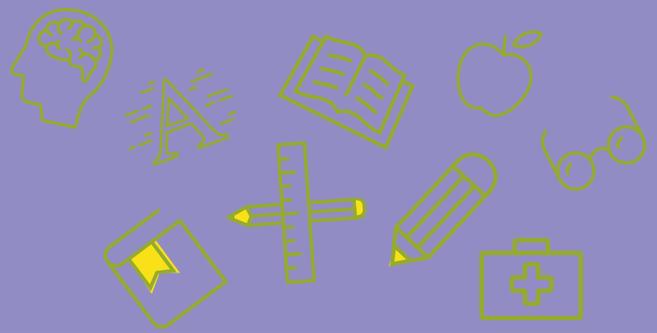
**Learn how you can do your part for the Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.**

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# ENDNOTES

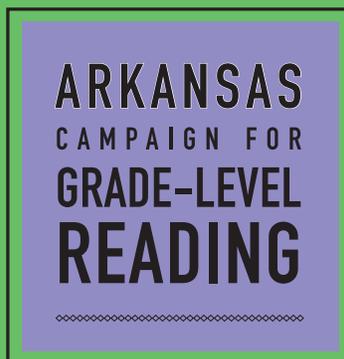


- 1 Arkansas Department of Education: <http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/learning-services/student-assessment/test-scores/year?y=2017>
- 2 2017 ACT Aspire Subject Proficiency by Demographics Report
- 3 Alliance for Excellent Education: [http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Arkansas\\_econ.pdf](http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Arkansas_econ.pdf)
- 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](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 2016-2017
- 9 National Center for Education Statistics: <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2015/pdf/2016008AR4.pdf>
- 10 Arkansas Department of Education: [http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/Learning\\_Services/NAEP/NAEP\\_2017\\_update\\_AR.PDF](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 National Center for Education Statistics: [https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR\\_RE\\_and\\_characteristics\\_2013-14.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR_RE_and_characteristics_2013-14.asp)
- 13 National Center for Education Statistics: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16\\_219.46.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_219.46.asp)
- 14 Analysis of DHS data by Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
- 15 DHS, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office
- 16 Arkansas Imagination Library
- 17 Reach Out and Read Arkansas
- 18 Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance analysis of ADE and DHS data
- 19 Afterschool Alliance: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2014/AR-AA3PM-2014-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
- 20 Afterschool Alliance: [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Special\\_Report\\_on\\_Summer\\_052510.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Special_Report_on_Summer_052510.pdf) and America After 3PM Summer Learning, Arkansas Findings
- 21 AR-GLR Analysis of data provided by ADE; Funds used for After-school programming may include tutoring

# AR-GLR PARTNERS



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