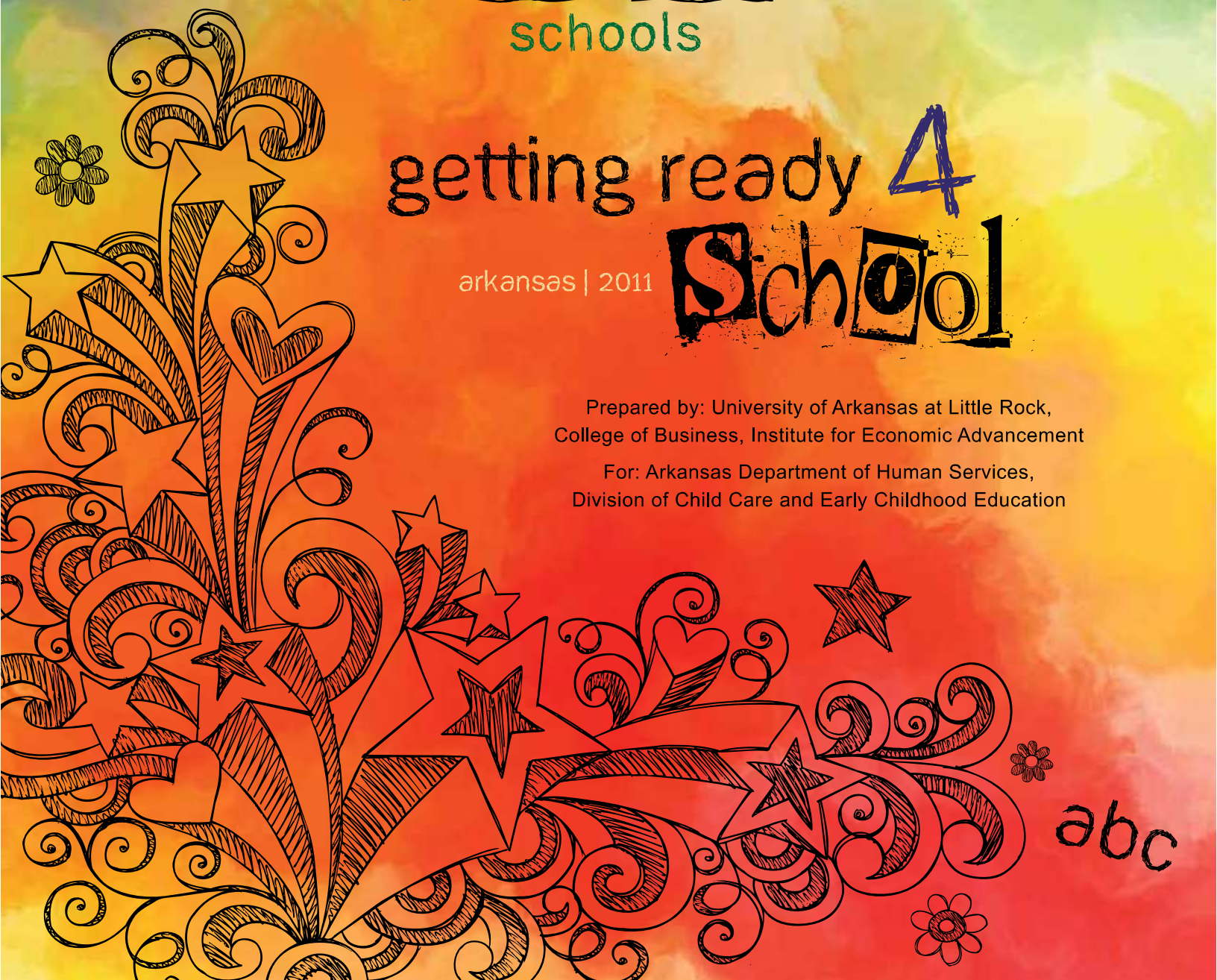
getting ready 4 School

arkansas | 2011

Prepared by: University of Arkansas at Little Rock,
College of Business, Institute for Economic Advancement

For: Arkansas Department of Human Services,
Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education



Getting Ready for School

Children, Families, Schools, Communities
Arkansas, 2011

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ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF
Human Services
Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education

preface

With the increased awareness that children need to start school ready to learn, we continue to track the School Readiness Indicators that were developed in 2003 by the Arkansas School Readiness Initiative Team. As part of a 17 state initiative, these indicators were identified in order to change policies so we may have ready children, families, schools, and communities. The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative was sponsored by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and the Ford Foundation.

Arkansas' School Readiness Indicators are continually collected and updated. The regular tracking of these indicators enables policymakers and community leaders to identify areas most in need of intervention, track the results of investments, and monitor trends over time. These indicators are presented as a dynamic and ever-improving set of measurements to monitor child outcomes and tell the story of successes as well as areas that need improvement.

These data provide reliable measures with which the state's families, legislative leaders, educators, and communities may continue to track and pursue strategies that will move us toward the goal of *Getting Ready for School*.

acknowledgements

The thematic maps were created by the UALR GIS Applications Laboratory, 501-569-8530.

Other staff members at the Institute for Economic Advancement who contributed time, effort, and skills to this report are Siobhan Bartley, Inderpreet Singh Farmahan, and Susan Jackson, who designed the publication.

ready Children

A healthy child is ready to learn. Even before birth, opportunities exist to ensure the health of the child and the mother. To thrive, a child needs a healthy start in life with someone providing the necessary elements to ensure the future. A child needs the proper care provided by the family. However, a child can also benefit from the experiences provided through high quality early childhood programs and services.

The age at which adults become parents is a contributing factor in child well-being. In Arkansas, birth to teens, age 11-17, continues to decline from 2,153 in 2000 to 1,764 in 2009. The rate per 1,000 females also declined, from 16.1 in 2000 to 13.3 in 2009.

The ARKids First program is a state sponsored insurance program to assist families in providing children with access to comprehensive health and mental health services and preventative care. The ARKids First program increased its enrollment by 175.8 percent between 2000 and 2010 to a total of 345,446. According to the Census Bureau's *Current Population Survey*, 50.2 percent of the children under 19 in Arkansas were at or below 200 percent of poverty in 2009. Of those children, 85.5 percent have health insurance compared to 84.3 percent for the U.S. This is an indication of the effectiveness of this program.

The Child Care Voucher program is a federal program which assists low-income working families with the cost of child care. Arkansas' Child Care Voucher program serving Low-Income Working Families had a decrease in families served and a 0.8 percent increase in children served in those families from 2000 to 2009. The Transitional Employment Assistance program saw declines in both families and children served since 2000.

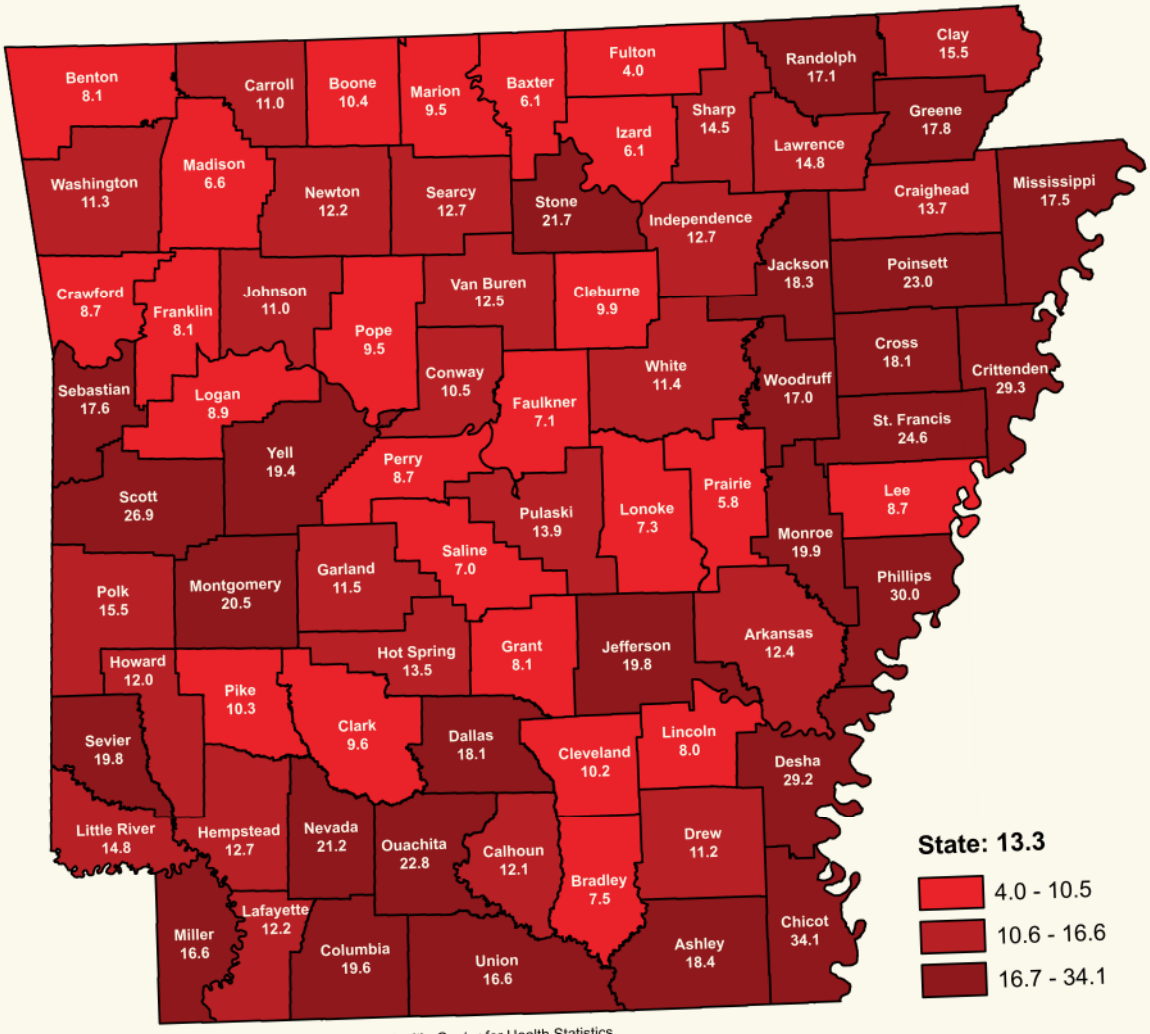
The capacity of Child Care Licenses has grown for all types, especially in centers licensed for school-age children, where capacity increased 87.4 percent since 2001. Also, more licensees are meeting state early childhood accreditation/quality approval standards. These standards ensure quality programs for young children. The capacity meeting these standards was 43,659 in 2009, or 24.9 percent of the total licensed capacity. This is an increase of 60.3 percent since 2003.

The Arkansas Better Chance program was initiated in 1991 to offer high quality early education services to children 0-5 years of age exhibiting developmental and socioeconomic risk factors. In 2003 the Arkansas General Assembly funded an expansion of the ABC program, titled Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABCSS), over several years to serve low-income three- and four-year old children in areas at high risk for academic failure. The first installment of ABCSS funding occurred during 2004-2005. As a result, the number of children served grew at a rate of 13.5 percent per year over a six-year period to a total of 26,385 enrolled in 2009-2010.

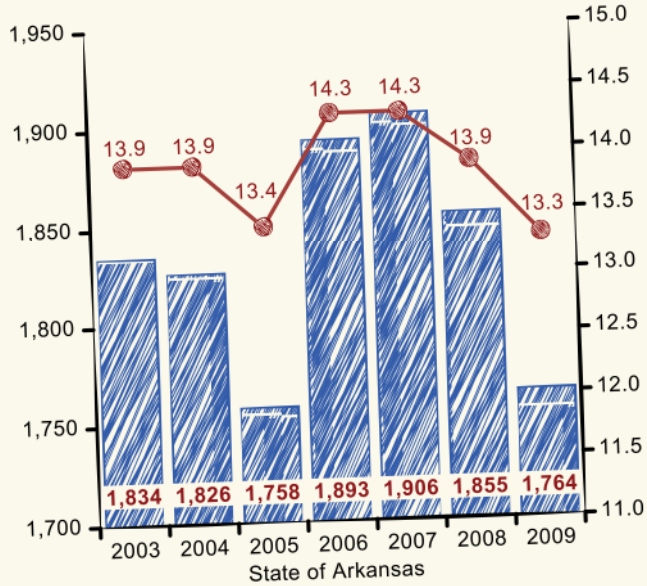
Birth to Teens,

2009

(Rate per 1000 females age 11-17)



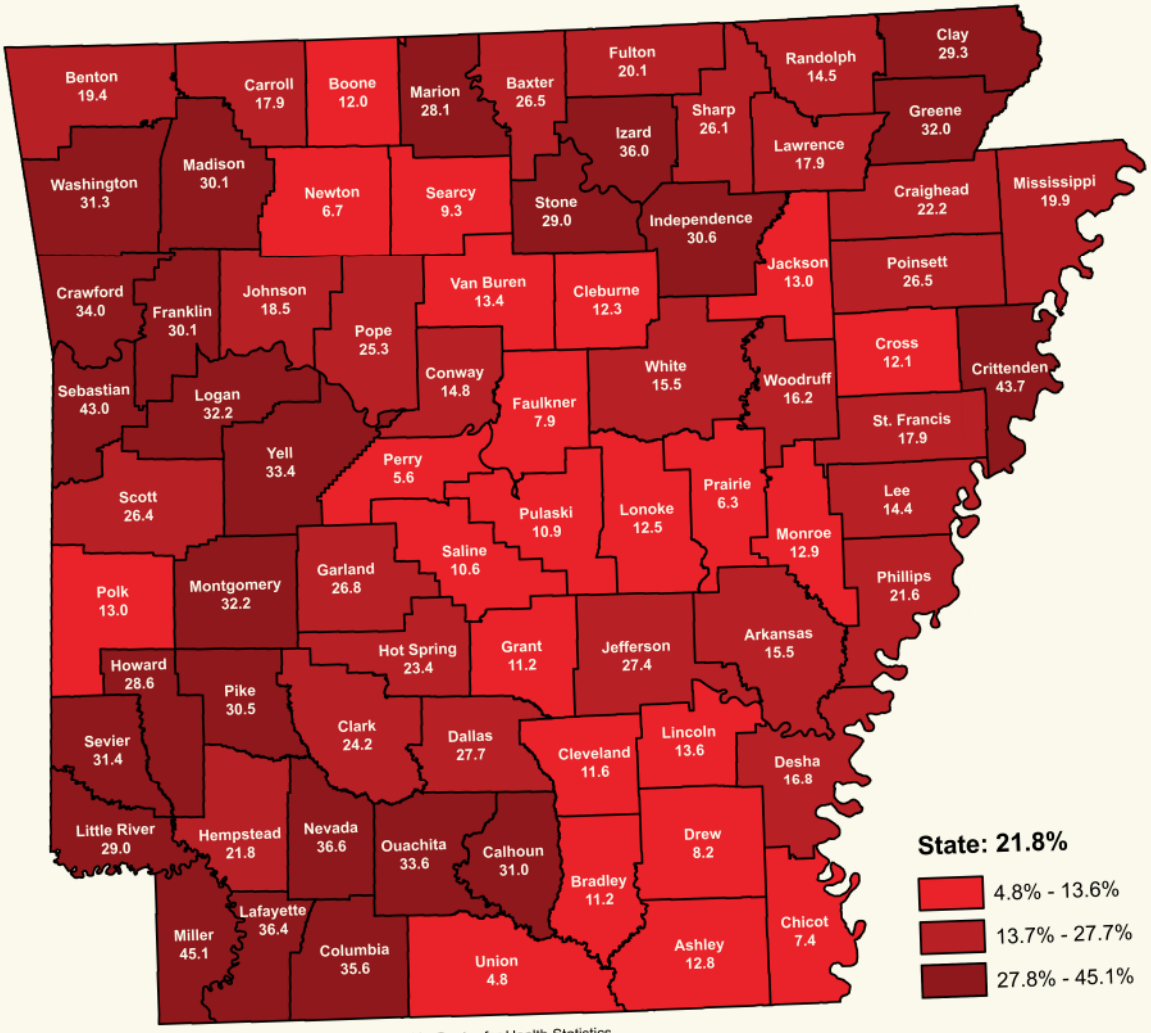
Source: Arkansas Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics



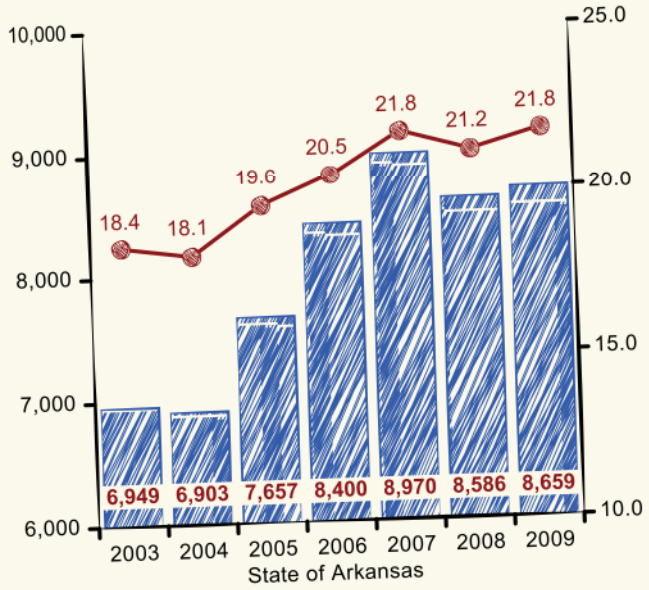
No Prenatal Care During First Pregnancy Trimester,

Percent of All Births, by County: 2009

(Percent of all births in which the mother did not begin prenatal care during the first three months of pregnancy)



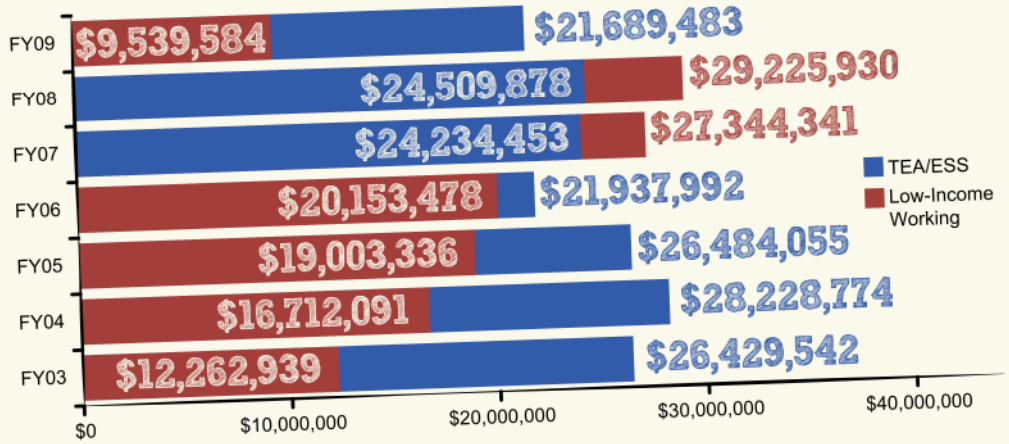
Source: Arkansas Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics



Child Care Voucher Program,

State Fiscal Year 2009

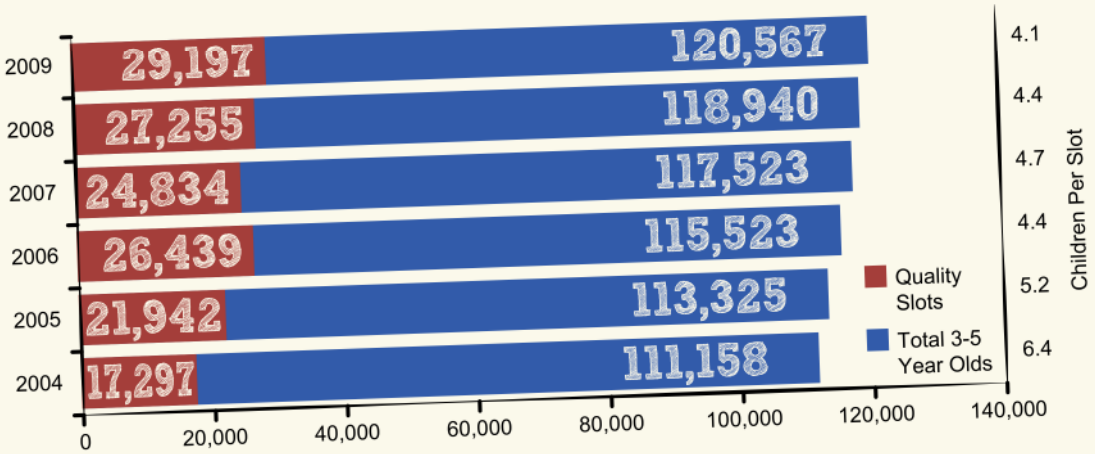
	Children	Families	Amount
TEA/ESS	13,379	7,442	$21,689,483
Low-Income Working	7,079	3,926	$9,539,584
Foster Care	2,379	983	$3,426,585
Protective Services	406	228	$509,353



Child Care Licenses,

2009

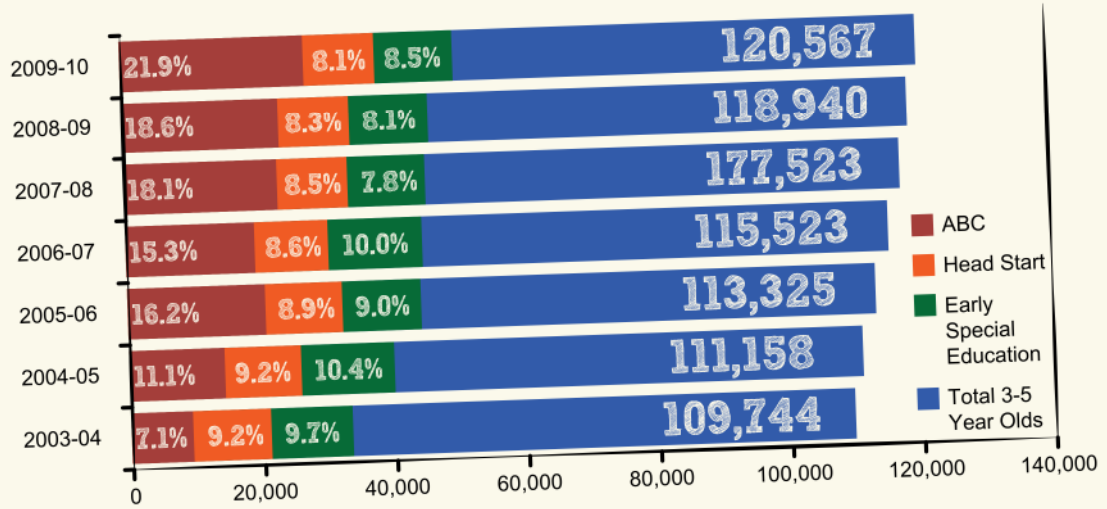
	Licensed		Capacity Meeting Quality Standards		Children Per Licensed Slot		Children Per Quality Slot	
	Number	Capacity						
Preschool Centers	1,787	85,352	29,197	34.2%	Age 0-13	3.2	Age 0-13	12.7
Infant/Toddler Centers	1,042	33,041	5,618	17.0%			Age 0-4	5.8
School Age Centers	704	48,484	8,468	17.5%			Age 5-13	41.2
Day Care Family Homes	713	8,227	376	4.6%				
Total Licenses	4,246	175,104	43,659	24.9%				

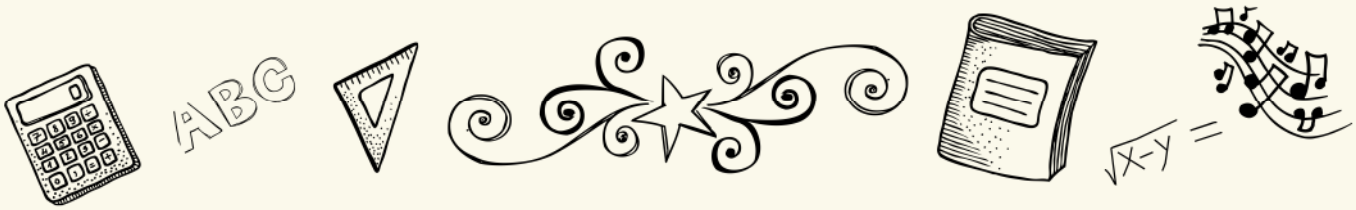


Number of Children Served at Any Time During the Program Year,

(Not full-time equivalent)

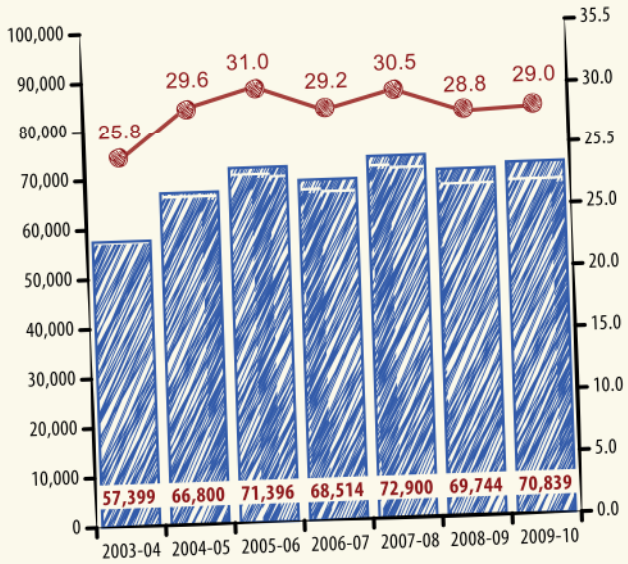
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
ABC	7,745	12,333	18,316	17,678	21,321	22,067	26,385
Head Start	10,138	10,192	10,130	9,950	9,950	9,833	9,709





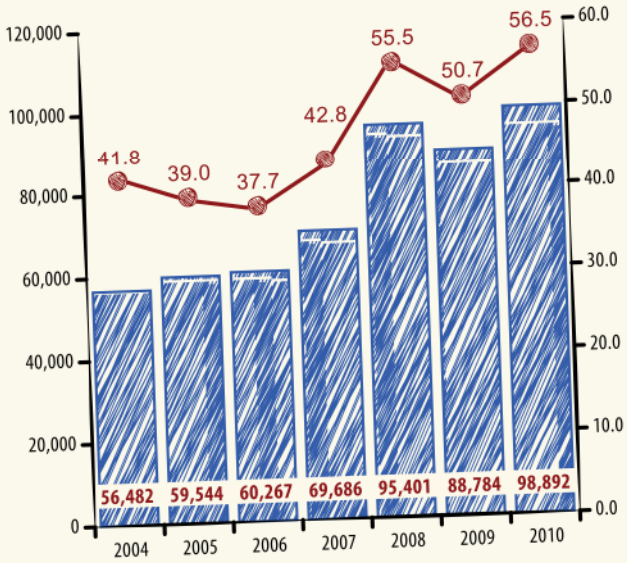
Number of Children Served by State and Federally Funded Programs During Program Year,

(Early Head Start, Early Intervention Special Education, ABC, Head Start, Early Special Education, CCDF)



USDA Child and Adult Care Food Progam,

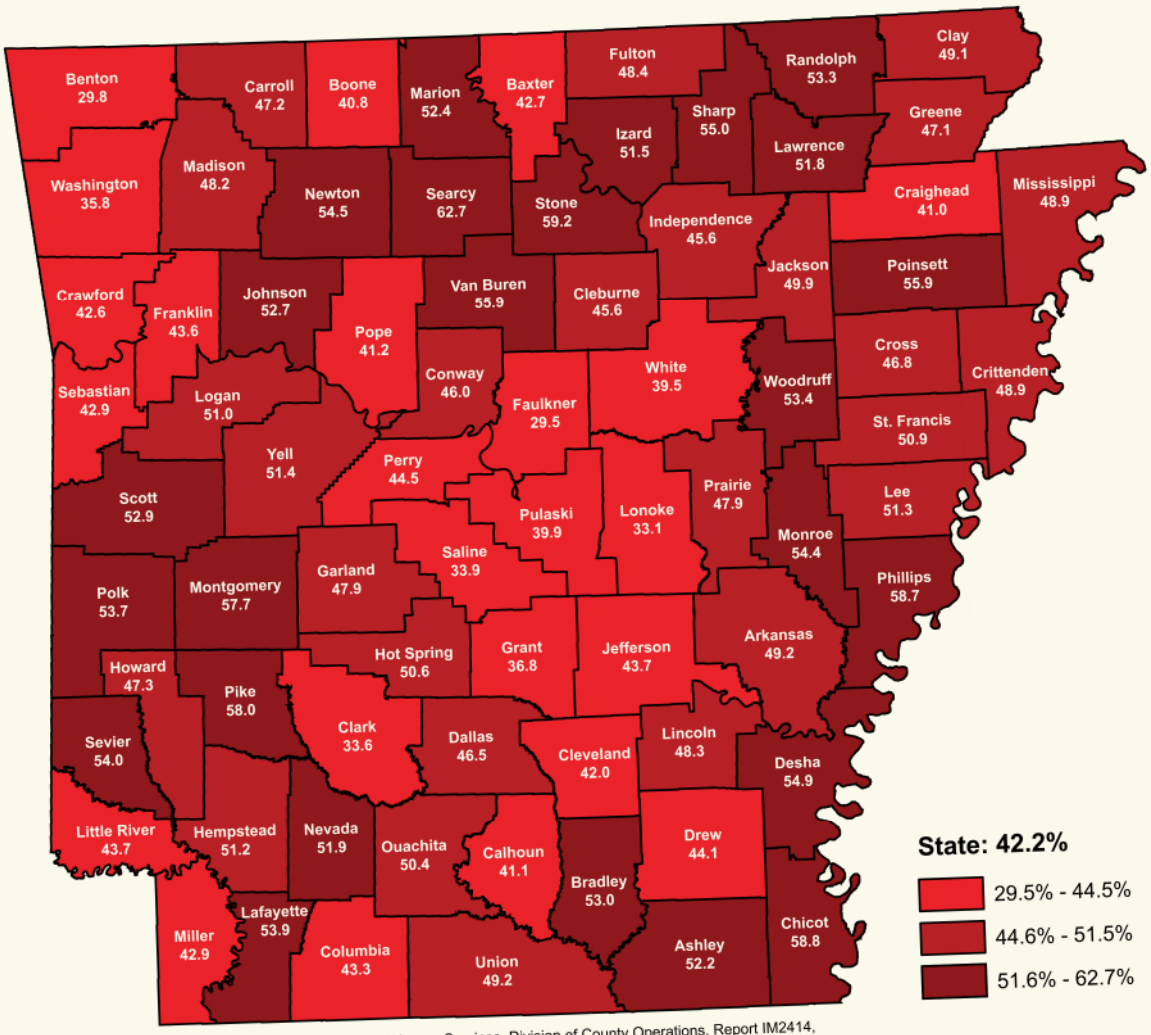
(Special Nutrition Program for Child Care)



ARKids First Enrollment as a Percent of Population,

Age 0-19, by County: 2009*

*Population estimates not available for 2010 comparison.



Sources: Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, Report IM2414, Monthly Statistical Report on Number of Cases Eligible for Medicaid; Population Estimates processed by Demographic Research, Institute for Economic Advancement, UALR from U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, Vintage 2009

ARKids First Enrollment

	ARKids A*	ARKids B**	Total ARKids
June 2006	239,450	74,173	313,623
June 2007	247,401	77,461	324,862
June 2008	241,169	77,057	318,226
June 2009	265,967	67,933	333,900
June 2010	271,882	73,564	345,446

Percent Change from June 2000 to June 2010 = 175.8%

*ARKids A: Full Medical Coverage

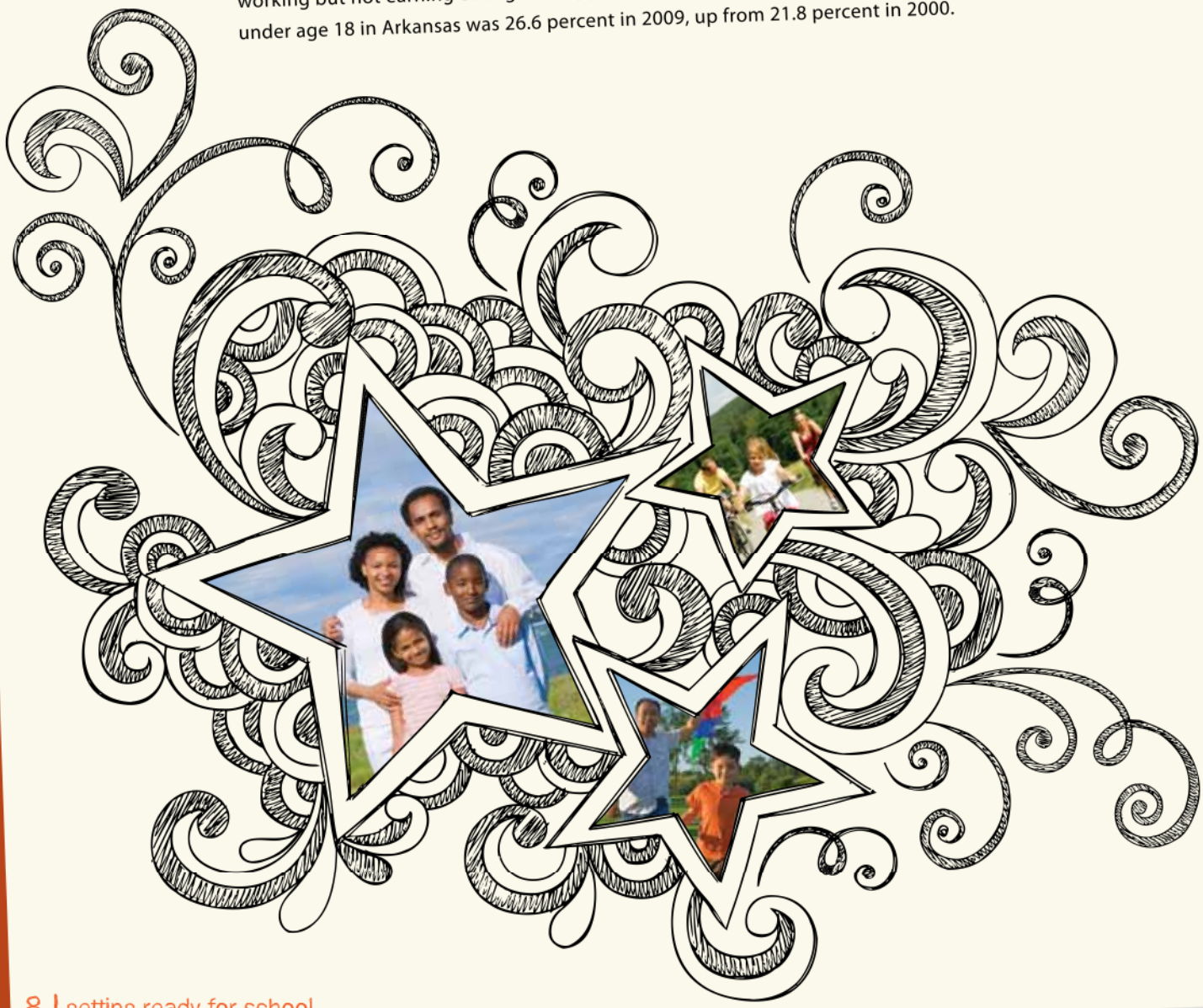
**ARKids B: Reduced Coverage

ready Families

Parents are a child's first and most important teachers, and almost everything that children learn in the first years of their lives comes from their families. The relationship between early home experiences and later school readiness and their success is significant and establishes habits that can influence the student's progress in school.

The best predictor of how well a child will succeed is the economic status of the family as measured by the poverty level. The 2009 poverty threshold for a family of four with two adults and two children was an income of $21,756. The percentage of children, age 0-4, in poverty has increased from 26.4 percent in 2000 to 30.8 percent in 2009 affecting 61,707 children in Arkansas.

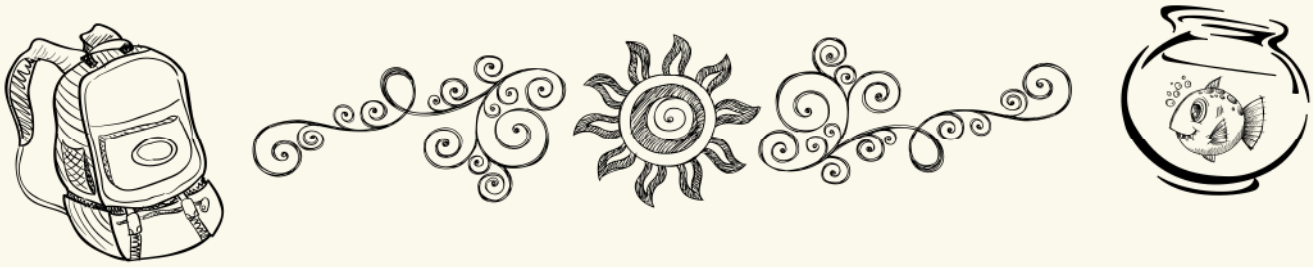
Even though the number of families and children under age 18 on welfare has declined, the poverty rate has increased, due to the additional working poor, who are defined as parents who are working but not earning enough to support their family's basic needs. The poverty rate for children under age 18 in Arkansas was 26.6 percent in 2009, up from 21.8 percent in 2000.



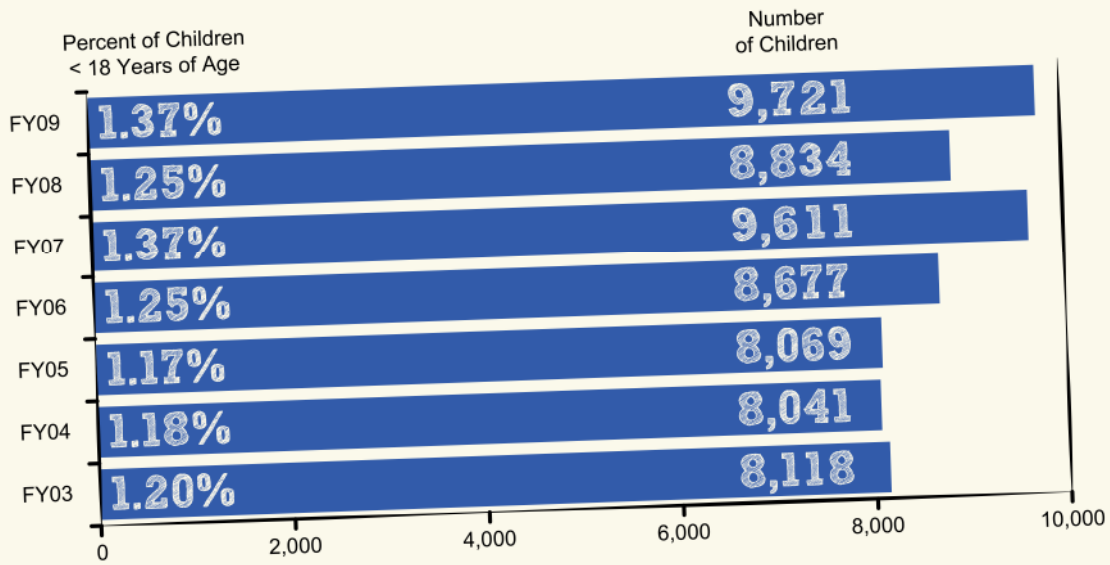
Federal Poverty Level Income Thresholds for 2009

(Size of family and number of related children under 18 years)

Size of Family	Number of Children							
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight or More
Two Persons Householder < 65 Years	$14,787							
Three persons	$17,268	$17,285						
Four persons	$22,490	$21,756	$21,832					
Five persons	$27,074	$26,245	$25,603	$25,211				
Six persons	$30,815	$30,180	$29,571	$28,666	$28,130			
Seven persons	$35,537	$34,777	$34,247	$33,260	$32,108	$30,845		
Eight persons	$39,847	$39,130	$38,501	$37,610	$36,478	$35,300	$35,000	
Nine persons or more	$47,744	$47,109	$46,576	$45,701	$44,497	$43,408	$43,138	$41,476

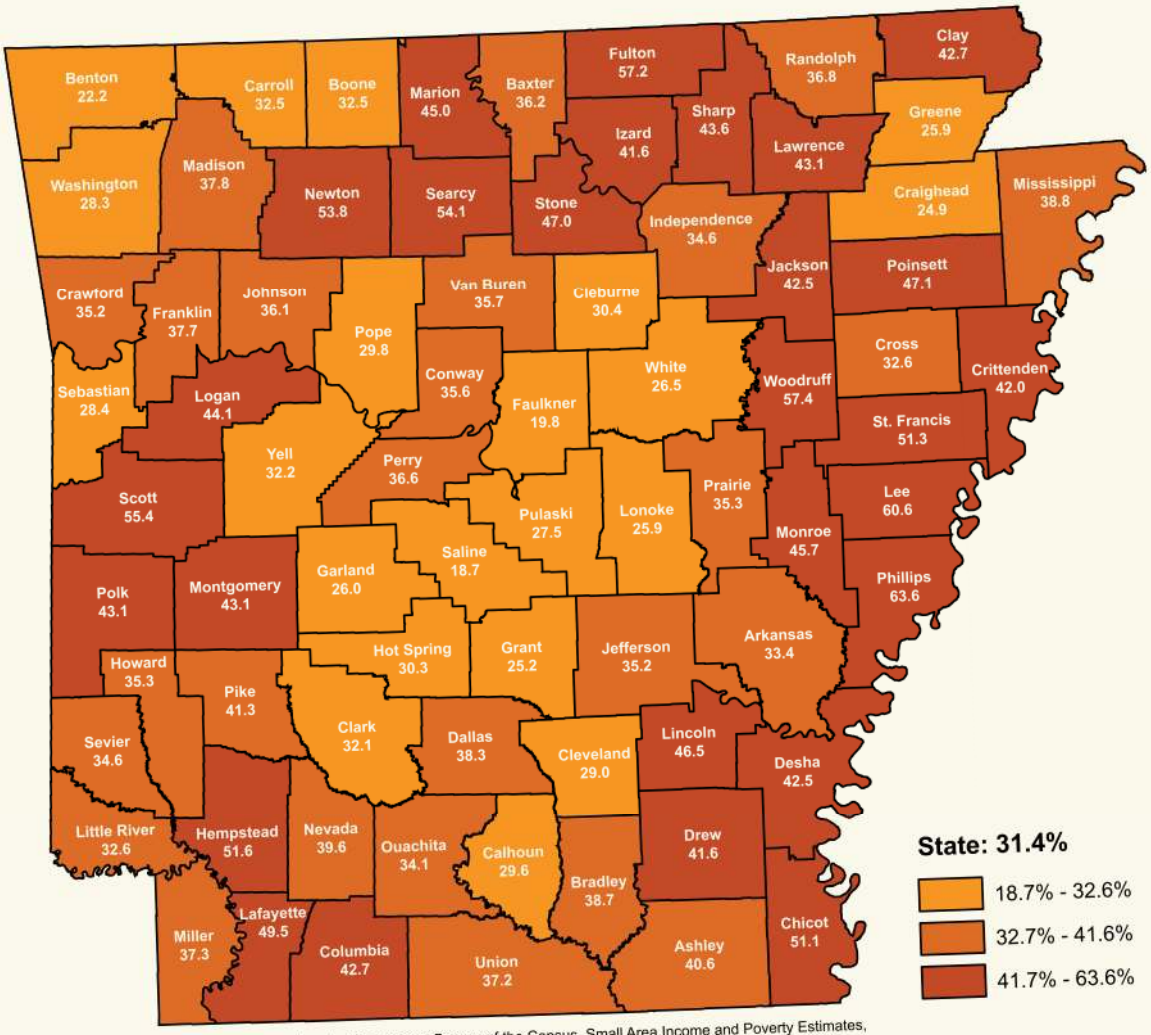


Victims of Child Maltreatment



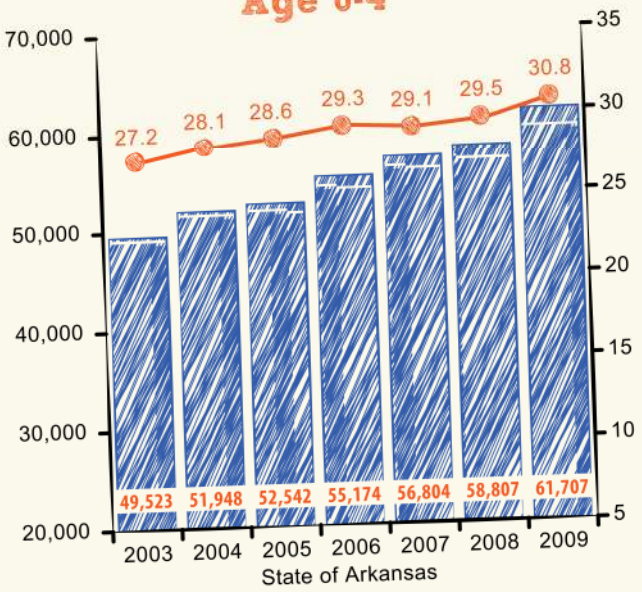
Percent of Children in Poverty Age 0-4,

by County: 2009

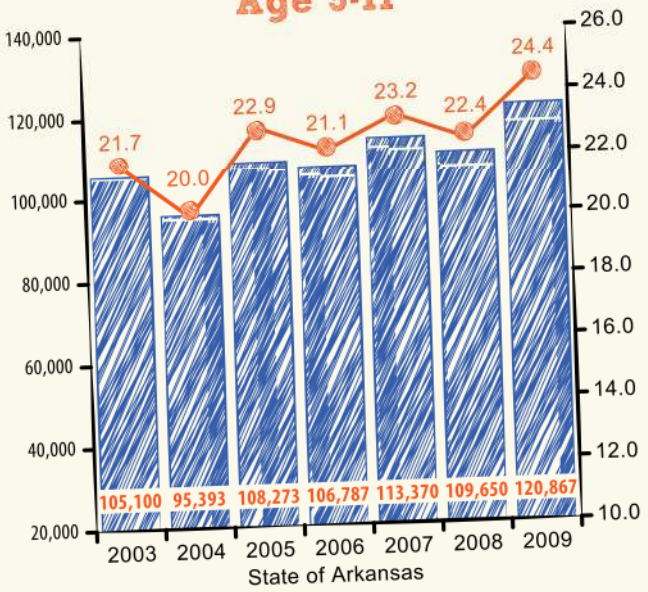


Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, released December 2010; and Population Estimates processed by Demographic Research, Institute for Economic Advancement, UALR from U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, Vintage 2009

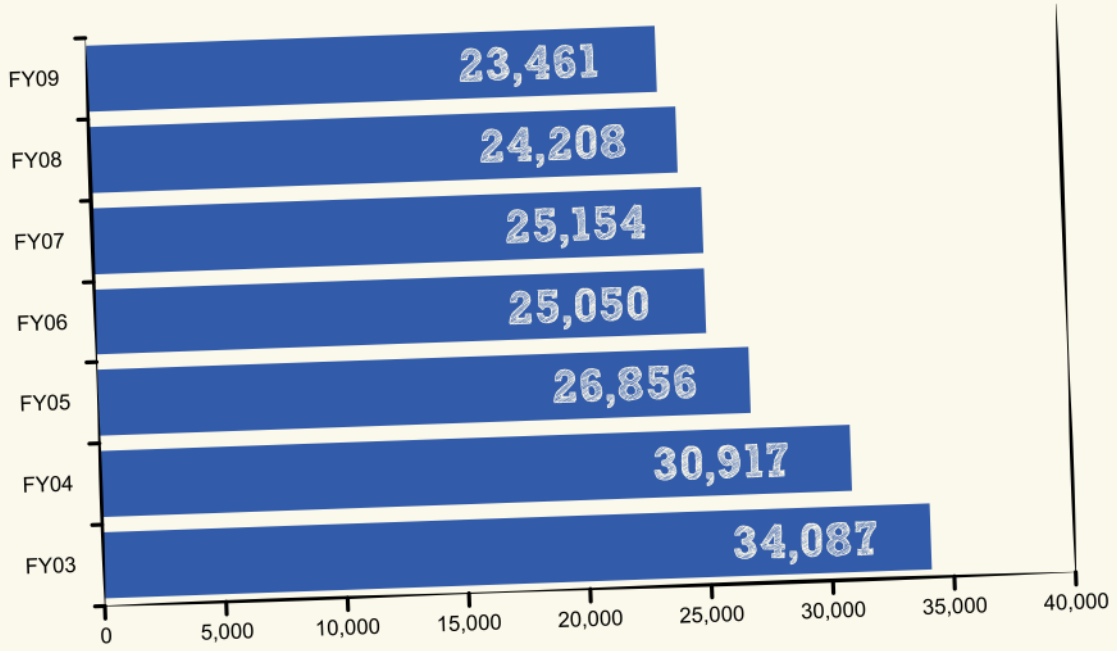
Children in Poverty Age 0-4

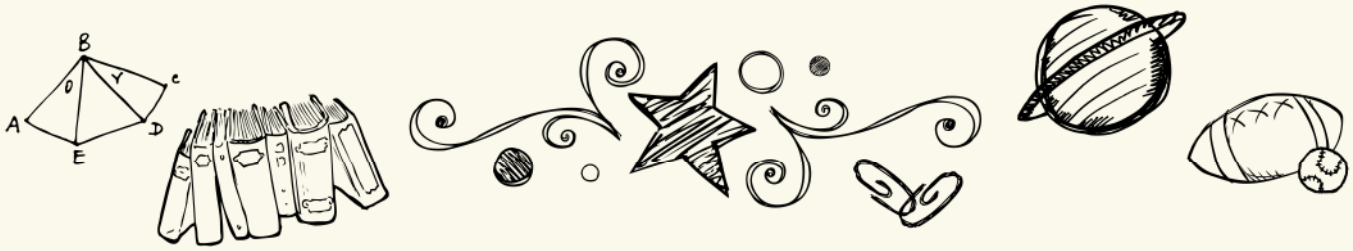


Children in Poverty Age 5-17

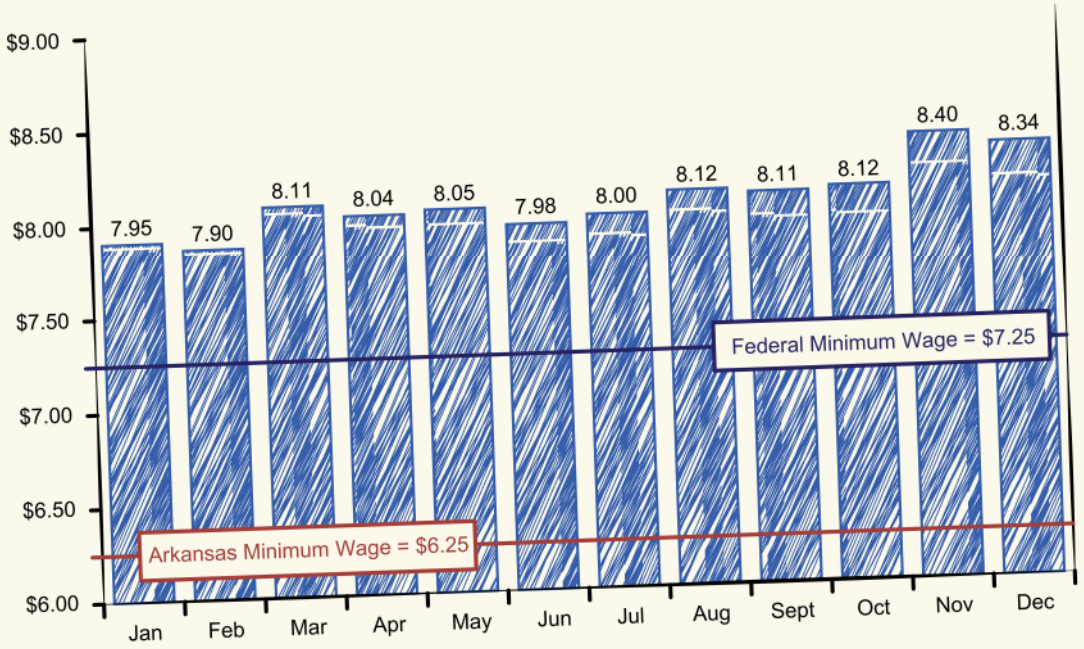


Transitional Employment Assistance Children





Average Hourly Wage of TEA Recipients, 2010



ready Schools

Research shows that the transition from preschool to kindergarten is one of the most difficult that a child faces throughout their education. Schools must be ready and responsive to the diverse cultural, physical, emotional, and developmental needs of children, especially children in poverty, children of color, children for whom English is not their first language, and children with disabilities.

Public School enrollment grew at a rate of 0.4 percent per year over the past 10 years.

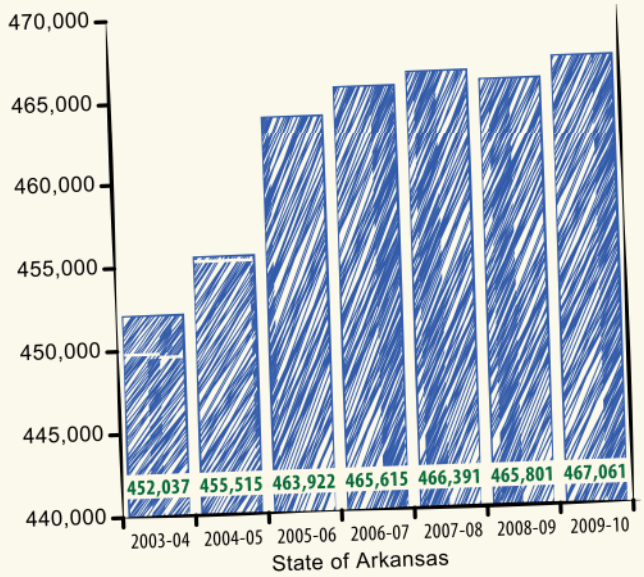
The number of students eligible for reduced and free lunches increased from 226,478 in 2003 to 276,206 in 2009, which is an increase of 22.0 percent.

School age children living in poverty continues to be a problem in many parts of the state. In 2009, poverty rates ranged from a low of 8.5 percent in Armorel School District in Mississippi County to a high of 55.3 percent in the Elaine School District in Phillips County. Statewide, the poverty rate for children 5-17 years of age increased from 19.0 percent in 2000 to 24.4 percent in 2009.

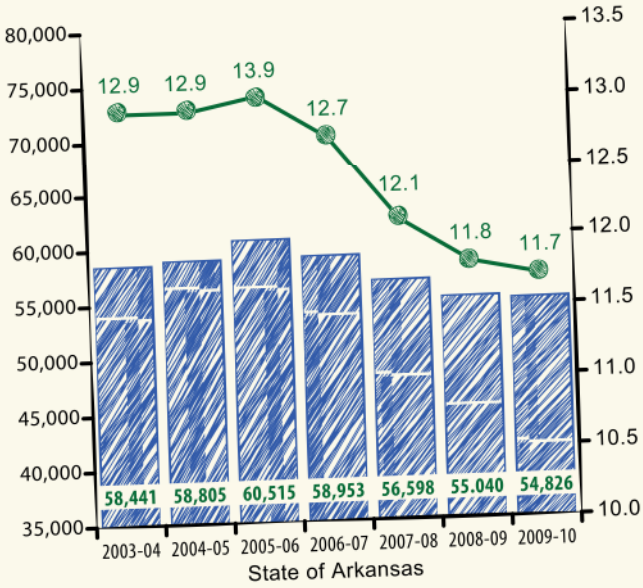
Tracking the Body Mass Index (BMI) of public school students is seen as one way of identifying the health of students now as well a predictor of future health problems. The percentage of students who are overweight or obese was 38.0 percent in 2009-2010. After seven years of measuring BMI, the percentage of students who are overweight or obese has declined by 0.1 percent.

The percentage of students in Grade 4 who met or exceeded proficiency on the Criterion Referenced Test, Benchmark Exam in 2010 was up three percentage points in math and six percentage points in literacy from 2009.

Public School Enrollment, Grades K-12

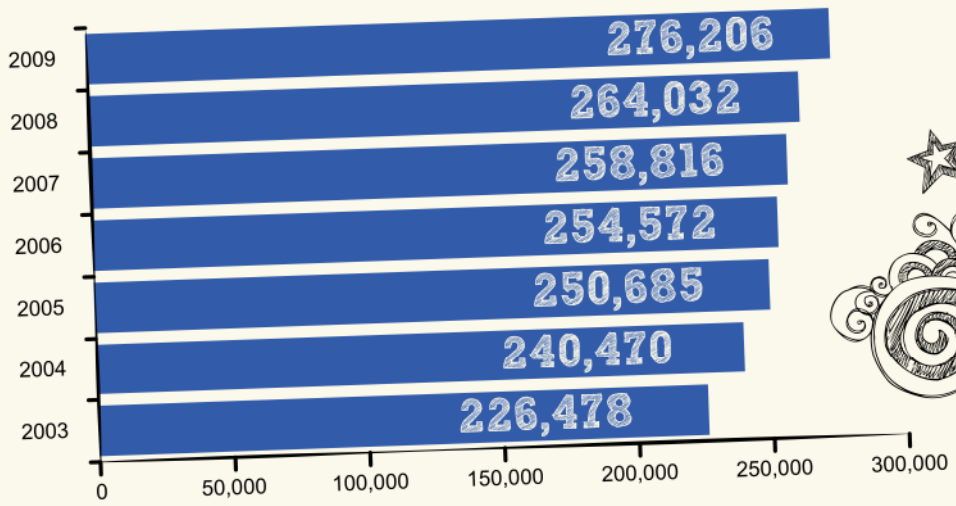


Children Receiving Special Education K-12 in School Districts



School Lunch Program,

Student Eligible



Suspensions and Expulsions

2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
123,390	124,334	131,152	126,878	129,990	122,974	122,294
			Seven Year % Change	0.9%		

Grade 4 Test Scores on

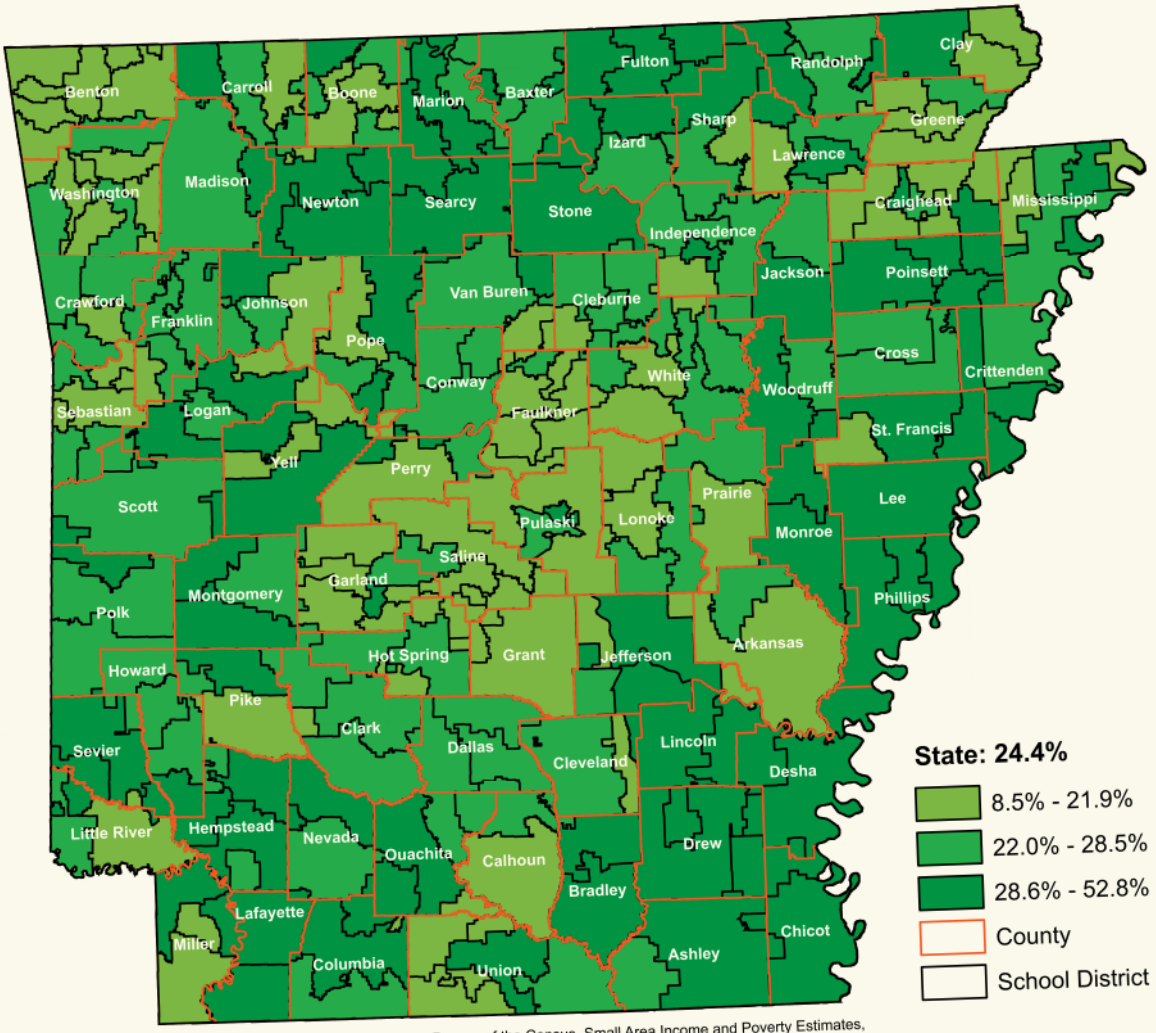
ACTAAP

(Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountablility Program)

					Meeting or Exceeding Proficiency				
	Below Basic	At Basic	Proficient	Advanced	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Math									
Number	3,234	4,312	9,343	19,405	28,748	27,374	24,728	21,799	20,073
Percent	9.0	12.0	26.0	54.0	80.0	77.0	75.0	67.0	62.0
Literacy									
Number	1,437	6,828	15,452	12,218	27,670	25,241	22,416	19,534	20,342
Percent	4.0	19.0	43.0	34.0	77.0	71.0	68.0	60.0	63.0

Percent of Children in Poverty Age 5-17,

by School District: 2009



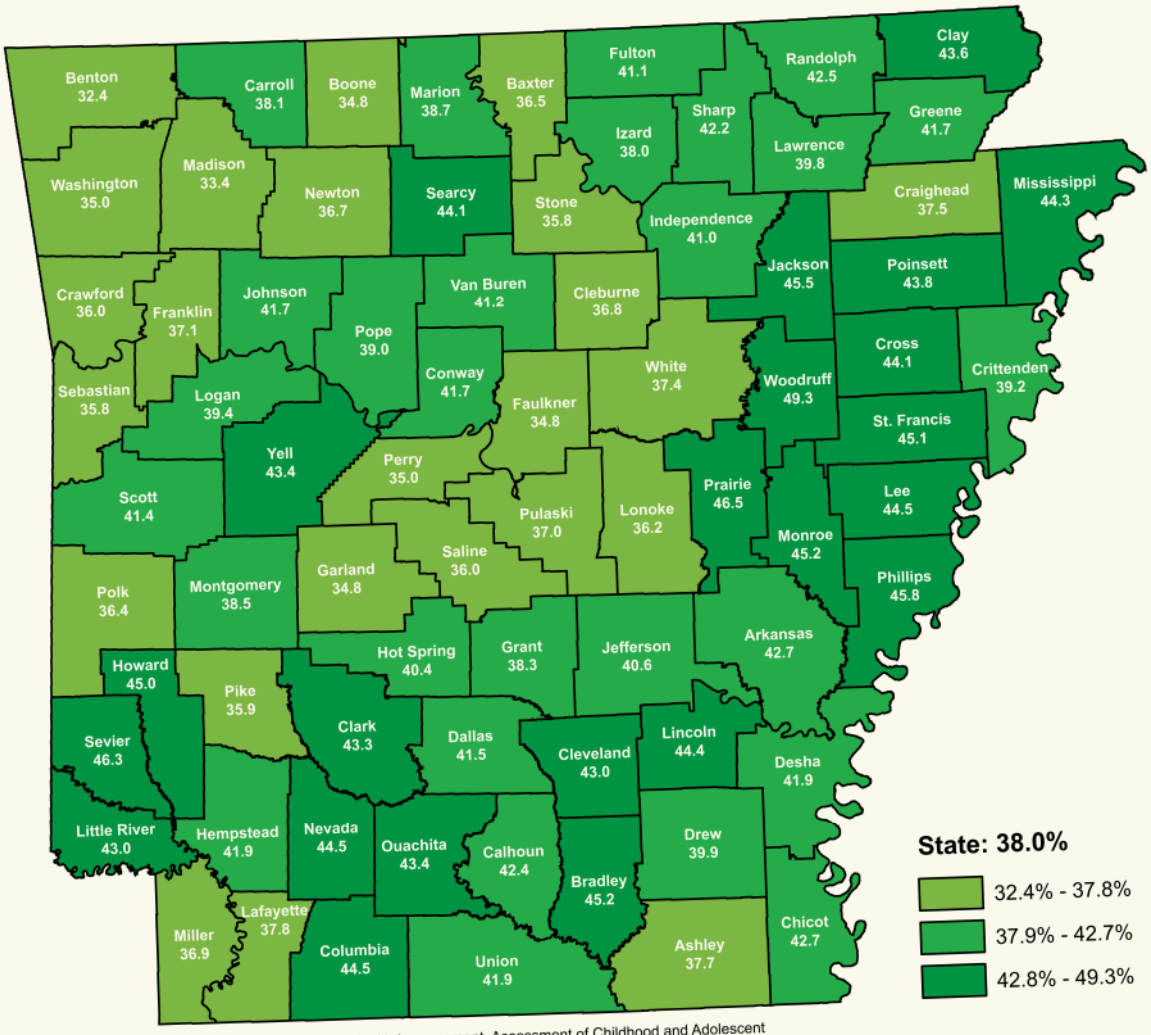
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, released December 2010

County	School District	Number of Children in Poverty	Poverty Rate
Lowest Poverty Rates			
Mississippi	Armorel School District	25	8.5%
Benton	Bentonville Public Schools	1,123	10.3%
Craighead	Valley View School District	164	10.3%
Sebastian	Greenwood School District	381	10.6%
Saline	Bryant Public Schools	879	11.3%
Highest Poverty Rates			
Lee	Lee County School District	717	45.8%
Phillips	Helena-West Helena School District	1,331	46.7%
Phillips	Marvell School District	294	49.6%
Crittenden	Earle School District	496	52.8%
Phillips	Elaine School District	187	55.3%

Percent of Overweight or Obese Students,

by County: 2009-2010

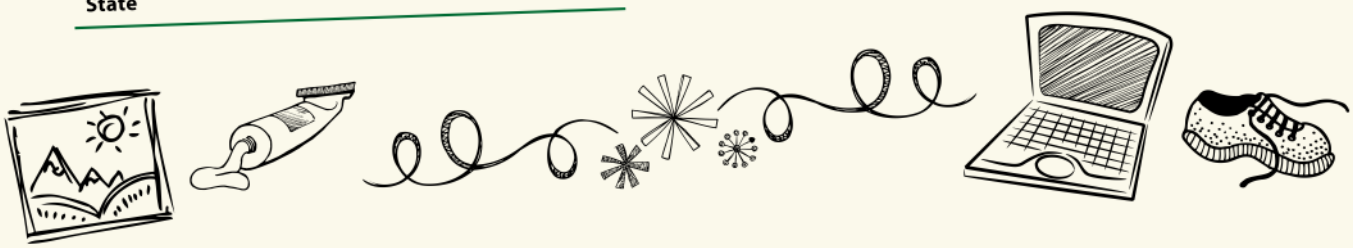
(Grades K, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10)



Source: Arkansas Center for Health Improvement, Assessment of Childhood and Adolescent Obesity in Arkansas: Statewide Results (Year 7)

Largest Decrease (fewer overweight)	
Dallas	-5.67%
Benton	-4.50%
Pike	-4.11%
Ashley	-4.09%
Franklin	-3.62%
State	**-0.10%**

Largest Increase (more overweight)	
Nevada	5.90%
St. Francis	6.07%
Columbia	6.69%
Scott	6.84%
Searcy	7.09%



ready Communities

The economic state of the community is critically important for the success of families and schools since all the elements are interdependent. Stable populations, low crime rates, affordable housing, plentiful jobs with adequate wages, and access to health care are some of the characteristics that make a community a viable and supportive place to live.

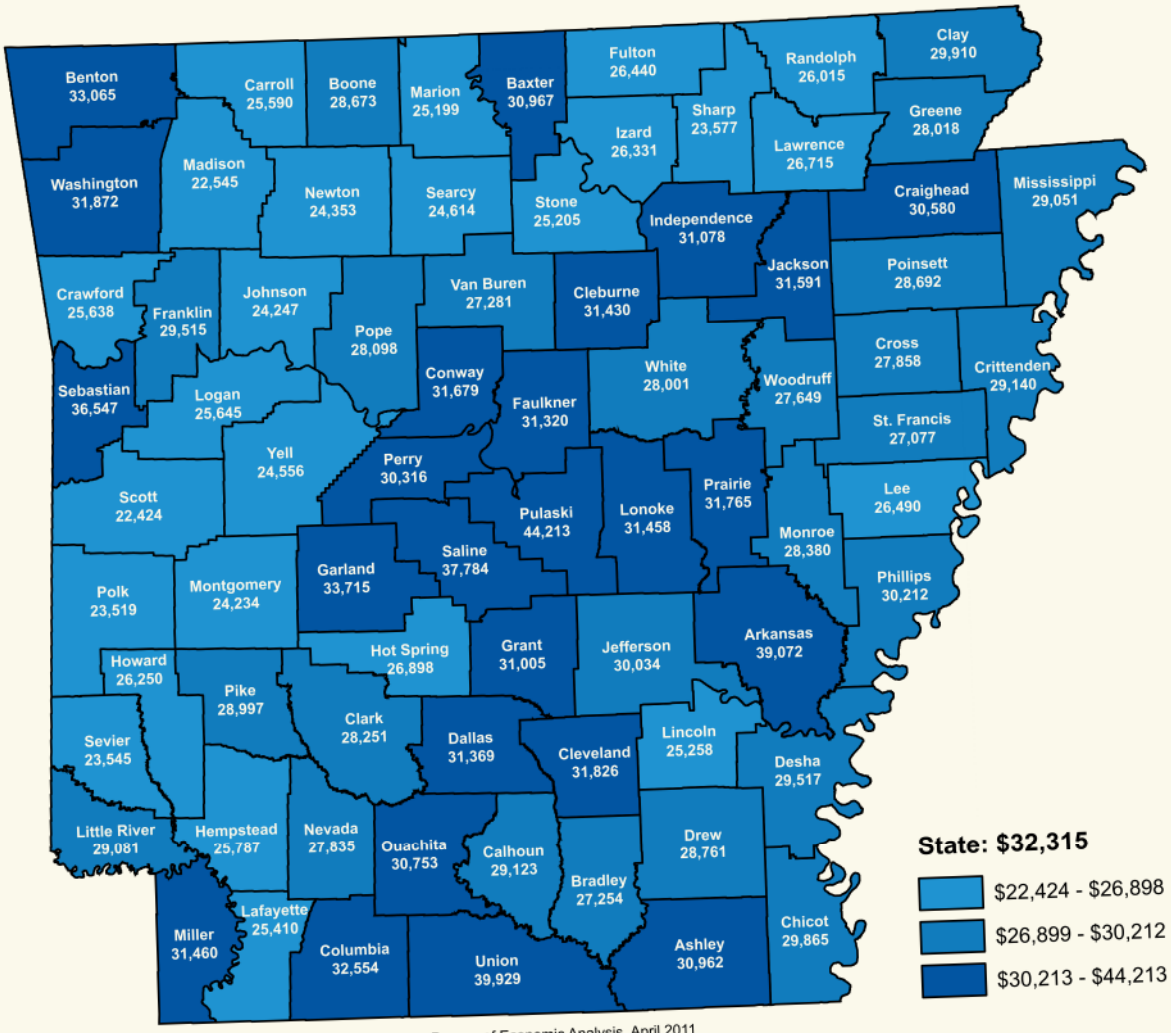
Per capita personal income for the state was $32,315 in 2009. This was 81.5 percent of the U.S. per capita personal income. This is an improvement since 2001, when Arkansas' per capita personal income was only 76.6 percent of the U.S.

While the state median household income increased 13.3 percent from 2003 to 2009, the U.S. median household income grew at a faster rate (15.9%). As a percentage of the U.S., the state decreased from 77.2 percent of the U.S. median household income in 2003 to 75.4 percent in 2009.

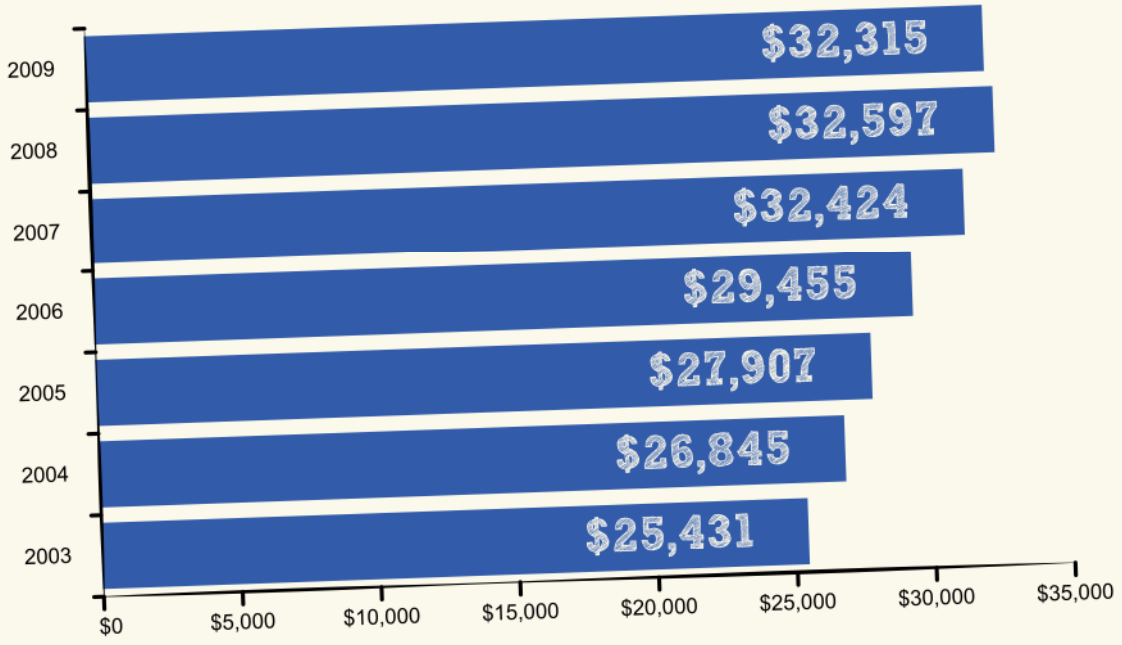
In the health professionals field, the total number of physicians increased 11.7 percent and the total number of nurses increased 7.9 percent from 2002 to 2010.

Per Capita Personal Income,

By County: 2009

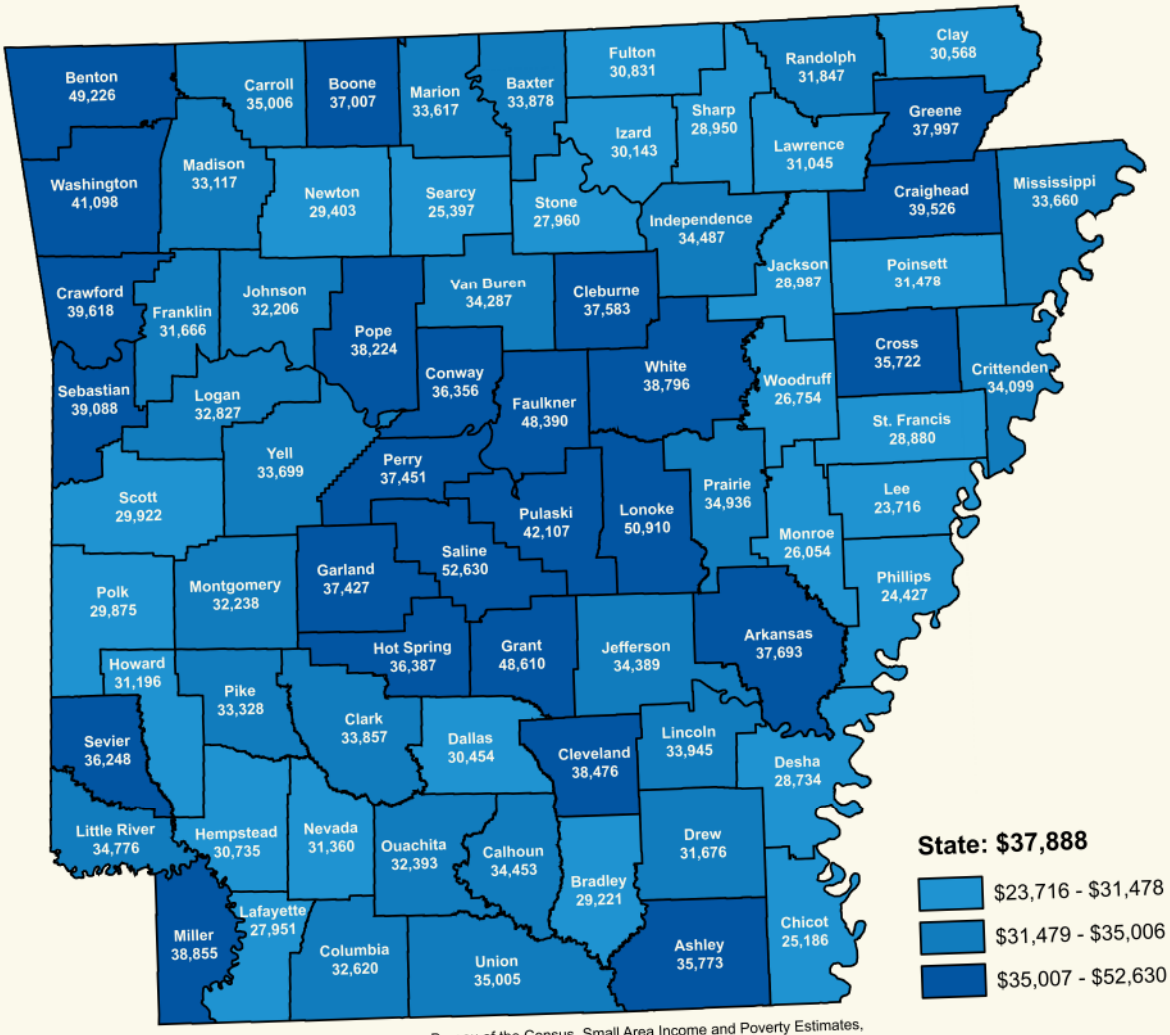


Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, April 2011

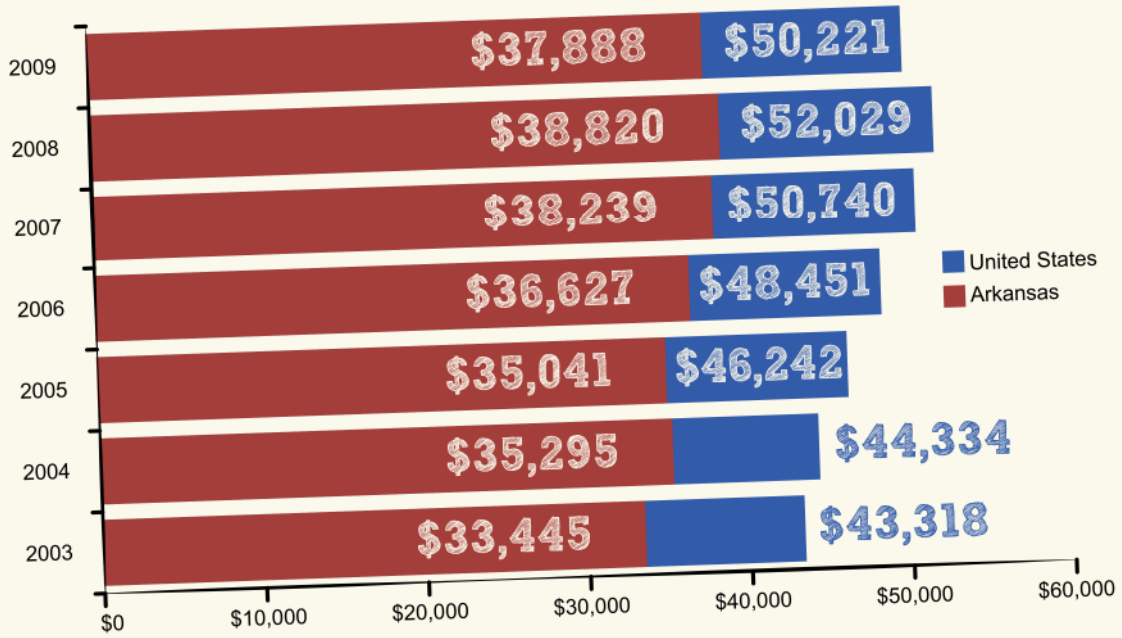


Median Household Income,

by County: 2009



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, released December 2010



Health Professionals, 2010

Total Physicians	5,834
Primary Care Physicians	3,090
Total Dentists	1,181
Total Optometrists	397
Total Social Workers	2,496
Total Nurses	45,274
Licensed Practical Nurses	15,011
Registered Nurses	30,670

terms & Sources

1 **Births to Teens**: The number of births in which the woman was less than 18 years of age. Arkansas Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics, Calendar year

2 **No Prenatal Care During First Pregnancy Trimester**: The number of all births in which the mother did not begin prenatal care during the first three months of pregnancy. Arkansas Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Calendar year

3 **ARKids First Enrollment**: The number of children enrolled in ARKids First, an insurance program provided by the state of Arkansas for children who come from working poor families without insurance. The ARKids First waiver program and SOBRA Medicaid, the largest category of children's Medicaid, were combined under the ARKids umbrella. SOBRA became ARKids A and the waiver program became ARKids B. Arkansas Department of Human Services, Report IM-2414

4 **Child Care Voucher Program**: The number of children receiving child care through the voucher program which provides subsidized child care to low income working families. The voucher program is a federal program which assists families who meet eligibility criteria with the cost of child care. Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, State fiscal year

5 **Child Care Licenses**: The number of child care licenses issued and the capacity by type of facility. Children per slot: The total number of children by age groups divided by the total capacity of licensed centers or the total capacity of those meeting the state early childhood accreditation/quality approval standards. These standards ensure quality programs for young children. Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education

6 **Number of Children Served at Any time During Program Year**:

Arkansas Better Chance Program: The number of children served at any time during the program year in the Arkansas Better Chance Program (ABC) and Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABC/SS). The ABC program is intended to serve educationally deprived children, birth to five years of age, while the ABC/SS serves children ages three and four from families up to 200% of federal poverty level. The Arkansas Better Chance Data Center and Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education

Head Start: Each Head Start program is funded to provide services to a designated number of children and exists to provide and to promote a high quality, developmentally appropriate child development program for economically deprived children 3-5 and/or 0-3 years of age, thus reducing the potential for school failure. Arkansas Head Start Association-State Collaboration Project

Children Served Compared to 3-5 Year Old Population: A comparison of the number of ABC, Head Start slots, and Early Special Education with the 3-5 year old population. Number of slots does not include migrants. The Arkansas Better Chance Data Center and Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Arkansas Head Start Association-State Collaboration Project, the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education, IDEA Data and Research partnership with UALR College of Education, and the U.S. Census Bureau

7 **Number of Children Served by State and Federally Funded Programs**: The number of children served in various early childhood programs during the program year divided by the population 0-5 years of age.

The ABC and Head Start programs have been defined above.

Early Childhood Special Education: Early Childhood Special Education services are defined as "special education and related services provided to eligible children with disabilities age 3-5, inclusive" in the federal law Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Arkansas Department of Education is designated as the agency for administering and providing general supervision of education programs statewide for children with disabilities ages 3-5. The federal law "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (IDEA) defines Early Intervention Services as services designed to meet the developmental needs of each child birth to three with disabilities and the needs of the family related to enhancing the child's development. The Lead Agency in Arkansas for Early Intervention is DHS/Developmental Disabilities Services. Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education

Child Care and Development Fund: The number of children served at any time during the program year in the Child Care and Development Fund, which assists low-income families and those transitioning off welfare to obtain child care so that they can work or attend training or education. Eligible children are those under age 13 (or up to age 19, if disabled). The state currently serves families at 60 percent of the state median income. Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, State fiscal year

Early Head Start: Head Start programs for age 0-3.

8 **USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program**: The number of children served by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which is a federal program providing healthy meals and snacks to children and adults receiving day care. Facilities serving children include child care centers, Head Start programs, after school care programs, and family day care homes. Arkansas Department of Human Services, Special Nutrition Program, State fiscal year

9 **Federal Poverty Level Income Thresholds**: *Poverty status* is determined from income data. Poverty thresholds are arranged in a two dimensional matrix based on family size and number of children in the family. The total income of the family was tested against the appropriate threshold to determine the poverty status of the family. If the family income is less than the corresponding cut off, the family is classified as *below poverty level*. The number of children below poverty is the sum of all children in families below the poverty level. The percent of children in poverty is the sum of children below the poverty level divided by the total number of all children in families. U.S. Census Bureau, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, Poverty Thresholds, 2009, Calendar year

10 **Percent of Children in Poverty, Age 0-4**: See number 9 for definitions of poverty. The percent of children 0-4 years of age in poverty is the sum of children below the poverty level divided by the total number of all children 0-4 years of age in families. U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, Calendar year

11 **Children in Poverty, Age 5-17**: See number 9 for definitions of poverty. The percent of children 5-17 years of age in poverty is the sum of children below the poverty level divided by the total number of all children 5-17 years of age in families. U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, Calendar year

12 **Victims of Child Maltreatment**: The number of children for whom an allegation of maltreatment has been founded. This number is divided by the population that is less than 18 years of age to calculate the percent. Arkansas Department of Human Services, *Annual Statistical Report*, State fiscal year

13 **Transitional Employment Assistance Children**: The number of children who receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children/Transitional Employment Assistance. AFDC was a cash assistance program designed to meet the basic needs of children under age 18 who are deprived of the care or support of one or both parents. Arkansas implemented the Transitional Employment Assistance program on July 1, 1998, a result of the national welfare reform movement. Arkansas Department of Human Services, *Annual Statistical Report*, State fiscal year

14 **Average Hourly Wage of TEA Recipients**: The average hourly wage from January 2010 through December 2010. Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, Calendar year

15 **Public School Enrollment Grades K-12**: The enrollment in grades K-12, for all districts. Arkansas Department of Education, Office of Data Administration, Statewide Information System

16 **School Lunch Program, Students Eligible**: The number of students eligible for free/reduced price lunches in the public schools, grades K-12. Students are eligible based on income and family size guidelines established for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Arkansas Department of Education, Statewide Information System

17 **Children in Poverty, 5 to 17 Years of Age, by School District**: See number 9 for definitions of poverty. Estimates of poverty levels for school age children will be made biennially by the U.S. Census Bureau to comply with Title 1 requirements. U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, Calendar year

18 **Overweight or Obese Students**: The number of overweight or obese students as shown in the annual body mass index (BMI) screening of Arkansas public school students. This number is divided by the total number of students in grades K, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10. Arkansas Center for Health Improvement, *Assessment of Childhood and Adolescent Obesity in Arkansas, Year Seven*

19 **Children Receiving Special Education K-12 in School Districts**: The number of students counted under the P.L. 94-142 grant for all districts combined for each school year. Students in special education placements are those who have been identified as disabled according to criteria set forth in state and federal regulations, and who are receiving special education and related services as necessary. The percent is determined by dividing the enrollment in special education by the total enrollment. Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education, IDEA Data and Research partnership with UALR College of Education

20 **Suspensions and Expulsions**: School disciplinary actions taken, including in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expelled, expelled for weapons, expelled for drugs, and expelled for dangerousness. Arkansas Department of Education, Office of Data Administration, Statewide Information System, April of current year

21 **Grade 4 Test Scores on ACTAAP**: Number and percent of Students in Grade 4 meeting or exceeding proficiency in math and literacy on the Criterion Referenced Test, Augmented Benchmark Examination, Combined Population. Arkansas Department of Education

22 **Per Capita Personal Income**: Total personal income of the residents of a given area divided by the resident population of the area. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Calendar year

23 **Median Household Income**: Median household income divides the income distribution into two equal parts, one having incomes above the median and the other having incomes below the median. U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, Calendar year

24 **Health Professionals**: Total physicians (all medical doctors licensed to practice in the state of Arkansas), primary care physicians (medical doctors participating in family practice, general practice, obstetrics/gynecology, pediatrics or internal medicine), dentists, optometrists, social workers, and nurses. Arkansas Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Calendar year

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