



*2013 Arkansas Report Card*

# Letter from the Director

By Dr. Gary Ritter, OEP Director



To our readers,

The Office for Education Policy is pleased to bring you its *2013 Arkansas Report Card* for highlighting our students' educational performance and characteristics through the 2012-2013 academic year. We have built our *Arkansas Report Card* for six straight years, and we hope that this year's edition will help further the conversation that surrounds our education system. Whether you are a teacher, a policymaker, or a parent, we hope that the information that follows is helpful and informative. The following tables, graphs, and information show a snapshot of K-12 education in our state. Even though there are plenty of bright spots and rising stars across the state, we all know that there is still plenty of room for improvement.

This year, we chose to include a few spotlights – sections highlighting the programs that we think you should be excited about as they try to improve education in our state.

Just as it is important for a parent to make adjustments whenever a child brings home his or her report card, we think that it is important for our policymakers, administrators, and educators to make adjustments in response to information about state performance. While this is not the only source of information, we hope that it helps inform the conversation as we push towards progress.

Thank you for reading and we hope you enjoy!

Gary Ritter

*Director of the Office for Education Policy*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary W. Ritter". The signature is fluid and cursive.



*Rising Stars Across the State*

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# BY THE NUMBERS

**\$9,301**

State and Local Per Pupil Spending Amount  
in K-12 Education

**20.2**

Average score of  
Arkansas' ACT exams

**19**

Active open  
enrollment  
charter schools

**44**

4-year and 2-year  
Public and  
Independent Higher  
Education Institutions

**23**

High schools ranked  
in the top 2000 in the  
nation by U.S. News

**12.65%**

Percentage rise in home  
units sold for 2013 over 2012

**137**

Called "Achieving Schools,"  
schools receiving the highest  
ESEA Accountability rating

**7.2%**

Unemployment rate at the end of  
2013, up slightly from a year earlier

**260**

Number of  
school districts  
in Arkansas,  
down from 340  
a decade ago

**33,201**

Certified teachers employed by public  
schools in the state





## STATE PROFILE

### *Arkansas' Education System*

Enrollment 2012-2013	471,867
Enrollment 2004-2005	455,515
% Change	+3.5%

Districts in Arkansas	260
Schools in Arkansas	1,075
Charter Schools in Arkansas	19
ALE Schools in Arkansas	37
4-Year Public Universities and Colleges	11
4-Year Independent Universities and Colleges	11
2-Year Public Universities and Colleges	22

### *Educational Attainment (Ages 25+; Year 2010)*

Less than High School Graduate	17.5%
High School Graduate Only	35.0%
Some College or Associate's Degree	28.4%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	19.1%

### *Arkansas' Demographics*

Total Population	2,959,373
White	73.9%
African-American	15.6%
Hispanic	6.8%
Two or More Races	1.8%
Asian-American	1.4%
Other	0.5%

### *Arkansas' Economy*

Median Household Income	\$40,531
Tax Revenue, Fiscal Year 2013 (Millions)	\$18,925

### *Fortune 500 Companies*

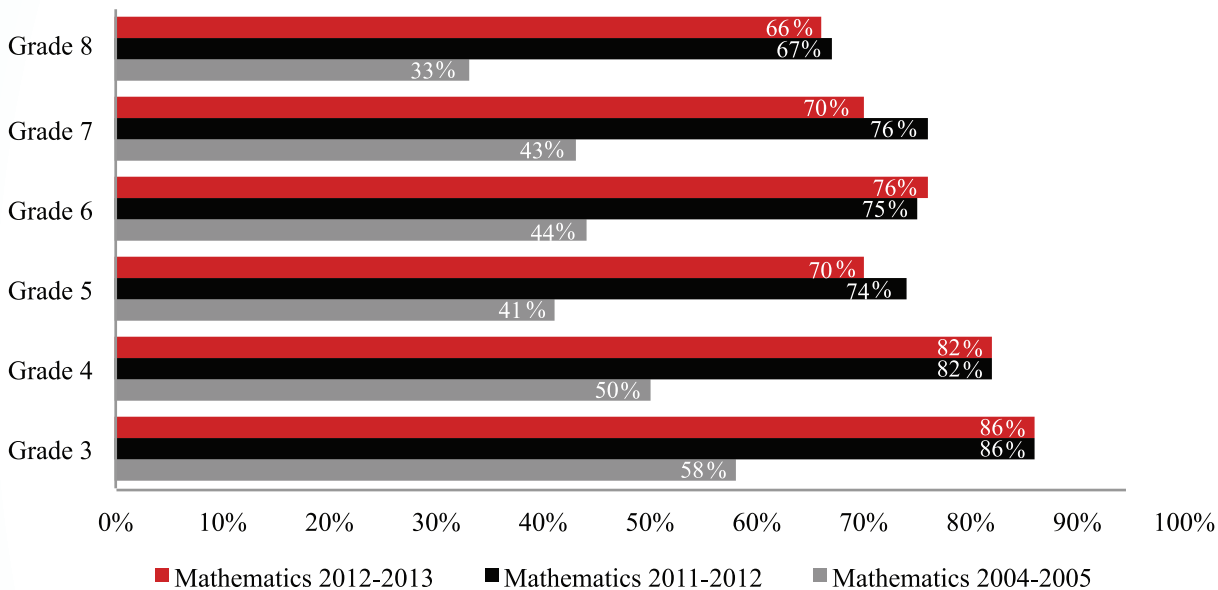
	<i>Rank</i>
Walmart	1
Tyson Foods	93
Murphy Oil	104
Dillard's	378
Windstream	414
J.B. Hunt	486

# BENCHMARK EXAM

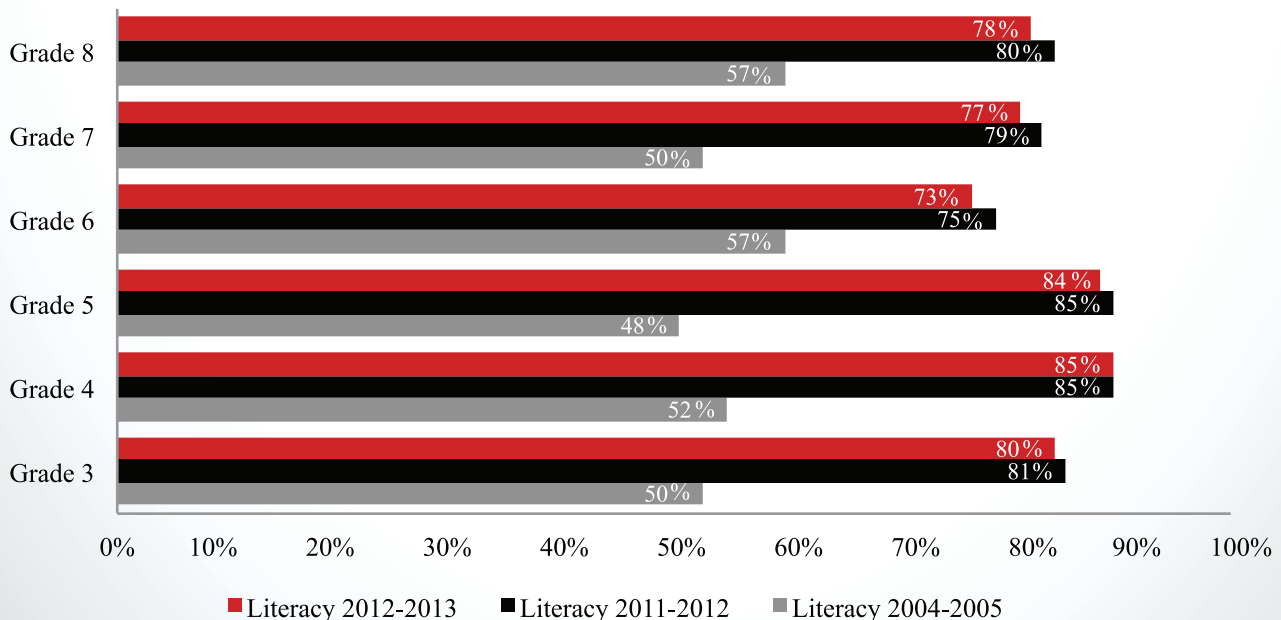
The Arkansas Comprehensive Testing Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP) "Benchmark exams" administered in Arkansas measure student performance on Arkansas' state standards. This criterion-referenced assessment is administered to students in grades 3 through 8 each year in the spring.

In 2012-13, results for math varied by grade, but there was very little change between 2011-12 and 2012-13. Proficiency rates decreased in grades 5, 7, and 8, increased in grade 6, and remained the same in grades 3 and 4. In literacy, proficiency rates decreased in most grades. Nevertheless, scores in all subjects have increased substantially since 2004-05. For an expanded look at this test and the others that Arkansas students take, take a look at our policy brief: 2012-13 Arkansas Test Results.

**Arkansas Benchmark: Percent Proficient and Advanced in Math, 2005, 2012 & 2013**



**Arkansas Benchmark: Percent Proficient and Advanced in Literacy, 2005, 2012 & 2013**

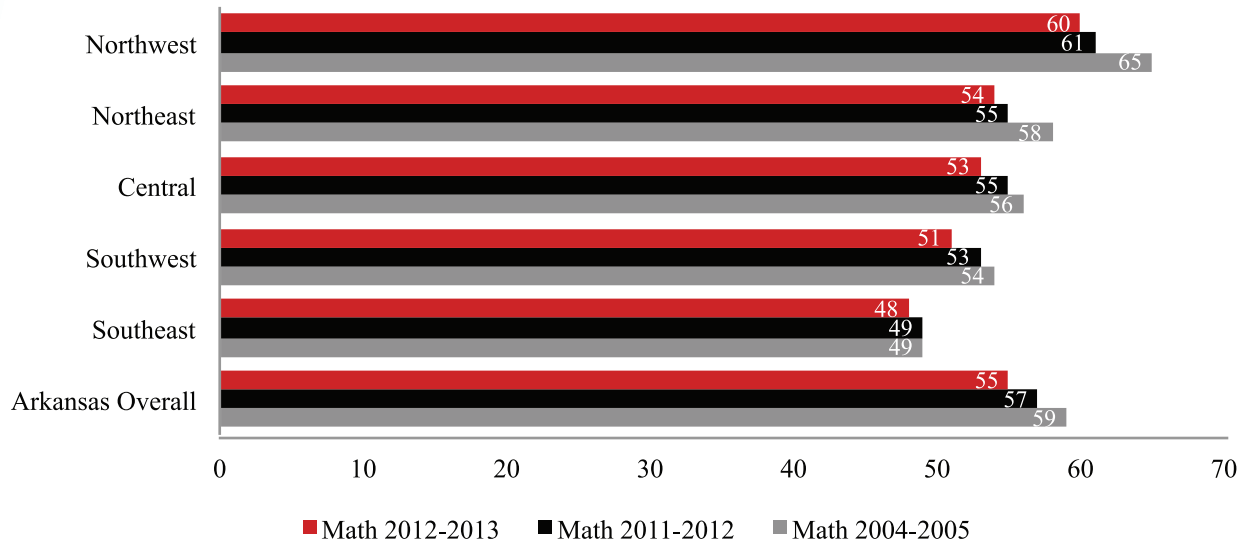


# IOWA TEST OF BASIC SKILLS (ITBS) EXAM

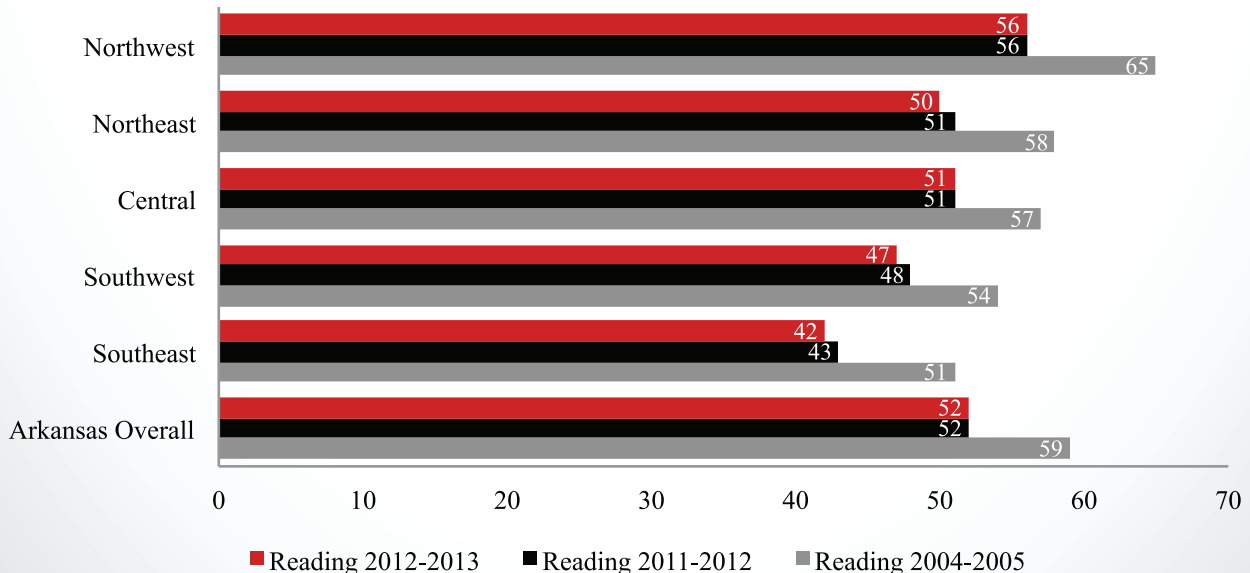
The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is administered to students in grades 1 - 9. These norm-referenced questions allow for comparison across state borders using National Percentile Ranks (NPR).

Arkansas students took the ITBS in 2004-05 and then switched to the Stanford Achievement Test (another nationally norm-referenced exam). In 2010-11, Arkansas students began taking the ITBS again. Since 2004-05, the results have declined or remained stagnant in math and literacy. In the graphs below, we show regional trends. These trends mirror those on the ACTAAP at the regional level. For an expanded look at this test and the others that Arkansas students take, take a look at our policy brief: 2012-13 Arkansas Test Results.

ITBS: National Percentile Rank by Region in Math, 2005, 2012 & 2013



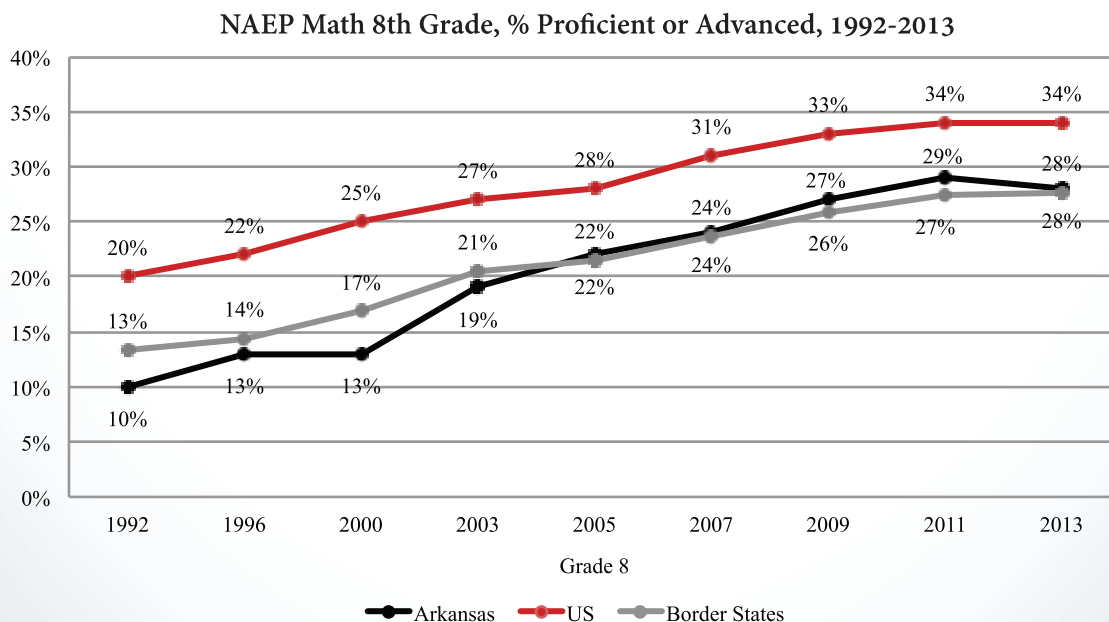
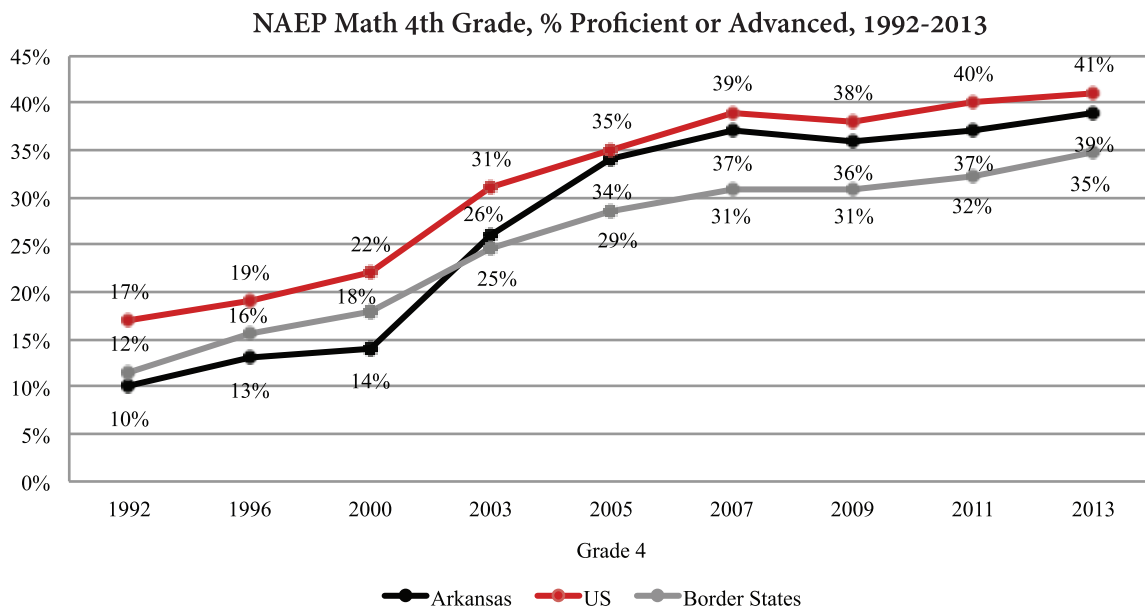
ITBS: National Percentile Rank by Region in Reading, 2005, 2012 & 2013



# NAEP MATH PERFORMANCE

Every two years, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test is administered to a representative sample of students in each of the 50 states plus Washington, D.C. For this reason, this test is known as the “Nation’s Report Card.” Administered at the 4th and 8th grade levels, these results can help us track how Arkansas performs against the nation as a whole. It is also possible to compare Arkansas to any individual state or a group of states, as we do in the tables below with our “border states” comparison. Arkansas’ border states include Mississippi, Missouri, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.

In 4th grade math, Arkansas’ proficiency rates have been between 1 and 3 percentage points lower than the national average since 2005. The gap between Arkansas’ scores and the national average is much larger in 8th grade math, with differences hovering around six percentage points.



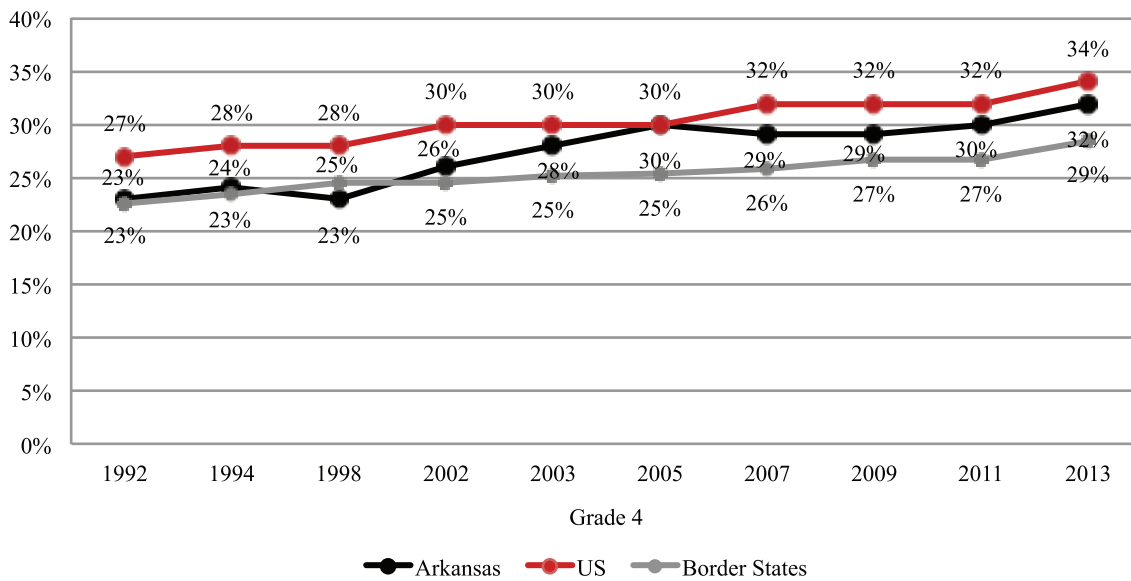


# NAEP READING PERFORMANCE

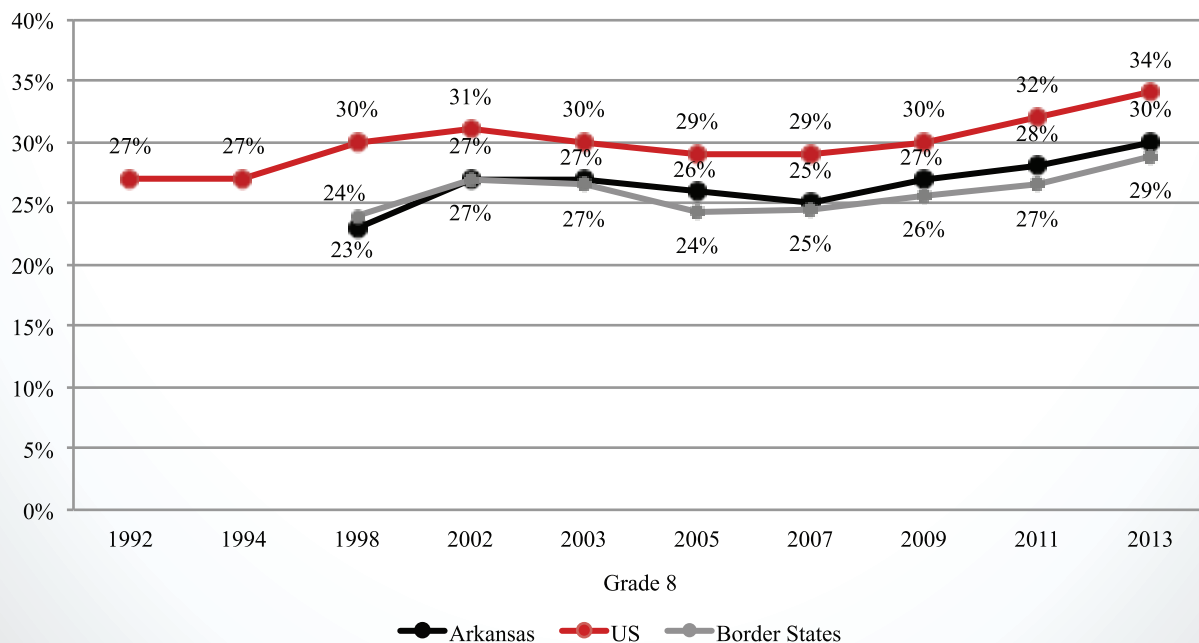
The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test has been used to show the achievement gaps between majority and minority populations around the country. Also, there has been a more recent movement to test urban centers and their concentrated populations, although none of these metropolitan areas are located in Arkansas. The graph below compares Arkansas' scores to the nation and "bordering states." Arkansas' border states include Mississippi, Missouri, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.

As with math proficiency, reading proficiency rates in the 4th grade are closer to the national average than in the 8th grade. The gap between Arkansas' reading proficiency rates and the national average since 2005, approximately 3 percentage points, is smaller than the gap for math.

NAEP Reading 4th Grade, % Proficient or Advanced, 1992-2013



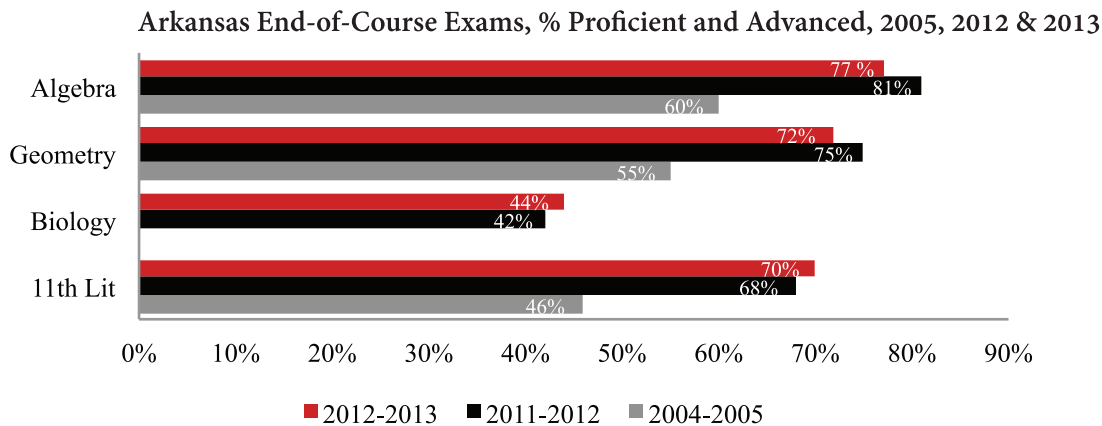
NAEP Reading 8th Grade, % Proficient or Advanced, 1992-2013



# END-OF-COURSE (EOC) EXAM

As “capstone tests” for Arkansas high school students, End-of-Course (EOC) examinations test proficiency in key subjects, including Algebra, Geometry, Biology, and 11th grade Literacy. These assessments are the last evaluation of students before they leave the Arkansas K-12 system, other than whether or not they graduate.

In the 2012-13 school year, test results were mixed, as math scores regressed slightly, while Biology and 11th grade Literacy scores saw gains. All tests have seen substantial increases over the results from years ago, as illustrated by the graph below comparing against the 2004-05 school year.



## Spotlight: Arkansas Teacher Corps



### What is the Arkansas Teacher Corps?

The Arkansas Teacher Corps (ATC) program recruits high-performing, service-oriented individuals from the state of Arkansas to teach in high-need school districts across the state.

### Who are the Fellows?

The first cohort is made up of sought-after and prominent individuals with specific ties to the state of Arkansas. The cohort includes Fellows with PhDs, an

Ivy League graduate, a National Merit Scholar, and many Fellows graduating at the top of their class at their universities.

### Arkansas Teacher Corps 2013-2014 Highlights...

- In Spring 2013, ATC received 135 applications for 21 Fellowships.
- During the 2013-2014 school year, ATC Fellows served 1,925 students in 11 schools across the state.
- Applications are already coming in for the 2014 ATC Fellowships with over 150 applicants!

### What are principals and superintendents saying about ATC Fellows?

- "...a natural and has tremendous potential."
- "...one of the most solutions oriented people I have ever met. I would not trade her for anything."
- "...fits right in with our staff and has become an integral part of our family. We are excited about the level of enthusiasm..."



# GRADUATION RATES

When the graduation caps are thrown in the air, Arkansas students have reached a milestone in their education – the end of their K-12 experience. It is the goal of all schools across the state to prepare their respective students for this day. Over the past three years, since our state has begun calculating four-year cohort graduation rates, Arkansas students have moved in a positive direction. It is important that the K-12 system not only sees graduation growth across all regions, but also across all groups, including students under the Targeted Achievement Gap Group (TAGG) classification (a super-subgroup that includes FRL-eligible, English language learner, and special education students), students in minority groups, students economically disadvantaged or students who are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL).

Arkansas 4-yr Cohort Graduation Rates, 2012-2013

	Overall		Targeted Achievement Gap Group		Minority		Economically Disadvantaged	
	2011-2012	2012-2013	2011-2012	2012-2013	2011-2012	2012-2013	2011-2012	2012-2013
Northwest	85%	86%	79%	81%	78%	81%	79%	81%
Northeast	86%	86%	81%	82%	80%	78%	81%	81%
Central	81%	79%	74%	73%	75%	73%	74%	72%
Southwest	87%	87%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	86%
Southeast	84%	84%	82%	81%	82%	81%	81%	81%
Arkansas Overall	84%	84%	79%	80%	78%	78%	79%	80%

## Spotlight: Schools of Innovation

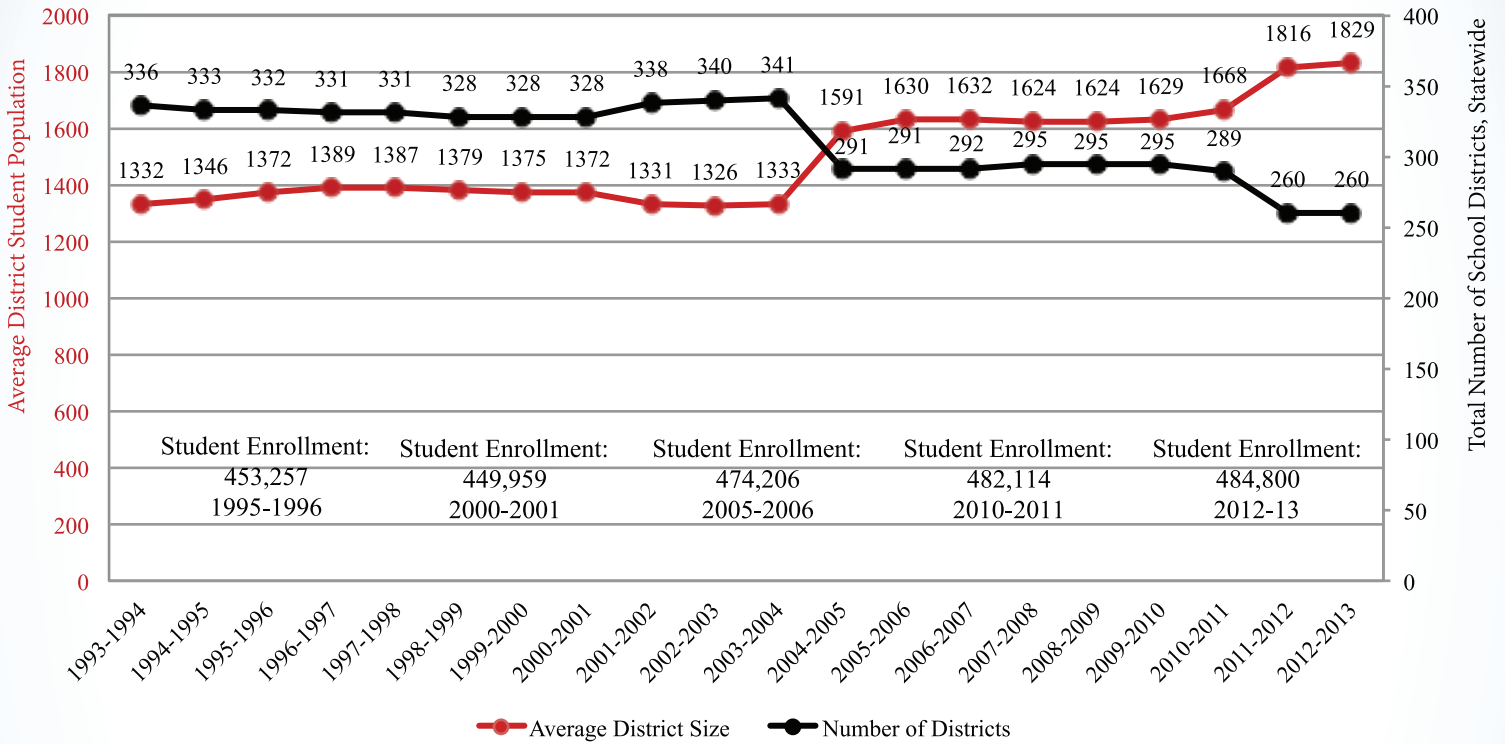


Arkansas’ 2013 General Assembly passed legislation that allowed for the creation of Schools of Innovation. Schools of Innovation will create and implement innovative plans that increase academic performance by improving teaching and learning. To become a School of Innovation, a school must establish a council (comprised of selected faculty and staff, parents, community members, students, and other stakeholders) to create a “Plan of Innovation.” The school council must submit the plan to the Arkansas Department of Education; if approved by the Commissioner, schools will receive necessary waivers from certain laws, rules, and policies to implement the plans. For the first time, in the spring of 2014, schools can apply to become a School of Innovation. We look forward to seeing the innovative plans and schools!

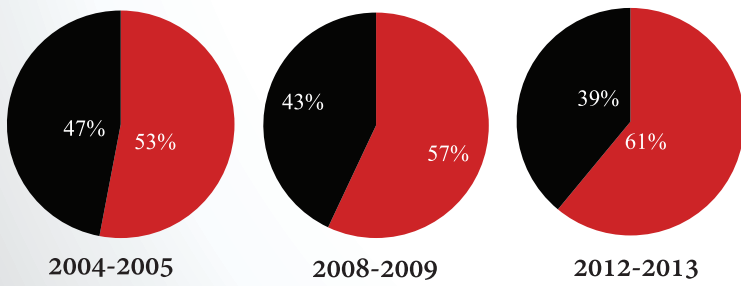
# STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Knowing the size of our districts is important for the ongoing education policy conversation. Going back several years, legislation in Arkansas has limited the minimum size of school districts, which triggers the consolidation of districts to exceed this limit. In 2003, the minimum district student enrollment was set at 350 by the state legislature. So, while the number of districts has trended downward, the average district size has trended up, as districts small enough to require a merger no longer exist. At the same time, student demographics have changed, including rising numbers of students eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch and growing minority populations.

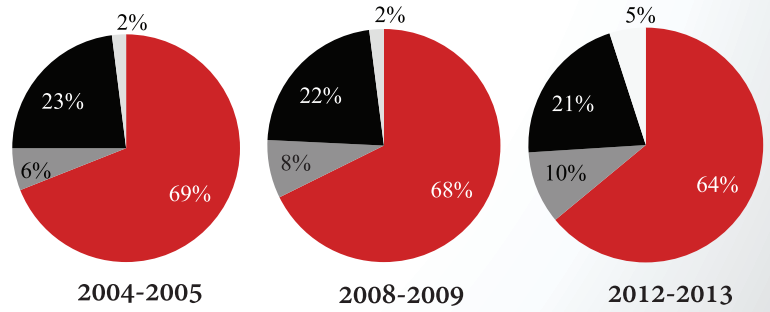
Average District Size and Number of Districts, 1994-2013



Student Free and Reduced Lunch Status by Year



Student Race/Ethnicity Status by Year



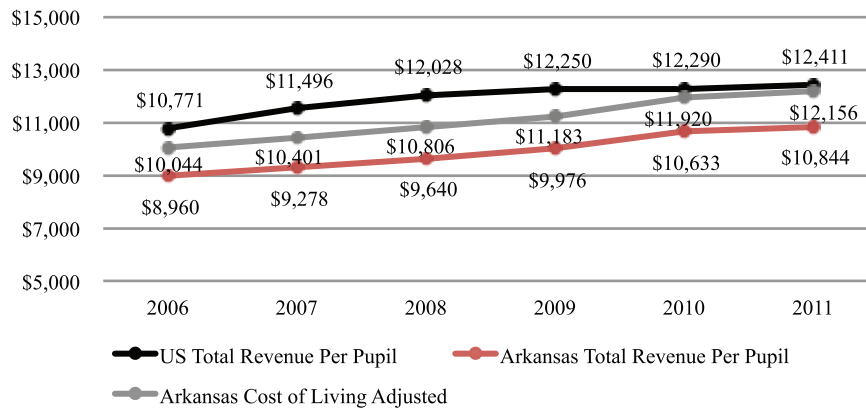
■ %FRL ■ % Non FRL

■ White ■ Hispanic ■ Black ■ Other Races

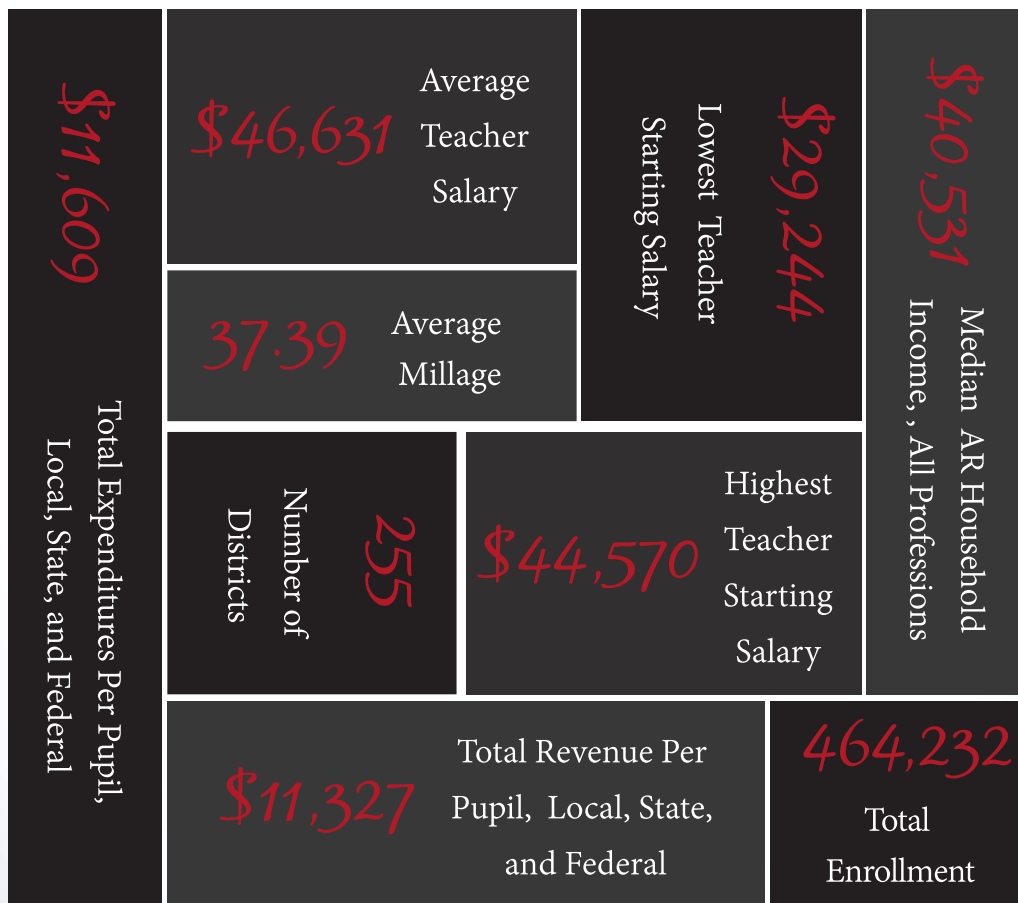
# ARKANSAS K-12 SCHOOL FINANCE

The Office for Education Policy group recently released a full policy brief looking at how school districts in Arkansas, both traditional and charter, are funded, with a special focus on state and local funding. For a full treatment of this topic, look for our policy brief, Traditional Public School and Charter School Funding in Arkansas, on our website. Below, we provide a quick look at some of the education finance numbers that can begin the conversation about Arkansas education funding. From funding levels over time to teacher salaries, the graphs and numbers provided seek to inform that conversation.

**Total Revenue Per Pupil by Year, 2006-2011**



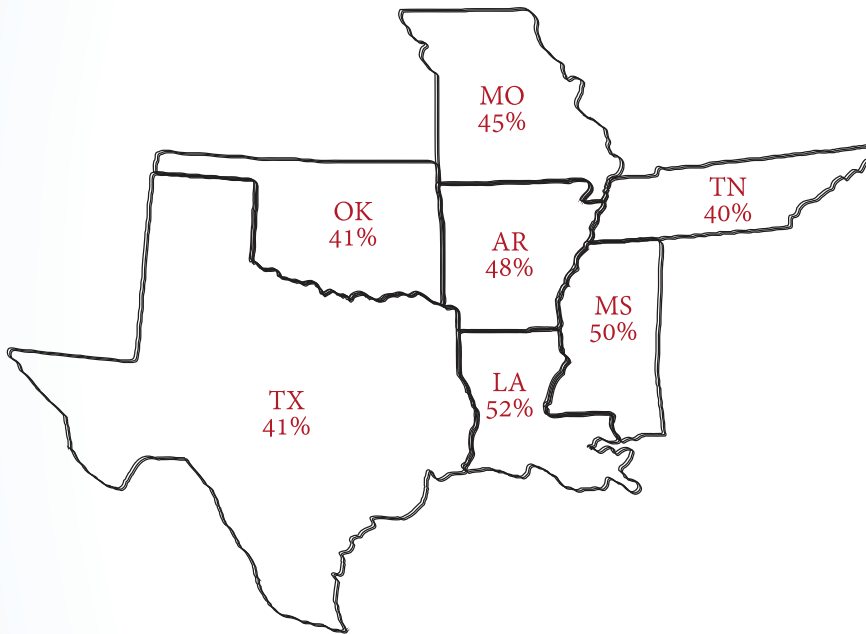
**School District Financing Facts, 2012-2013**



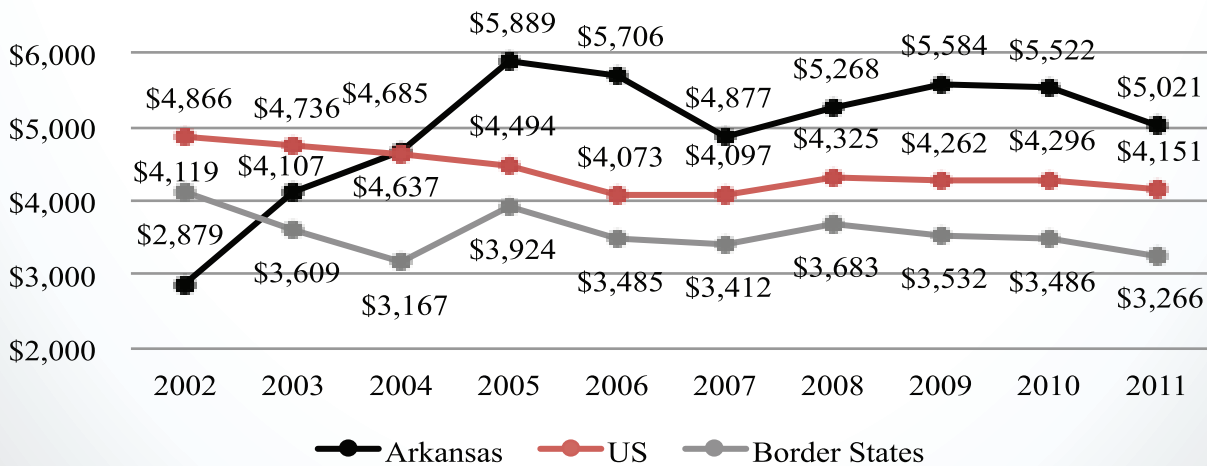
# PRE-SCHOOL IN ARKANSAS

The current education conversation in the state of Arkansas has taken a turn towards younger students – children who are not yet old enough for kindergarten – asking when do we fund early childhood education? And, as the shown below, this has been an area of concentration in the region. The map shows the percentage of students who are enrolled in some type of pre-school program across the state. The graph at the bottom of the page shows spending on the state-sponsored pre-school program in Arkansas, states that border Arkansas (Mississippi, Missouri, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas), and the nation as a whole. In Arkansas, this program is called the Arkansas Better Choice (ABC) program. These figures do not count students in non-public pre-schools, such as religious or independently run schools. According to the NIEER report, 32% of children in pre-school nationwide attend state sponsored programs.

Percentage of Children Attending Some Type of Pre-School, Ages 3 and 4, 2010-11



Pre-K State Spending Per Enrollee, 2002-2011



# Spotlight: EAST and New Tech

Across the state, more schools are undertaking initiatives to educate, motivate, and prepare students for the future. The EAST (Environmental and Spatial Technology) Initiative focuses on “student-driven service projects” that promote teamwork and technology. The EAST Initiative began in Arkansas in 1996 and has since spread to over 200 schools in Arkansas and seven other states. EAST students undergo service projects that incorporate technology. For instance, EAST students at Batesville Junior High School are creating Claymation videos and other media presentations to educate elementary students about healthy living and healthy eating. At Dardanelle High School, EAST students created an online map of the bus routes for the district by using Geographic Information System and Global Positioning System mapping tools.



In 2012-13, the EAST Initiative started EAST Core: a program that incorporates the EAST model into core classes (Biology, Geometry, Algebra II, and Chemistry currently). EAST Core is being implemented in eight schools across Arkansas this school year: Harrisburg High School, Hot Springs High School, Malvern High School, Monticello High School, Morrilton High School, Prairie Grove High School, and Star City High School.

The New Tech Network is a model of schools that focuses on project-based learning and integrating technology into all classrooms. The New Tech Network, a national organization that began in 1996, operates in 14 schools across Arkansas: Arkadelphia High School, Blytheville High School, Cross County High School, Dumas New Tech High School, El Dorado High School, Highland High School, Hillcrest High School, Hope Academy of Science and Technology, Lincoln New Tech High School, Marked Tree High School, Riverview High School, Rogers New Technology High School, Trumann High School, and Van Buren High School.

New Tech students gain valuable critical-thinking, problem-solving, and technology skills. In fall 2012, Hope School District opened Hope Academy of Science and Technology in the high school. The model provides one-to-one access to computers for all students and allows students to take inter-disciplinary courses that focus on project-based learning, such as an integrated science and math course.



## SOURCES

We would like to reference the following sources for data used in this State Report Card. All graphs and tables used in this publication come from publicly-available data. If you have any questions about how this publication was constructed, please contact our office.

ACT.org

Arkansas Department of Education

Arkansas Department of Higher Education

Arkansas Realtors Association

Bureau of Labor Statistics

Census.gov

Fortune.com

Institute of Education Sciences

U.S. News and World Report

# OFFICE FOR EDUCATION POLICY MISSION:

The Office for Education Policy (OEP) provides relevant education research, data, and policy analysis to support data-driven decision-making for Arkansas PK-12 policymakers and educators.



*Do you want to learn more?* If you have any questions regarding this report, please email or give us a call. We hope you find this edition of the State Report Card helpful. We appreciate your support and interest in the students of Arkansas! Be sure to visit us on the web at: [www.officeforeducationpolicy.org](http://www.officeforeducationpolicy.org)



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