

CHILDREN

COMMUNITIES



FAMILIES

SCHOOLS

GETTING READY <sup>4</sup>  
ARKANSAS | 2009 *School*

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, 2009

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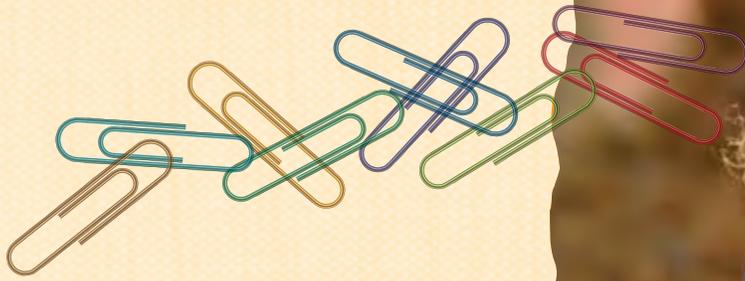
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ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF

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

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# 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 10-17, continues to decline from 2,486 in 1998 to 1,906 in 2007. The rate per 1,000 females also declined, from 16.5 in 1998 to 12.6 in 2007.



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 243.3% between 1998 and 2008 to a total of 318,226. Arkansas is one of 13 states to expand income eligibility levels during trying economic times. According to Census Bureau's *Current Population Survey*, 47.7% of children in Arkansas at or below 200% of poverty have health insurance compared to 32.0% for the U.S. in 2007. 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 101.8% increase in families and a 95.2% increase in children served in those families from 2000 to 2007. The amount paid through this program increased 222.9%, but the Transitional Employment Assistance program saw declines in both families served and children served since 2000.

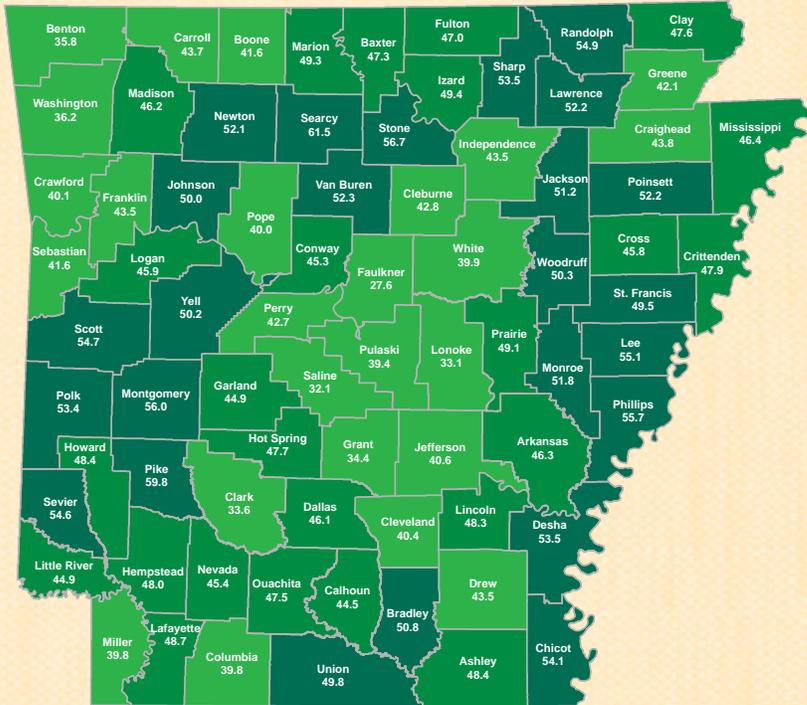
The number and capacity of Child Care Licenses have grown for all types, especially in centers licensed for school-age children, where capacity increased 64.8% since 2001. Also, more licensees are meeting state early childhood accreditation/quality approval standards. These standards ensure quality programs for young children. The capacity meeting these standards was 35,368 in 2007, or 21.7%, an increase of 29.9% 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. Arkansas was recognized by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) for outstanding quality standards for pre-K programs. 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 2004-05. As a result, the number of children served grew at a rate of 28.8% per year over a four-year period to a total of 21,321 enrolled in 2007-08.



# ARKids First Enrollment as a Percent of Population Age 0-19, 2007\*

\*Population estimates not available for 2008 comparison.



State: 41.8%

27.6% - 43.8%    43.9% - 49.5%    49.6% - 61.5%

# ARKids First Enrollment

	ARKids A*	ARKids B**	Total ARKids
June 2004	205,792	63,831	<b>269,623</b>
June 2005	224,286	69,042	<b>293,328</b>
June 2006	239,450	74,173	<b>313,623</b>
June 2007	247,401	77,461	<b>324,862</b>
June 2008	241,169	77,057	<b>318,226</b>

Percent Change from June 1998 to June 2008 = 243.3%

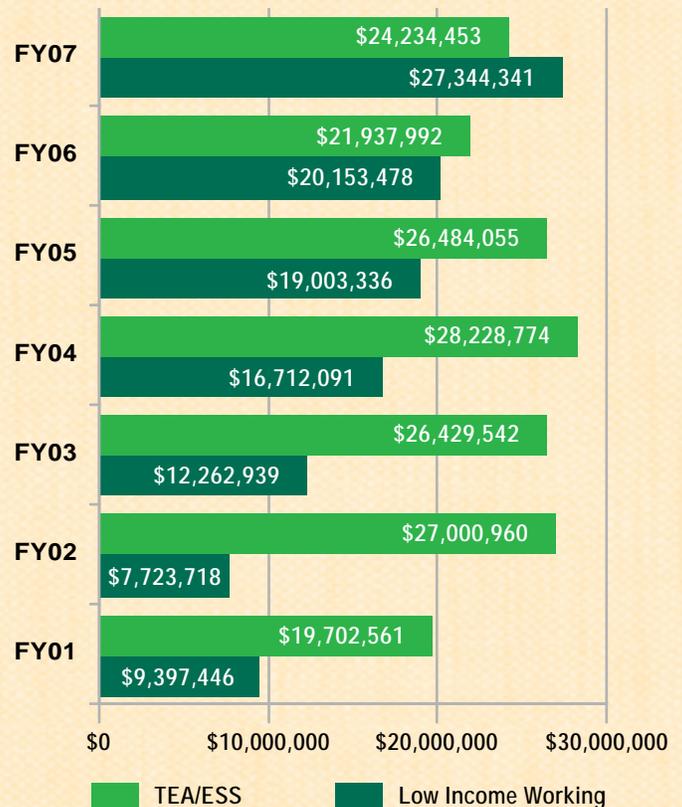
\*ARKids A: Full Medical Coverage

\*\*ARKids B: Reduced Coverage

# Child Care Voucher Program, State Fiscal Year 2007

	Children	Families	Amount
TEA/ESS***	14,772	7,755	\$24,234,453
Low-Income Working	14,173	7,713	\$27,344,341
Foster Care	2,245	903	\$2,813,766
Protective Services	207	119	\$212,985

\*\*\*Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA)  
Extended Support Services (ESS)



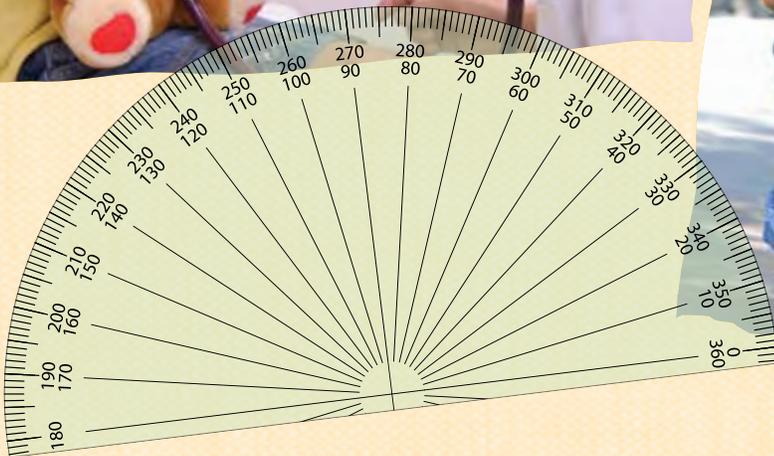
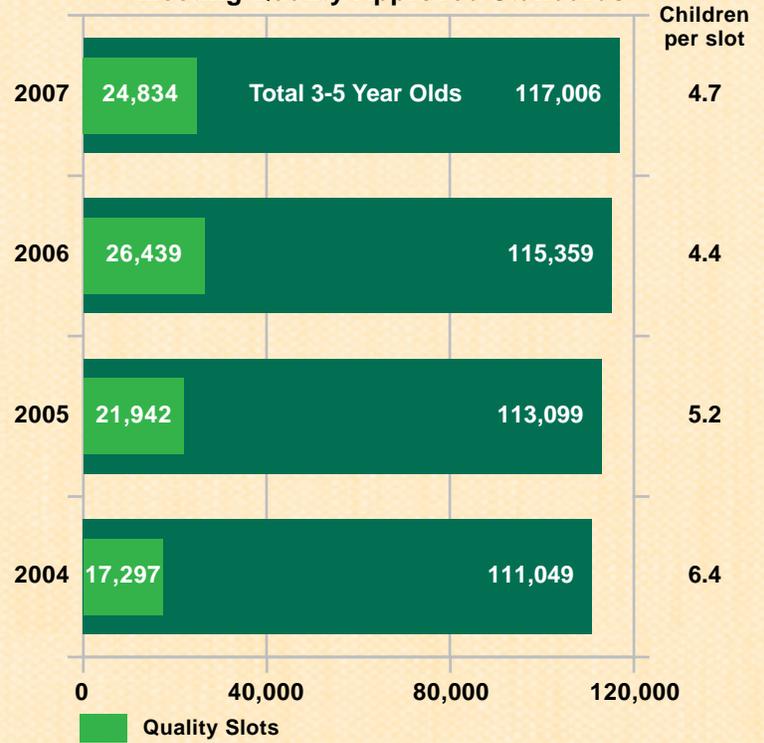
# Child Care Licenses, 2007

	Licensed Number	Licensed Capacity	Capacity Meeting Quality Standards
Preschool Centers	1,731	79,696	24,834 31.2%
Infant/Toddler Centers	992	30,873	5,457 17.7%
School Age Centers	620	42,650	4,686 11.0%
Day Care Family Homes	830	9,523	391 4.1%
<b>Total Licenses</b>	<b>4,173</b>	<b>162,742</b>	<b>35,368 21.7%</b>

Children Per Licensed Slot	
Age 0-13	3.3

Children Per Quality Slot	
Age 0-13	15.3
Age 0-4	6.5
Age 5-13	73.0

## Preschool Licensed Child Care Facilities Meeting Quality Approved Standards



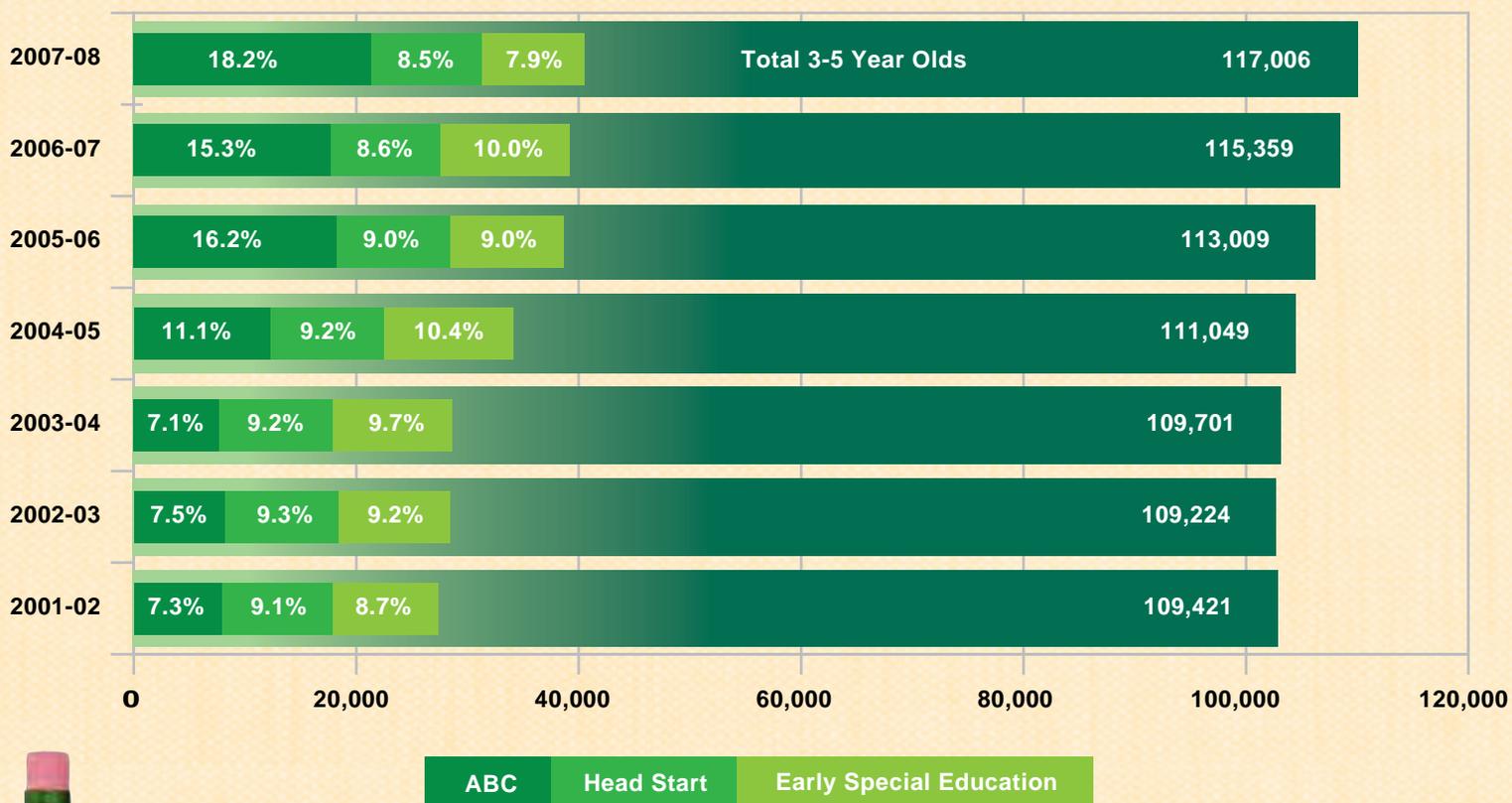
# Number of Children Served at Any Time During Program Year

(Not Full-Time Equivalent)

	ABC	Head Start
2001 - 2002	7,976	9,913
2002 - 2003	8,246	10,212
2003 - 2004	7,745	10,138
2004 - 2005	12,333	10,192
2005 - 2006	18,316	10,130
2006 - 2007	17,678	9,950
2007 - 2008	21,321	9,950

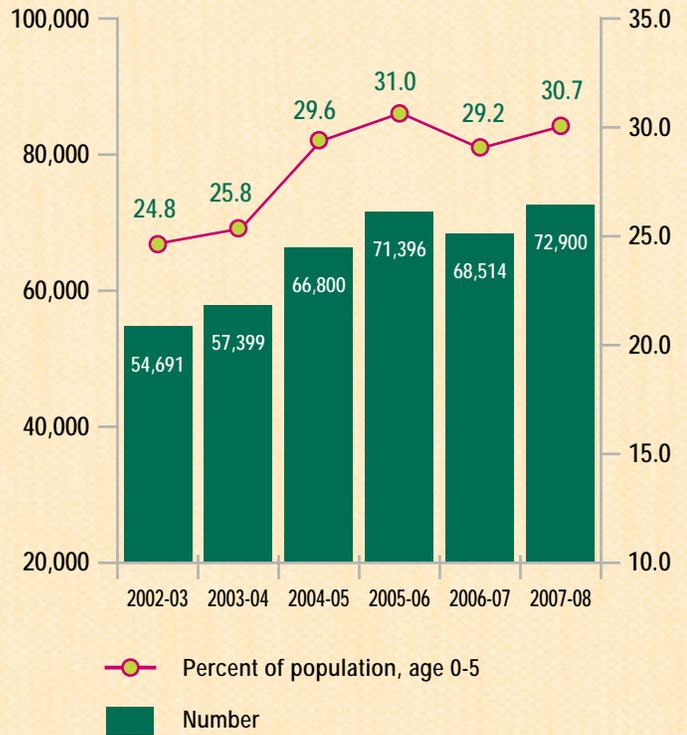


## Children Served Compared to 3-5 Year Old Population



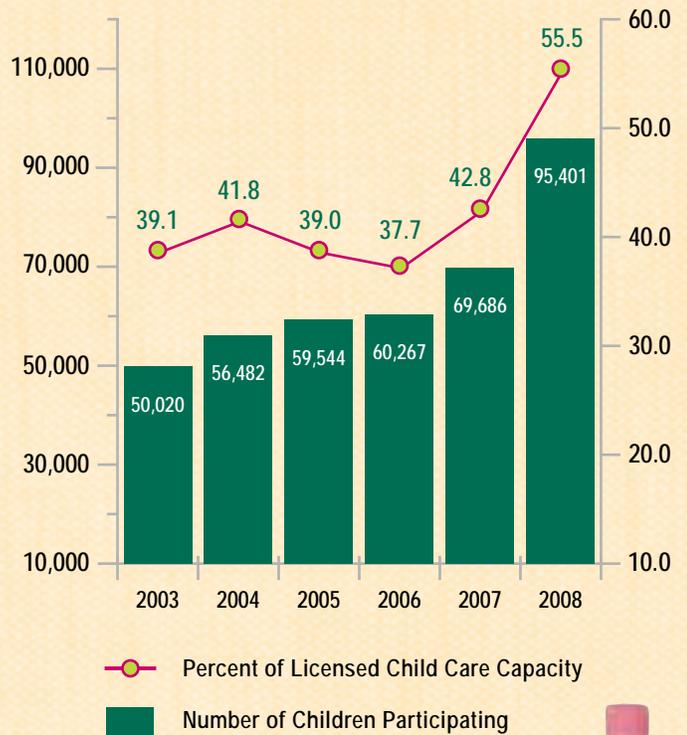
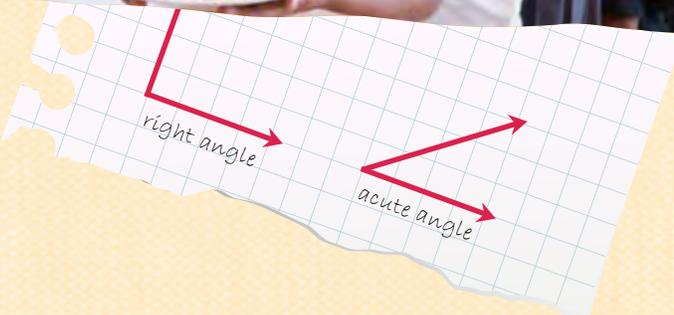
# Number of Children Served by State and Federally Funded Programs During Program Year

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



# USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program

(Special Nutrition Program for Child Care)



# R E A D Y

## 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 families. The successful relationship between early home experiences and later school readiness 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 2008 poverty threshold for a family of four with two adults and two children was an income of \$21,834. The percentage of children, age 0-4, in poverty has dropped since 1993 from 31.3% but remains a high 29.1% affecting 56,804 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 was 25.3% in 2007, up from 21.8% in 1999.

The number of children under 19 years of age who receive food stamps increased by 63,132 or 31.4% between FY2001 and FY2007. The program is now serving 35.8% of children under 19 years of age. Also, WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) caseloads increased 3.4% from 2006 to 2008, with two counties increasing more than 50%.

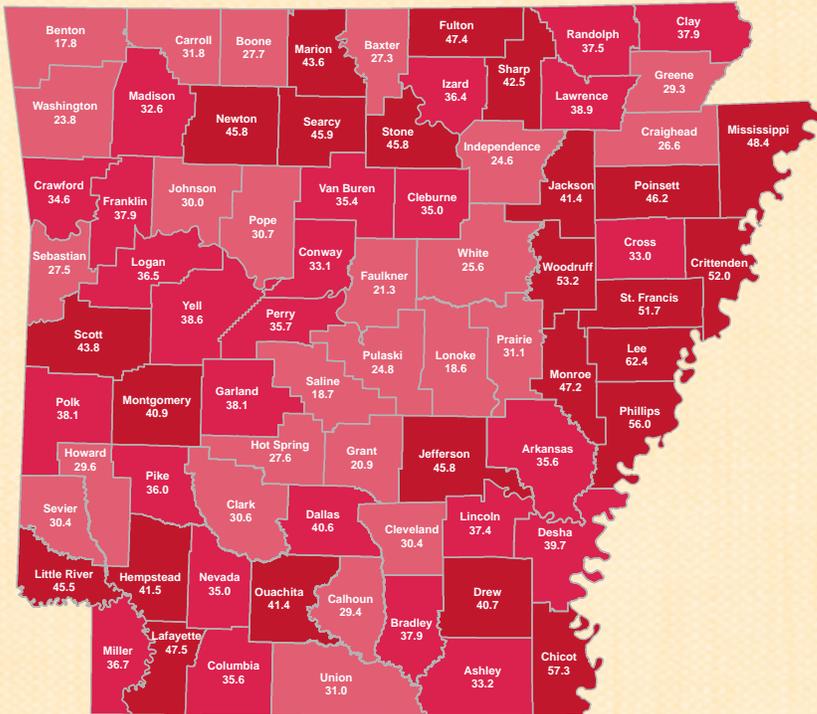


# Federal Poverty Level Income Thresholds for 2008

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

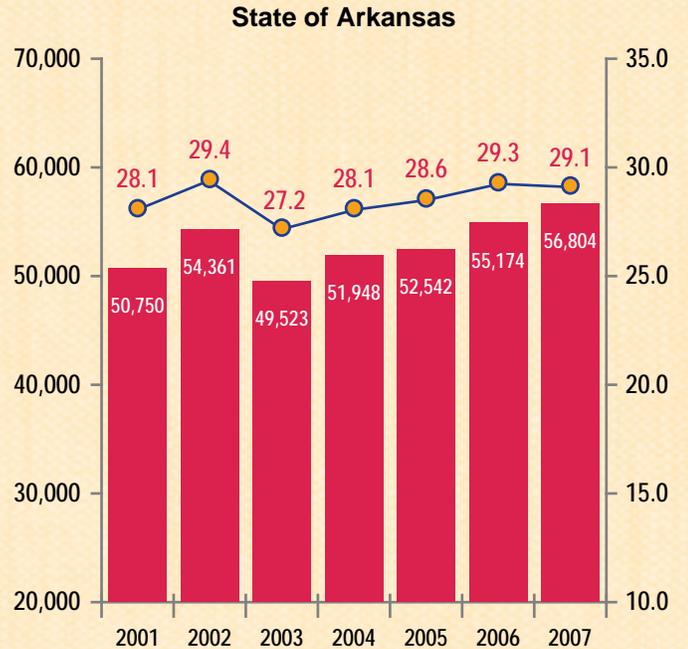
Size of Family	Number of Children								
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight or more	
Two Persons									
Householder < 65 Years	\$14,840								
Three persons	17,330	\$17,346							
Four persons	22,570	21,834	\$21,910						
Five persons	27,170	26,338	25,694	\$25,301					
Six persons	30,925	30,288	29,677	28,769	\$28,230				
Seven persons	35,664	34,901	34,369	33,379	32,223	\$30,955			
Eight persons	39,990	39,270	38,639	37,744	36,608	35,426	\$35,125		
Nine persons or more	47,915	47,278	46,743	45,864	44,656	43,563	43,292	\$41,624	

## Percent of Children in Poverty Age 0-4, 2007



State: 21.9%

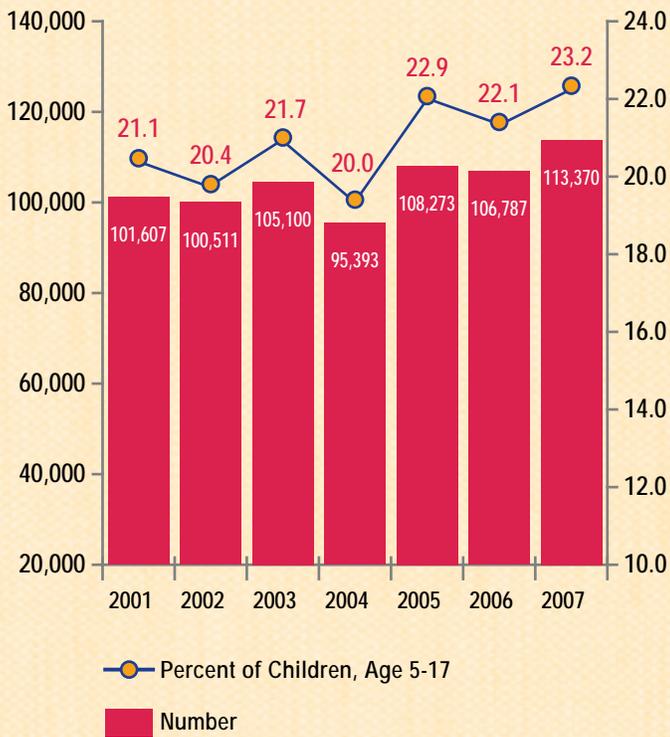
17.8% - 31.8%    31.9% - 40.6%    40.7% - 62.4%



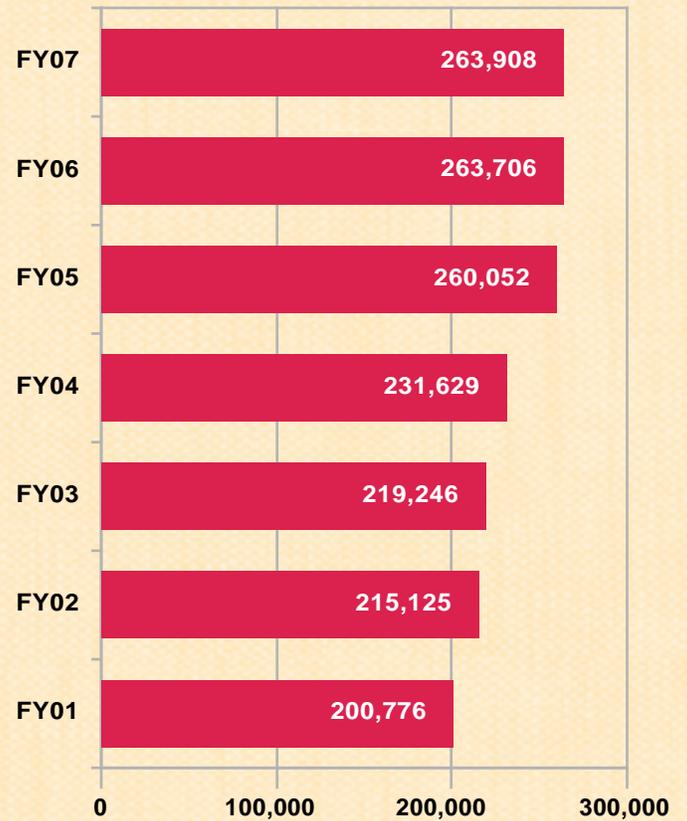
—●— Percent of Children, Age 0-4

■ Number

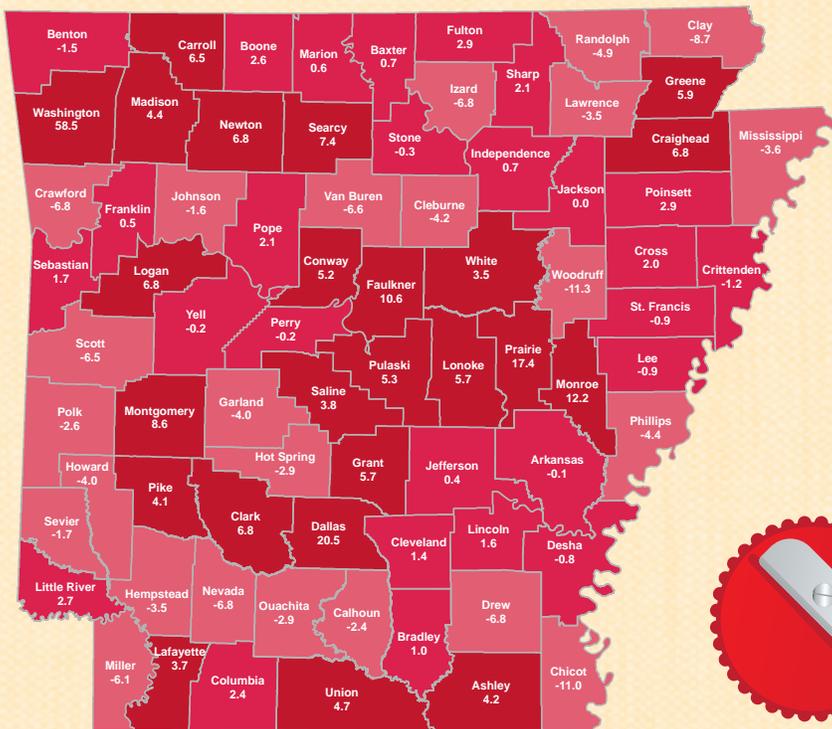
## Children in Poverty, Age 5-17



## Food Stamps, Under 19 Years of Age



## Percent Change in WIC Caseloads, by County, From 2006 to 2008



State: 3.4%

-11.3% - -1.5%

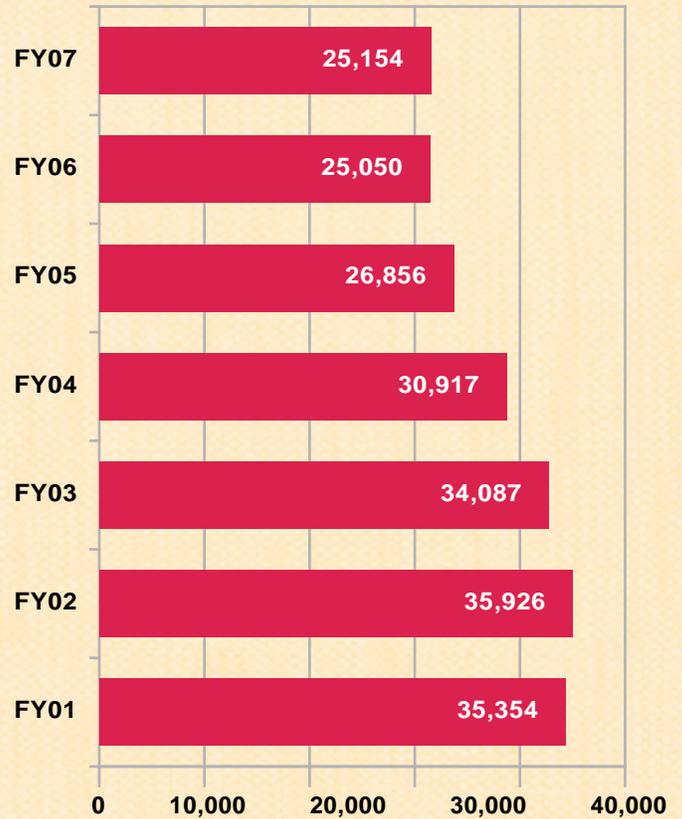
-1.4% - 2.9%

3.0% - 58.5%

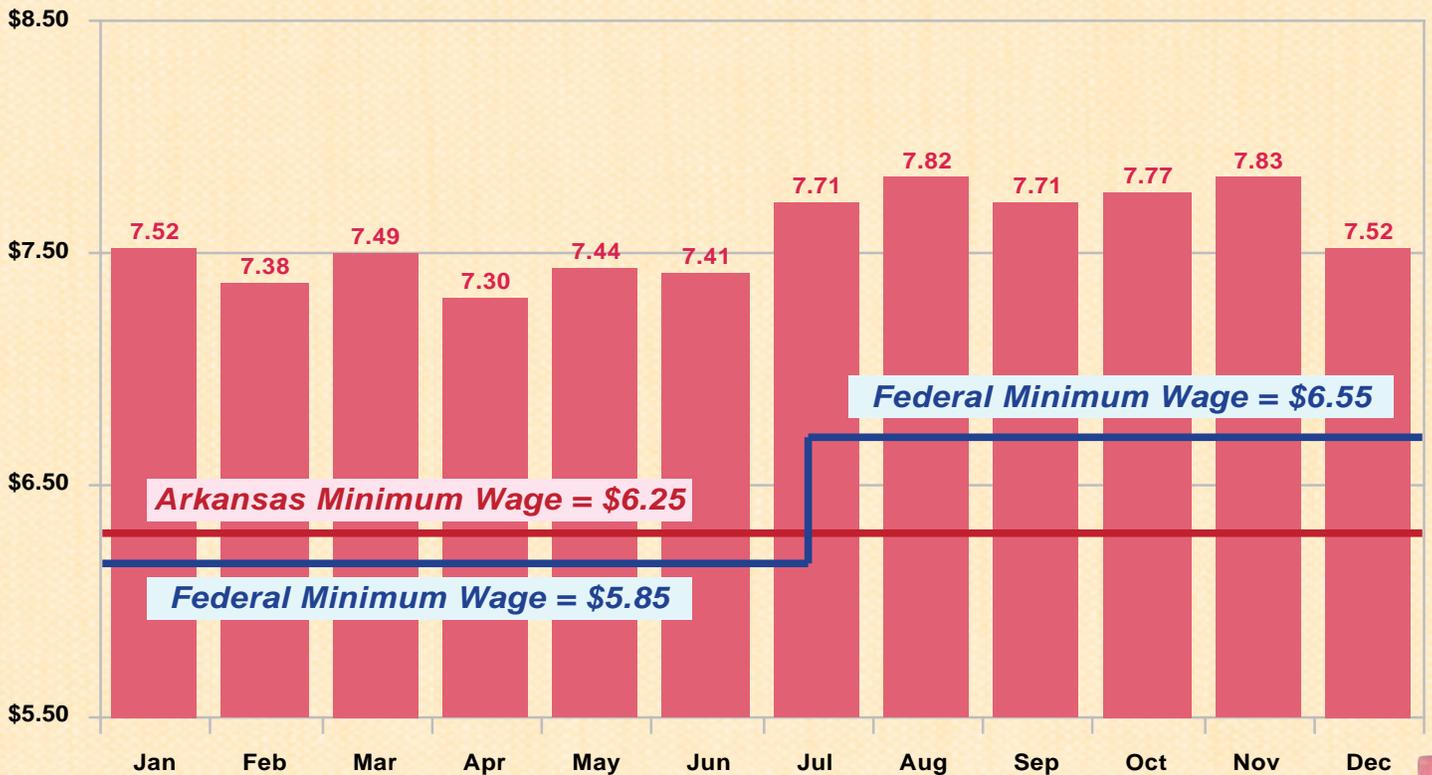
## Victims of Child Maltreatment



## Transitional Employment Assistance Children



## Average Hourly Wage of TEA Recipients, 2008



# 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 steadily at a rate of 0.3% over the past 10 years.

The number of students eligible for reduced and free lunches increased from 212,571 in 2001 to 258,816 in 2007, an increase of 21.8%.

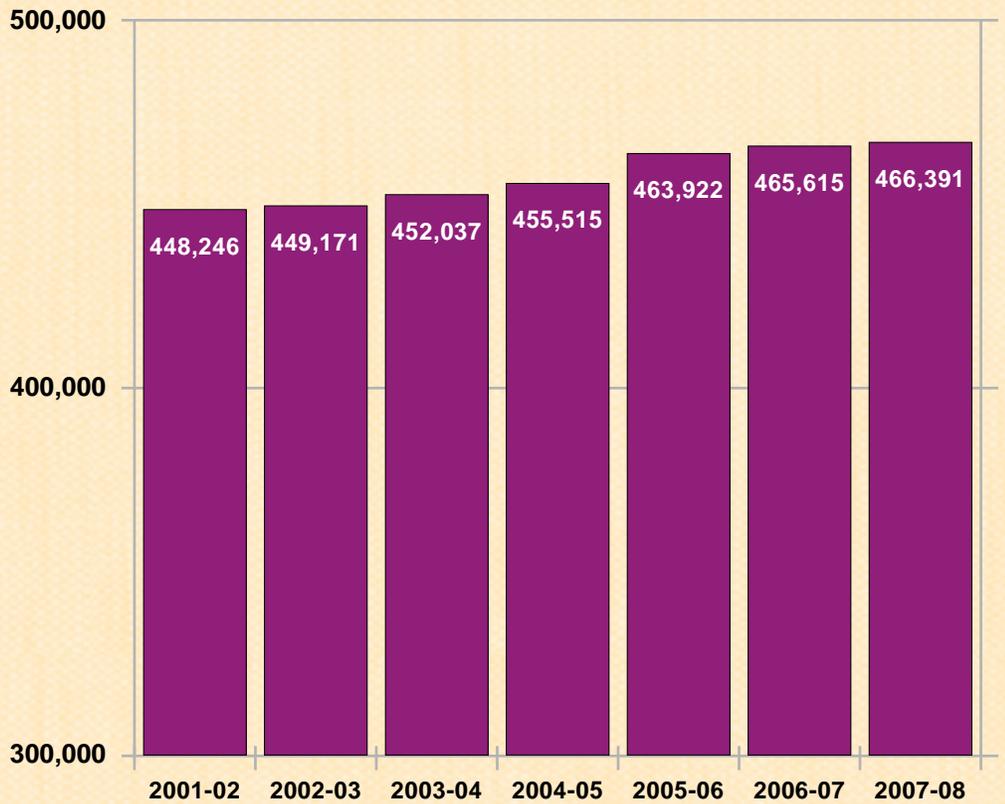
School age children living in poverty continues to be a problem in many parts of the state. In 2007 poverty rates ranged from a low of 7.5% in Armored School District in Mississippi County to a high of 55.1% in the Elaine School District in Phillips County. Statewide, the poverty rate for children 5-17 years of age dropped only slightly from 23.4% in 1993 to 23.2% in 2007.

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 at risk for overweight was 37.9% in 2007-08. After five years of measuring BMI, the percentage of students who are overweight or at risk for overweight has declined by 0.2%.

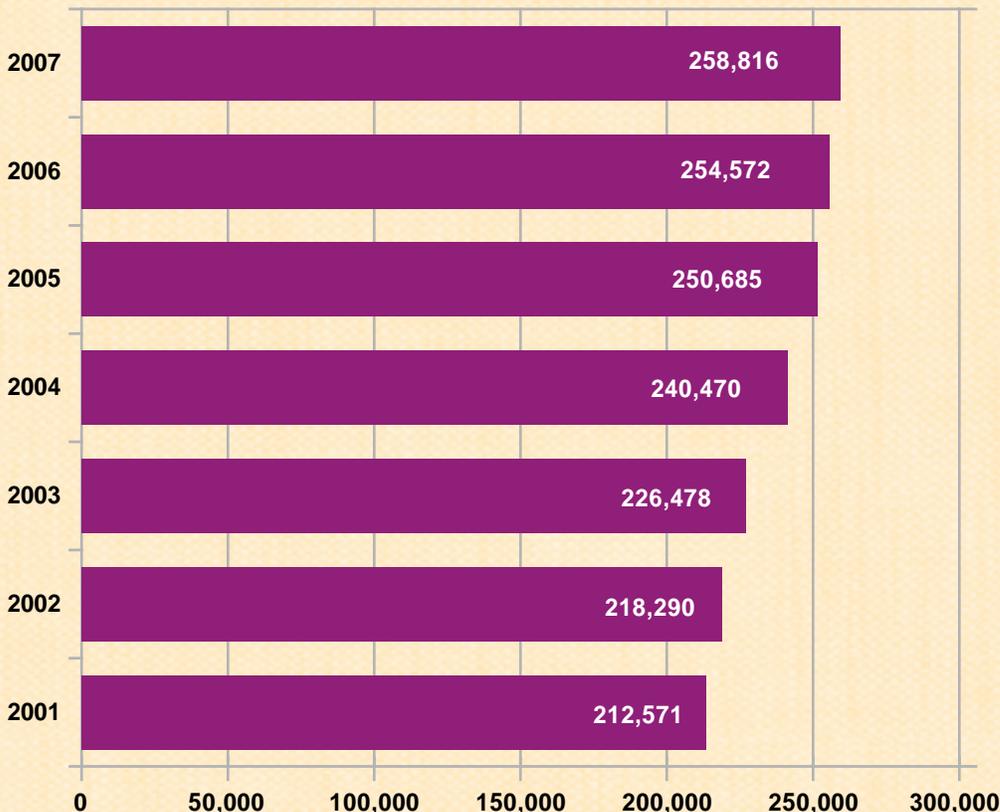
The percentage of students in Grade 4 who met or exceeded proficiency in math and literacy on the Criterion Referenced Test, Benchmark Exam in 2008 was up eight percentage points in both math and literacy from 2007.



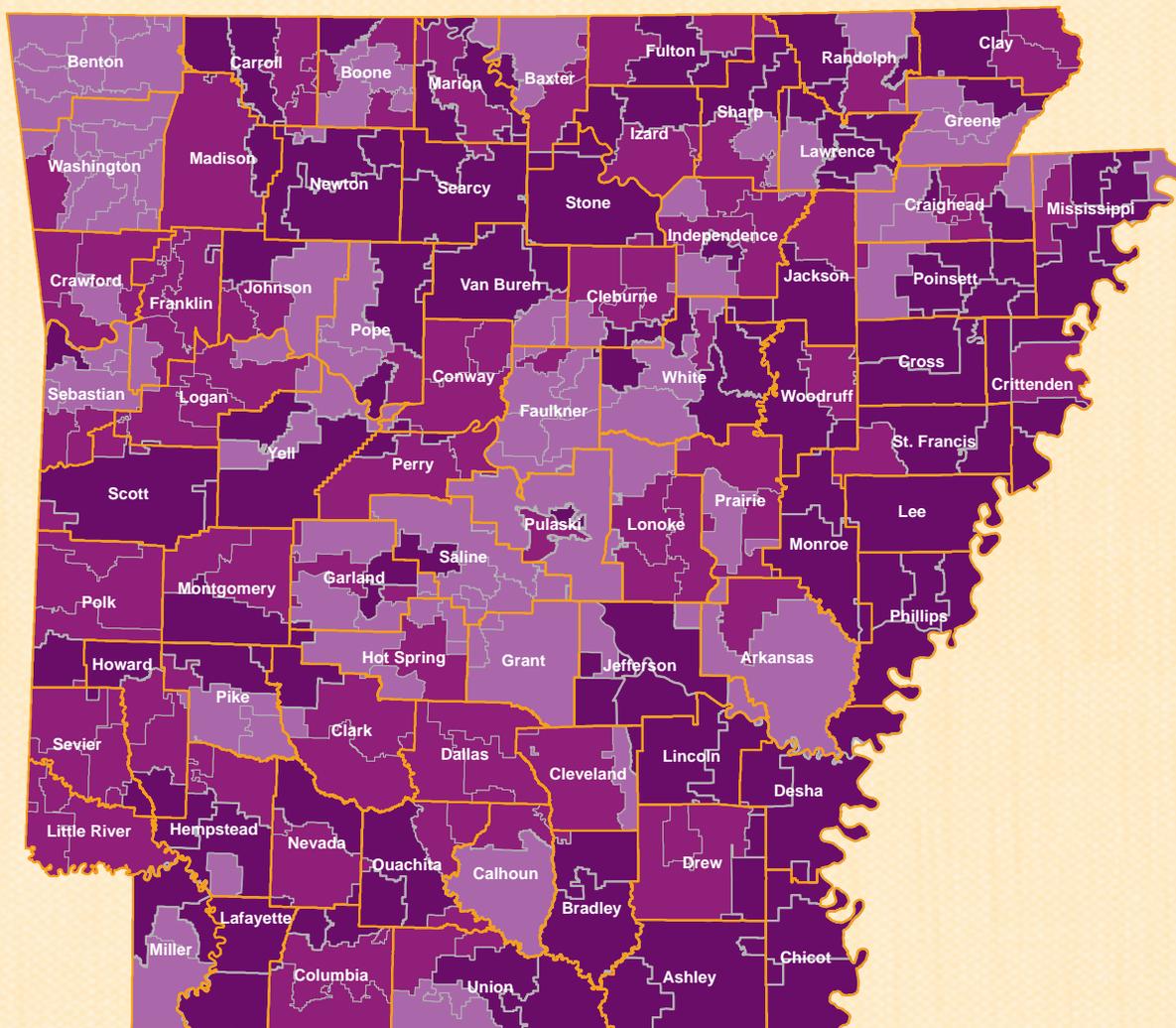
# Public School Enrollment Grades K-12



# School Lunch Program, Students Eligible



# Percent of Children in Poverty, 5-17 Years of Age, by School District, 2007



**State: 23.2%**

7.5% - 20.2%
  20.3% - 26.6%
  26.7% - 55.1%
  County boundaries

County	School District	Number of Children in Poverty	Poverty Rate
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### Lowest Poverty Rates

Mississippi	Armorel School District	22	7.5%
Logan	Scranton School District	32	8.8%
Craighead	Valley View School District	142	9.3%
Benton	Bentonville School District	953	9.6%
Faulkner	Vilonia School District	297	10.0%

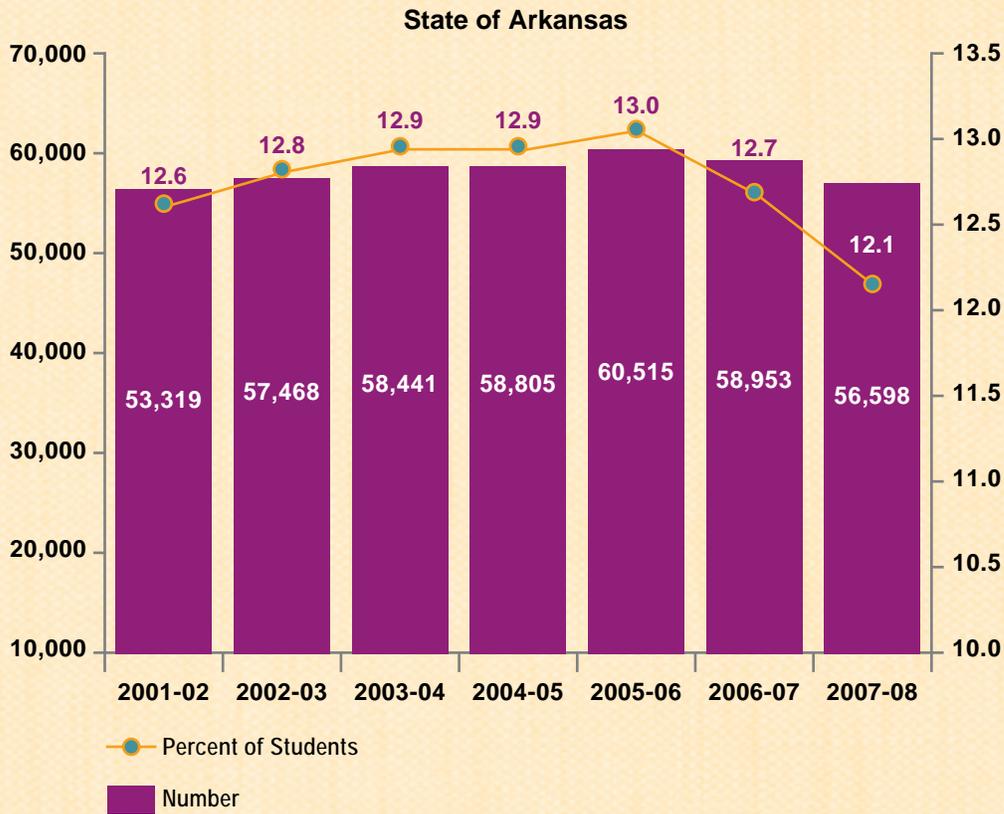
County	School District	Number of Children in Poverty	Poverty Rate
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### Highest Poverty Rates

Mississippi	Osceola School District	769	44.5%
Crittenden	Earle School District	434	45.1%
Phillips	Helena-W. Helena School District	1,450	46.9%
Phillips	Marvell School District	323	49.8%
Phillips	Elaine School District	201	55.1%



# Children Receiving Special Education K-12 in School Districts



## Suspensions and Expulsions



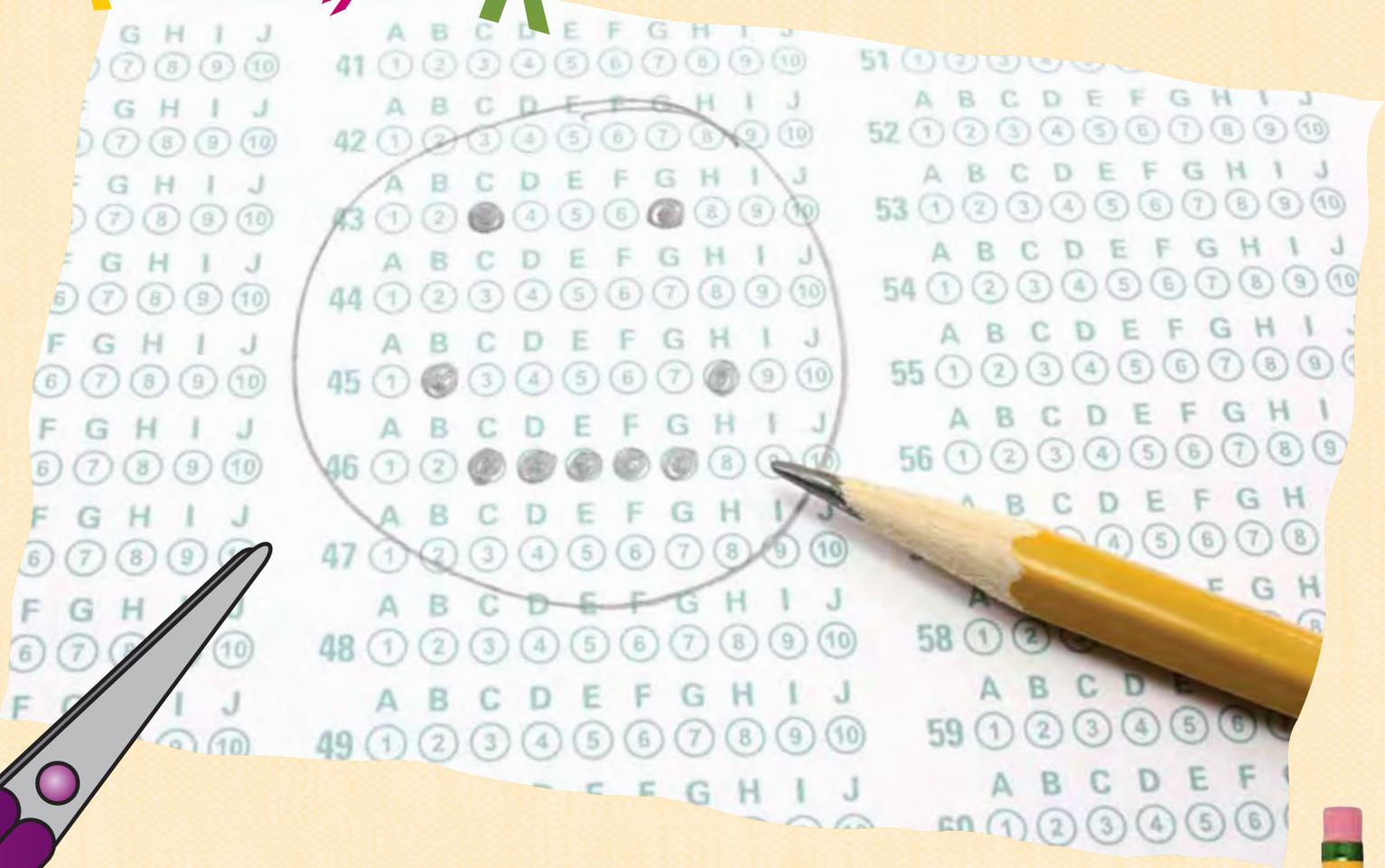
2007 - 2008	131,152
2006 - 2007	126,878
2005 - 2006	129,990
2004 - 2005	122,974
2003 - 2004	122,294
2002 - 2003	116,931
2001 - 2002	115,162
<b>Seven year % Change</b>	<b>13.9%</b>



# Grade 4 Test Scores on ACTAAP

(Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program)

					Meeting or Exceeding Proficiency				
Below Basic	At Basic	Proficient	Advanced	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	
<b>Math</b>									
Number	3,957	4,286	9,562	15,167	24,729	21,799	20,073	16,542	21,960
Percent	12.0	13.0	29.0	46.0	75.0	67.0	62.0	50.0	66.0
<b>Literacy</b>									
Number	2,307	8,241	12,856	9,560	22,416	19,534	20,342	16,872	22,958
Percent	7.0	25.0	39.0	29.0	68.0	60.0	63.0	51.0	69.0





# *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 \$30,177 in 2007. This was 78.1% of the U.S. per capita personal income. This is an improvement since 2001 when Arkansas' percent of the U.S. was only 75.3%.

While the state median household increased 16.4% from 2001 to 2007, the U.S. median household income grew at a faster rate. As a percentage of the U.S., the state decreased from 77.8% of the U.S. median household in 2001 to income to 75.4% in 2007.

In the health professionals field, the total physicians increased 12.4% and total nursing increased 1.6% from 2001-2007.



# Terms and Definitions

- 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, 2008. Calendar year.

School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Arkansas Department of Education, Statewide Information System

- 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 Food Stamps, Under 19 Years of Age:** The number of children under 19 years of age, who receive food stamps. The Food Stamp program is designed to provide nutrition to low income individuals and households in the form of coupons. The amount of coupons allotted is based on the household size, resources, and income. Arkansas Department of Human Services, *Annual Statistical Report*. State fiscal year.
- 13 Women, Infants, and Children:** WIC provides Federal grants to States for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and nonbreastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk. Arkansas Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics. State fiscal year.
- 14 Child Maltreatment:** The number of children for whom an allegation of maltreatment has been founded and the percent of the population that is less than 18 years of age. Arkansas Department of Human Services, *Annual Statistical Report*. State fiscal year.
- 15 Temporary 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.
- 16 Average Hourly Wage of TEA Recipients:** The average hourly wage from January 2008 through December 2008. Arkansas Department of Workforce Services. Calendar year.
- 17 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.
- 18 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
- 19 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 US Census Bureau to comply with Title 1 requirements. U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates. Calendar year.
- 20 Overweight or At Risk for Overweight Students:** The number of overweight or at risk for overweight 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, *The Arkansas Assessment of Childhood and Adolescent Obesity in Arkansas*, Year Five.
- 21 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.
- 22 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.
- 23 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, Benchmark Examination, Combined Population. Arkansas Department of Education.
- 24 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.
- 25 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.
- 26 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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