

Pre-K in Arkansas is Falling Behind

Arkansas Implements High-Quality Pre-K Programs

We have high-quality classroom environments in Arkansas; 83% of classrooms rated above 5 on a scale of 1-7 on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), an internationally accepted rating tool.

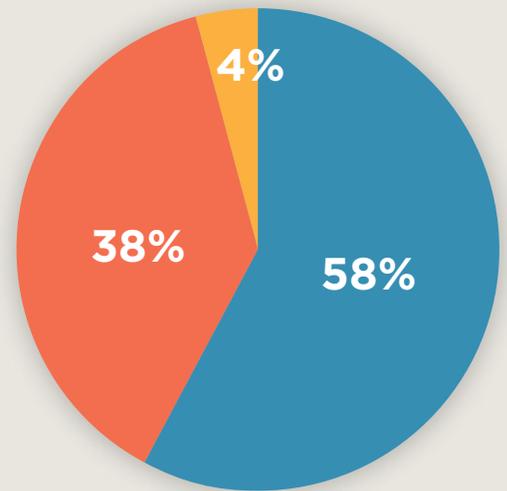
We have support in place for students in grades K-3 to prevent Pre-K fadeout through our work on adaption of the state's new early learning standards, the Governor's RISE Arkansas initiative, and the Grade-Level Reading Campaign.

Pre-K Investments Benefit Everyone

The return on investment (ROI) of Pre-K is real.

“We invest in Pre-K because it’s very important to us...the rewards we receive on the back end are tenfold.”

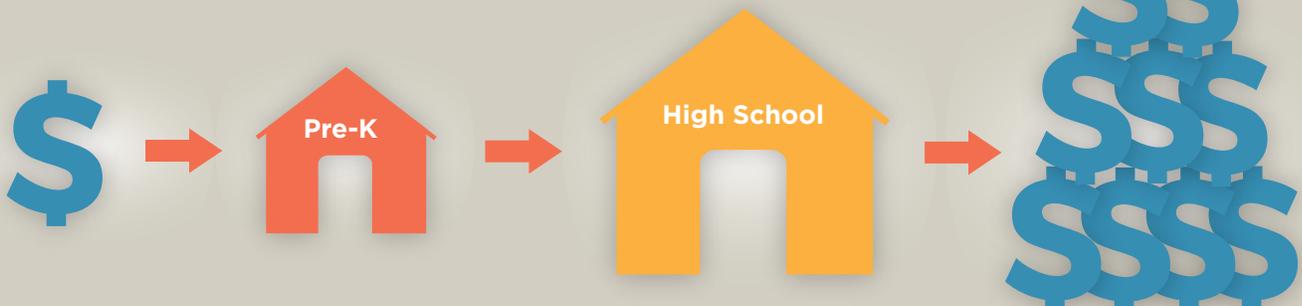
— Roger Rich, Southside Superintendent



Funds allocated by the legislature are matched locally and amplify the impact of programs by 40%. But programs are burdened with shrinking dollars.

- ▶ State General Revenue
- ▶ Local Match for Arkansas Better Chance (ABC)
- ▶ Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Researchers estimate that each dollar invested in Pre-K for low-income children returns up to 13 dollars to the nation in present value terms.



Investments

State Pre-K Spending Ranked 8th in 2005, but has since fallen in relation to other states.



State Spending Rankings from the National Institute for Early Education Research State of Preschool Reports - 2004 to 2015. Available at www.NIEER.org

Arkansas has also lost its footing as a national leader in providing high-quality Pre-K for children and their families. Our recent spending has now dropped below Pre-ABC levels.

Mind the Gap

An estimated **36%** of low-income 3 and 4 year-olds in Arkansas lack state or Head Start funding for Pre-K.



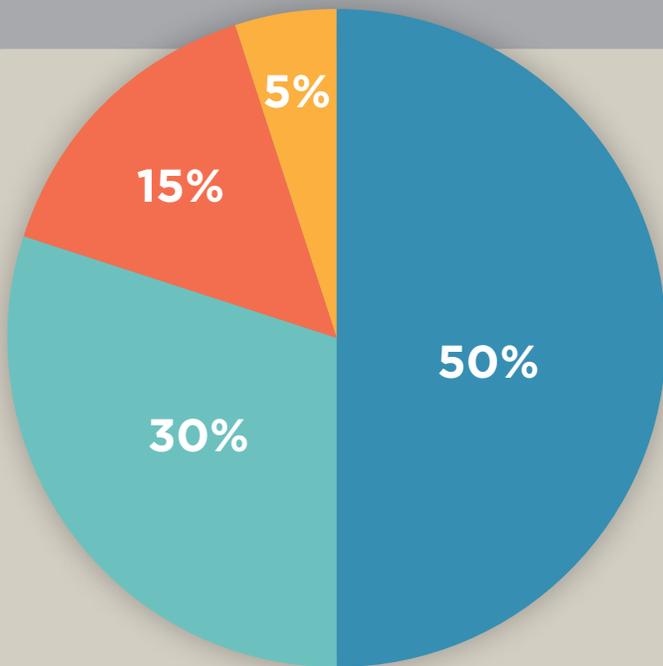
Estimated Arkansas 3 and 4-Year-Olds in Poverty



3 and 4-Year Olds Not Served by State Programs or Head Start

Population data from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2015 5-year estimates. Enrollment data from the 2015 NIEER State of Preschool Report at www.nieer.org

And, gaps in services still exist for our students who are most in need of services.



Recommended Investments

- ▶ **Refine Indicators of Quality — \$3 million**
- ▶ **Scale Innovations — \$6 million**
- ▶ **Provide Targeted Salary Increases — \$10 million**
- ▶ **Improve Data Infrastructure — \$1 million**

Westat, an employee-owned corporation, has provided research services to Federal and state government agencies and private organizations since 1963. As one of the foremost contract research organizations in the United States, we are recognized for our statistical skills and developing custom research and program evaluation studies across a range of subject areas.

ForwARd Arkansas, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is a partnership of education, business, government and community leaders committed to improving public education in Arkansas. ForwARd was established through a partnership between the Arkansas Board of Education, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation. For more information, please visit forwardarkansas.org.

Holding Our Ground with a \$20 Million Investment

THE SOLUTION

"We are up against a wall without additional state funds we will be forced to make harder choices..."

— Kathy Morledge, Springdale School District

▶ **Refine Indicators of Quality — \$3 million**

Focus on teacher-child interactions, now shown to be the most important aspect of quality and positive child outcomes.

Evolve to use Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, 3rd Edition (ERS-3) with measurements for interactions throughout the scale and at all indicator levels.

Support individualized instruction and effective use of curricula using professional learning communities to strengthen educators.

▶ **Provide Targeted Salary Increases — \$10 million**

Focus on high need areas to maintain stability of programming and relationships with students and families.

Create opportunities for non-degreed teaching assistants/paraprofessionals to pursue a degree and increase the options of highly qualified teachers in the teacher pipeline.

Use upcoming early childhood education workforce study being developed by UAMS to inform policy.

▶ **Scale Innovations — \$6 million**

Incentivize innovation and best practices in high-need areas in ways such as piloting programs that replicate elements of quality.

Improve accountability around quality measures and reward successful programs.

Transfer best-practices from successful programs into Pre-K classrooms using innovation grants and targeted professional development.

▶ **Improve Data Infrastructure — \$1 million**

Ensure that lawmakers and state agencies have comprehensive information to answer key policy questions.

Improve data collection, availability, storage and analytics to ensure effective monitoring, evaluation, and improvement of programs.

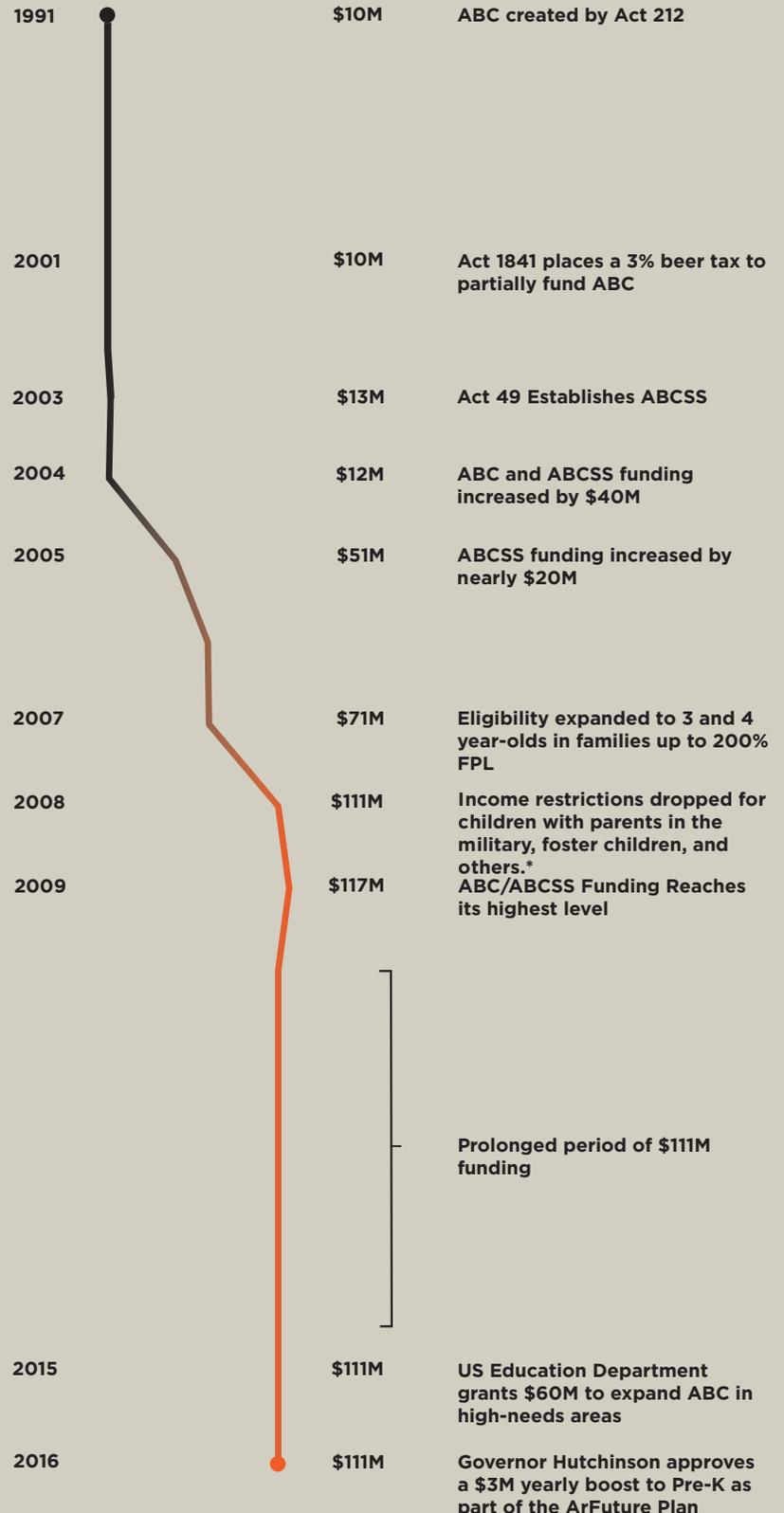
In partnership with providers implement an independent evaluation of student performance that describes quality and aligns curriculum and assessment Pre-K through grade 2.

Dropping the Ball

on Arkansas Pre-K Funding



ABC Funding



Educators who deliver Pre-K programming reside in each county in Arkansas. Pre-K funding matters to those educators and their families. Enhanced funding supports the stability and development of our high-quality Pre-K workforce and goes directly to communities in need.

"The single most important factor to Pre-K quality is the teacher, and right now Arkansas pays teachers less than 75% of the other states; we are in the bottom quarter."

State investments have stagnated AND they have not kept pace with cost of living adjustments while local match dollars have.

"I think the most important thing is to hire a trained teacher and start them out well above minimum wage."

— Dr. Bailey Jefferson, UAR Pine Bluff program