



## Research Report

# State Categorical Funding Review Alternative Learning Environments (ALE)

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**Prepared for**  
**THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**  
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**BUREAU OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH**  
One Capitol Mall, 5<sup>TH</sup> Floor | Little Rock, Ark., 72201 | (501) 682-1937



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## INTRODUCTION

Education in Arkansas is largely funded on a per-student basis through foundation funding, meaning each school district receives a set amount of money per student based on the previous year's enrollment. Because some students face challenges that make them more difficult to educate, Arkansas supplements foundation funding with three types of categorical funding. An additional set of categorical funding supports professional development for educators. The categorical funds intended to support students include money for:

- 1) English language learners,
- 2) Students from economically disadvantaged households and
- 3) Students who do not learn well in a traditional classroom environment.

This latter type of funding is to provide alternative learning environments for those students, and it is often called ALE funding. This report focuses on alternative learning environments in Arkansas public schools and the funding the state dedicates to them.

Schools in 212 school districts and one charter school systems reported having ALE students during the 2018-19 school year.<sup>1</sup>

## ALE: HISTORICAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT

Alternative learning for subsets of students dates back to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, though it looked much different than what we think of as alternative learning today.

That's not terribly surprising considering how the educational landscape has changed for U.S. public schools in the last 60 to 70 years. After all, in the early 1960s, classrooms, particularly in the South, still tended to be fairly homogenous. Though the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision had been in effect since 1954, many school districts remained for the most part segregated.<sup>2</sup> What's more, passage of the 1975 federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was a decade away, so special education students were seldom mainstreamed into public school classrooms. In addition, the population of English language learners grew significantly in the decades following passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and subsequent immigration legislation.<sup>3</sup>

Alternative education was completely different, too. During the 1960s, two types of schools – Freedom Schools to provide high quality education to minorities and Free Schools to allow children to be free, learn without restriction and focus on individual achievement, happiness and fulfillment<sup>4</sup> – represented the main genres of alternative education at the time.

Over the next decades, however, demographic and legal changes created classrooms that grew much more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, English language acquisition, and learning and functioning capabilities. Meanwhile, the structure of education remained much the same with an emphasis on Carnegie units ("seat time" for each subject) and teacher-led lessons.<sup>5</sup> The combination of these factors no doubt made the task of reaching and teaching each student in a classroom much more complex and challenging. It's little wonder, then, that the definition of

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<sup>1</sup> ALE Legislative Report, Sept. 15, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> "School Reform: Past, Present and Future," S.H. Lorio, Ph.D. Dean, College of Education, Wichita State University, 2011, retrieved at <http://webs.wichita.edu/depttools/depttoolsmemberfiles/COEdDEAN/School%20Reform%20Past%20Present%20and%20Future.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> "Timeline: Marking Demographic Changes in Schools," Education Week, Aug. 19, 2014, retrieved at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/timeline-demographic-changes-in-schools.html>

<sup>4</sup> "Alternative Educational Settings" by Sandra Hughes-Hassell, Knowledge Quest / Nontraditional Settings, September/October 2008.

<sup>5</sup> "School Reform: Past, Present and Future."

alternative learning environments morphed into one that addresses those children who do not thrive in a regular classroom setting and are therefore at risk for dropping out of school.

The current definition of alternative learning used by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics, in fact, is "a public elementary/secondary school that addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or falls outside the categories of regular, special or vocational education."<sup>6</sup> The National Center for Education Statistics elaborates that students at risk of educational failure are those "as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with temporary or permanent withdrawal from school."<sup>7</sup>

The focus on at-risk students is the defining factor for most of the 43 states and the District of Columbia with statutorily described alternative education, all of which embody their own definition.<sup>8</sup> Yet, while the target population and overall goals are similar, alternative learning environments encompass myriad forms. Various researchers list everything from prison and hospital schools to virtual and language immersion schools.<sup>9</sup>

Researcher Mary Ann Raywid in 1994 developed a classification structure for the United States' alternative education programs:<sup>10</sup>

- **Type I** – Schools students chose to attend (magnet schools, for example) that emphasized innovative programs and strategies
- **Type II** – Often known as last-chance schools as students are typically sent to them as a last step before expulsion or detention
- **Type III** – Schools that are remedial and therapeutic in nature

Raywid redefined this framework in 1998, again including three types of schools and programs:<sup>11</sup>

1. **Change the student** – programs that attempt to fix the student. They are often highly structured and contain therapeutic components.
2. **Change the school** – innovative schools that focus on changing the curriculum and the instructional approach with an emphasis on a positive school climate.
3. **Change the educational system** – these are movements to change the entire educational system. Examples are the small-school and school-within-a-school movements.

According to a 2014 report on exemplary practices published by the National Alternative Education Association, "[n]ontraditional and alternative education delivers innovative 21<sup>st</sup> Century approaches to teaching and learning which provide students with the opportunity to meet graduation requirements, engage in college and career readiness, and participate as productive members of their communities."<sup>12</sup>

According to a 2018 report by Momentum Strategy and Research, an organization "whose leadership has been working to impact alternative education related policy and practice for more than a decade," alternative education varies widely both across and within states. Programs

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<sup>6</sup> "How Do States Define Alternative Education?" by A. Porowski, R. O'Conner and J.L. Luo, National Center of Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, September 2014.

<sup>7</sup> "How Do States Define Alternative Education?"

<sup>8</sup> "How Do States Define Alternative Education?"

<sup>9</sup> "Critical Analysis of Accountability Policy in Alternative Schools: Implications for School Leaders" by Lynn M. Hemmer, Journal of Educational Administration, January 2013.

<sup>10</sup> "An Examination of School Climate in Effective Alternative Programs" by M.M. Quinn, J.M. Poirier, S.E. Faller, R.A. Gable and S.W. Tonelson, Preventing School Failure, Fall 2006.

<sup>11</sup> "An Examination of School Climate in Effective Alternative Programs."

<sup>12</sup> "Exemplary Practices 2.0: Standards of Quality and Program Evaluation 2014," National Alternative Education Association, 2014.

may operate as stand-alone schools or as programs within schools, focusing on one or more of a variety of student needs and populations. Nearly half serve high school students, a third serve both high school and middle school students and about 14% are K-12 programs. Primary missions listed by the schools include dropout recovery, credit recovery, special education or operating in a residential facility.<sup>13</sup>

## ALE IN ARKANSAS

### POLICY BACKGROUND

As part of its series of education reforms in response to the Arkansas Supreme Court's 2002 Lake View decision, in which the court declared the state's education funding system to be unconstitutional, the General Assembly passed legislation to provide funding that addressed issues of adequacy and equity in Arkansas's education system. One of those pieces of legislation provided funds for alternative learning environments through Act 59 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003. Now codified at § 6-20-2305(b)(2)(A), ALE funding is to help cover the additional costs involved "to eliminate traditional barriers to learning for students."<sup>14</sup>

Act 59 set an initial level of ALE funding at \$3,250 per ALE student to support a teacher-pupil ratio of 1 to 15 for ALE students. That same year, the General Assembly appropriated nearly \$16 million for ALE funding, increasing the existing \$3 million annual appropriation for alternative education to almost \$19 million.

Act 59 also called for the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE, which is now a part of the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, or DESE) to promulgate rules to determine how ALE funding should be distributed as well as how students should be identified for ALE participation. These will be discussed more fully in the sections below.

ALE funding is now set at \$4,700 per full-time equivalent student (FTE), per Act 667 of 2019, and will be so for each school year of the 2019-2021 biennium. (FTEs are calculated based on students who have attended 20 or more consecutive days of ALE programming.) Act 877 of 2019 appropriated \$29,773,362 for ALE for the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

### ALE STUDENTS

DESE's Rules Governing the Distribution of Student Special Needs Funding and the Determination of Allowable Expenditures of Those Funds specify the 12 behaviors or situations for which a student can be identified for an alternative learning environment. Placement in alternative learning cannot be based solely on academic problems (§4.02). Instead, a student can be recommended for alternative learning if he or she meets two or more of the following barriers to learning:

- Ongoing, persistent lack of attaining proficiency levels in literacy and math (*Students cannot be placed in an ALE program for academic problems alone.*)
- Abuse: physical, mental, or sexual
- Frequent relocation of residency
- Homelessness
- Inadequate emotional support
- Mental/physical health problems
- Pregnancy
- Single parenting
- Personal or family problems or situations

<sup>13</sup> "Alternative School Options across the US," Momentum Strategy & Research, October 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Act 59 of 2003.

- Recurring absenteeism
- Dropping out of school
- Disruptive behavior

Students who meet two or more of the above criteria may be placed in an alternative learning environment only on the recommendation of an Alternative Education Placement Team, which must include the school counselor from the referring school, the building principal or assistant principal from the referring school, one or more of the student's regular classroom teachers, a special education or 504 representative (if applicable), the student's parents or guardians if they choose to participate, an ALE administrator and/or teacher, and, if the school district decides, the student.<sup>15</sup>

According to DESE, documentation of the two criteria are noted in students' files and are monitored to assure appropriate placements are being made when DESE's ALE unit makes its monitoring visits. Furthermore, DESE is working with the state's education service cooperatives to provide training to ALE educators this summer that will focus on training teachers to address student needs in ways that might lessen the need for ALE placement.<sup>16</sup> For instance, a description of one such training says:

The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education's Alternative Education Unit is offering this training on meeting the needs of the hardest-to-reach students, who typically might be placed in an Alternative Learning Environment. With a focus on inclusive practices and Universal Design for Learning principles within classroom behavior management, participants will unpack the essential elements of a few focus areas within the DESE's G.U.I.D.E for Life in an attempt to better meet students' needs and possibly keep students in the traditional environment.<sup>17</sup>

Upon entry into ALE, the Placement Team is to assess each student's current functioning abilities as well as all relevant social, emotional, academic, career and behavioral information to develop a Student Action Plan. Each plan addresses the specific services to be provided to the student, the goals and objectives the student must meet to return to the regular educational environment and specific exit criteria. Before a student returns to the regular educational environment, the Placement Team is to develop a transition or positive behavioral plan to support the move back to the regular classroom. (Rules §§4.12.4 – 4.02.6)

According to some of the principals BLR spoke with during site visits to 75 schools during fall 2019, trying to meet the growing mental health needs of students can merge into ALE decisions. Some mentioned that ALE was one of the services provided to students with mental health needs, while one voiced a concern that ALE was not the appropriate place for some of these students, saying, "I am concerned about where and what we are going to do with kids that we don't have a place for, kids for whom ALE is not the place or ALE does not have spots, but they don't need to be in the general student population [either]."

DESE recommends that districts identify no more than 2% to 3% of its students for alternative learning environments, and even sends letters to those districts that have exceeded the 3% mark. The exception is smaller school districts, which can identify up to 15 FTE ALE students in order to have enough funding to support a full-time ALE teacher.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Distribution of Student Special Needs Funding and the Determination of Allowable Expenditures of Those Funds, §§4.12.2.1 et seq.

<sup>16</sup> Meeting with Jared Henderson, Division of Elementary Secondary Education ALE coordinator, March 13, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Retrieved at [https://www.escweb.net/ar\\_esc/catalog/session.aspx?session\\_id=403633](https://www.escweb.net/ar_esc/catalog/session.aspx?session_id=403633).

<sup>18</sup> Meeting with Jared Hogue.

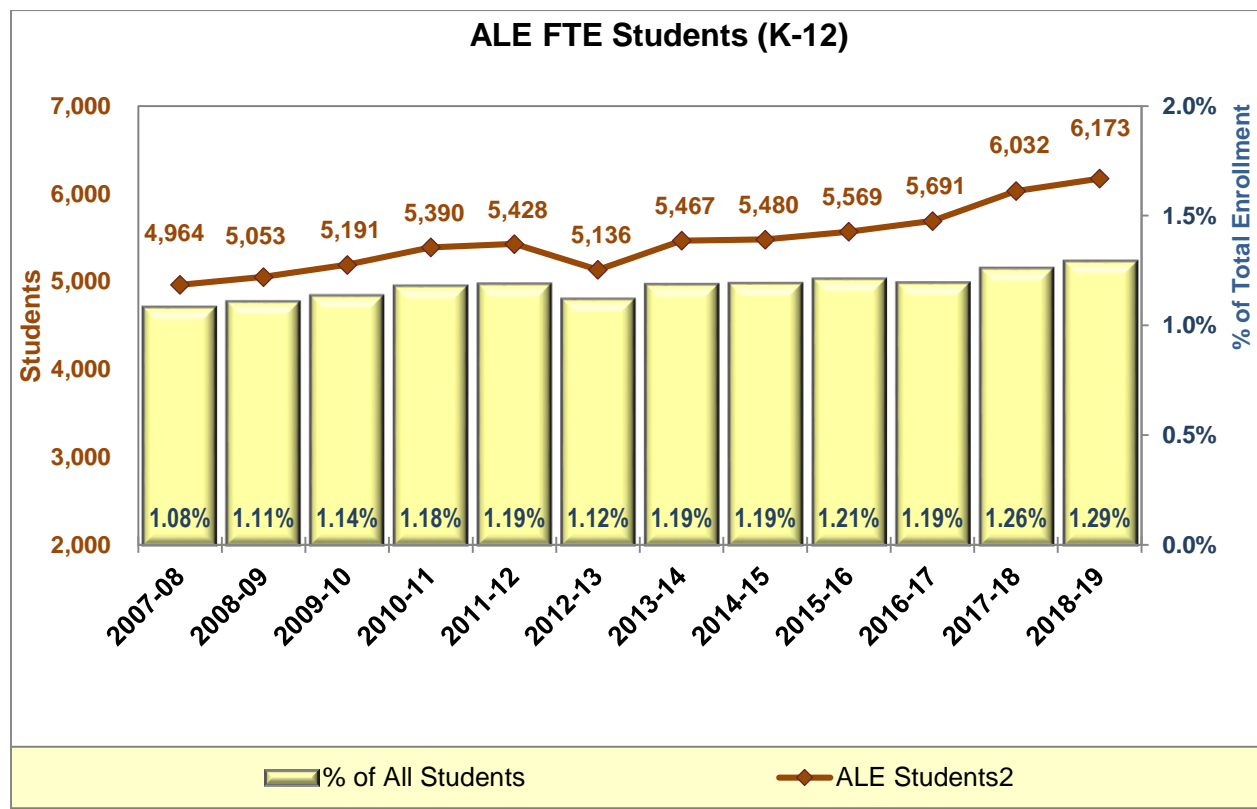


Schools receive funding for full-time equivalent students (FTEs). Except for a few years, FTEs have included only those students who are in the alternative learning environment for 20 consecutive days. (For a brief period, the law was changed to 20 days total, but was changed back to consecutive days in 2011 by Act 1118.) While some students may attend alternative learning environments for a full day for the full year, many attend the program for partial days and/or for part of the year.

This is accounted for in the FTE calculation:

$$\frac{\text{Total number of days in ALE}}{\text{Total number of school days}} \times \frac{\text{Hours per day in ALE}}{6 \text{ hours}}$$

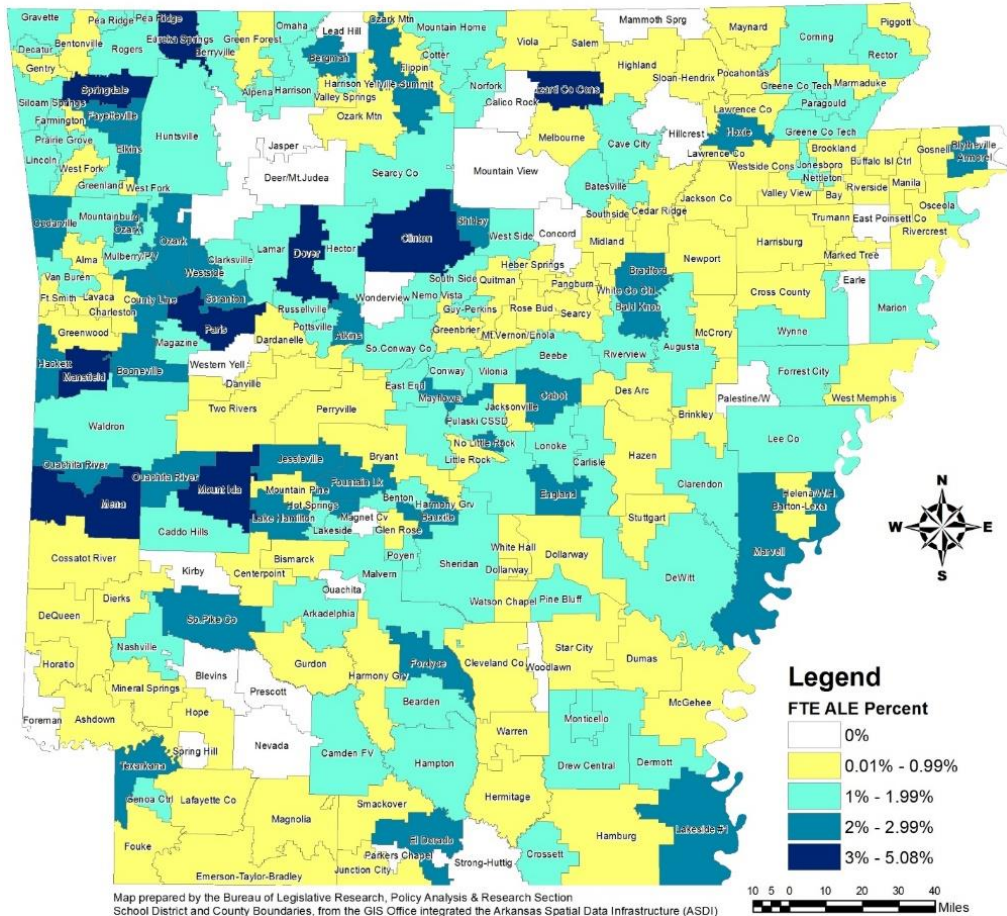
Current year funding is based on the previous year’s count of full-time equivalent ALE students.



Source: DESE State Aid Notice

NOTE: 2018-19 funding is from the initial State Aid Report and could change with the release of the final report.

### Districts by Percent ALE FTEs



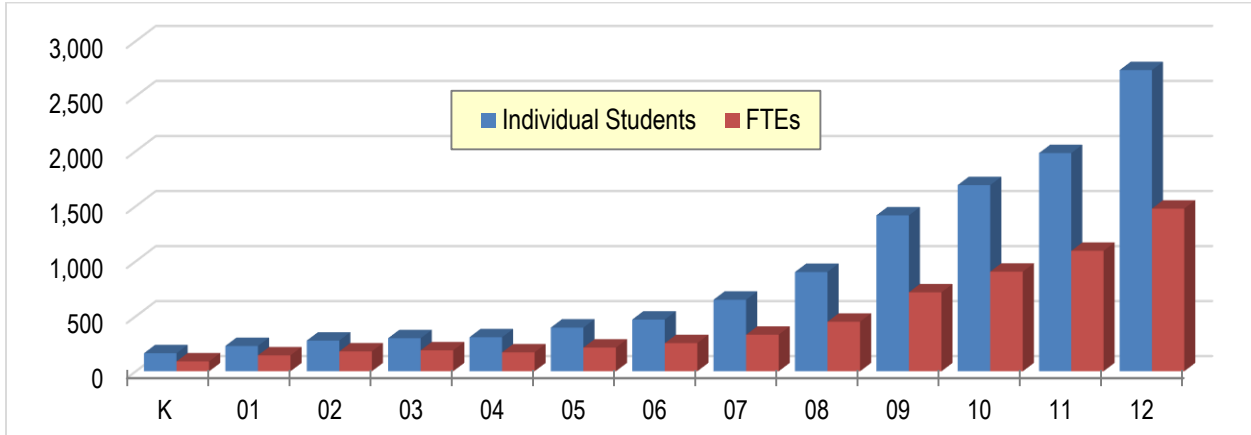
The map shows school districts according to the proportion of ALE FTE students in their enrollment in the 2017-18 school year, which ranged from 0% to 5.08%. Seven districts had more than the DESE recommended cap of 3% of FTE students participating in ALE.

% ALE FTE	2017-18 Districts
0%	25
.01% < 1%	95
1.01% < 2%	73
2.01% < 3%	35
>3%	7

Source: 2018-19 DESE Annual State Aid Notice.

As is the trend in the United States, most ALE students in Arkansas are in the upper grades, as shown in the following graph.

**2018-19 ALE Student Counts by Grade**

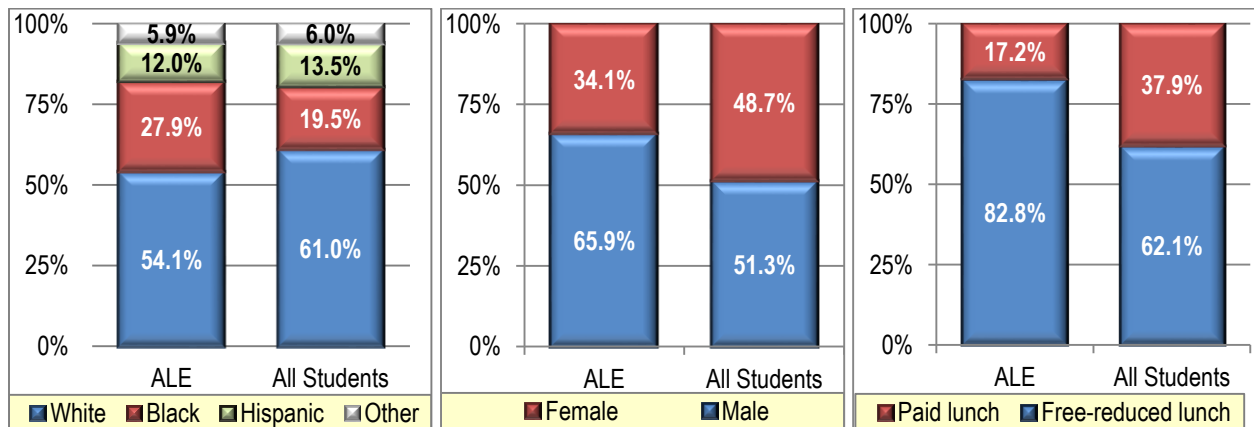


Another way to examine how much time students are spending in ALE programs is to consider the average number of minutes per day and days per year that are spent there. Statewide, the average ALE student in 2018-19 spent 123 days per year in ALE (out of 178) in the 2017-18 school year and 304.3 minutes per day in ALE (out of 360).<sup>19</sup>

The following charts compare demographic data about students in ALE programs versus the full student population in 2018-19. The ALE data for the racial/ethnic breakdown and male versus female charts are reported in the 2019 Joint Education ALE Report.

According to the 2018-19 State Aid Notice, 25 school districts did not report having any ALE students in 2017-18. Those districts are: Lead Hill, Concord, Woodlawn, Wonderview, Earle, Mammoth Spring, Blevins, Spring Hill, Magnet Cove, Ouachita, Calico Rock, Hillcrest, Foreman, Armored\*, Prescott, Nevada, Jasper\*, Deer/Mt. Judea, Kirby, East Poinsett County, Palestine-Wheatley, Mountain View, Parkers Chapel, Strong-Huttig and Western Yell County. (Enrollment data from the DESE MySchoolInfo site is used for total enrollment but, to make it comparable to the ALE data, the analysis excludes the districts with no ALE students. Also excluded are the Schools for the Deaf and Blind and all open-enrollment public charter schools except for SIA Tech in Little Rock, which was the only one to receive ALE funding in 2018-19.<sup>20</sup>

**2018-19 Race, Gender and Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Status**



<sup>19</sup> Analysis of 2018-19 de-identified student-level data supplied to BLR by the Office of Innovation for Education.

<sup>20</sup> \*Denotes districts with waivers from ALE programs in at least one of its schools during the 2017-18 school year.

As in previous years, black, “other,” male and economically disadvantaged students participate in higher proportions in ALE programs than in regular classroom settings. The ALE data is supplied by DESE in its 2019 ALE Legislative Report and the total public school population data is found in the DESE’s My School Info site (<https://myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov/>).

## PROGRAMS

Students are placed in alternative learning environments for a variety of reasons, and the programs into which they are placed vary as well. All school districts in Arkansas are to provide their students with access to an alternative learning environment, and Act 1118 of 2011 and Act 994 of 2015 provided school districts with the current options for doing so:

- Establish and operate an alternative learning environment (this can be a stand-alone school or a school-imbedded program)
- Cooperate with one or more other school districts to establish and operate an alternative learning environment
- Use an alternative learning environment operated by an education service cooperative
- Partner with an institution of higher education or a technical institute

As of May 2016, alternative learning environment programs must be approved by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) every three years. Each ALE program submits a program description to the department and, according to DESE, most program descriptions go through additional clarifications and/or alterations before becoming final.

ALE programs are approved in cohorts every three years. Currently, there are just over 500 programs approved for operation in Arkansas’s school districts as well as in two charter schools – SIATech and Future Fort Smith (though the latter has not received any funding for ALE students).

All but 25 school districts received ALE funding in 2018-19, which was based on the number of full-time equivalent ALE students they served in the previous school year. While 25 districts reported having no ALE students in 2017-18, over the years there have been a few districts that consistently report not having any ALE students. For instance, even though they are listed among the approved programs, 13 districts did not report any students for at least three consecutive years (2015-16 through 2017-18).

They were:

- Armored
- East Poinsett County
- Mountain View
- Palestine-Wheatley
- Spring Hill
- Blevins
- Lead Hill
- Nevada
- Parkers Chapel
- Deer/Mt. Judea
- Magnet Cove
- Ouachita
- Prescott

None of the charter schools have historically received ALE funds. The majority of charter schools have obtained waivers from the state so they do not have to provide the services. Even though a few charter schools serve primarily harder-to-educate students, DESE maintains that they are only due funding for up to 3% of their students. While none of these have received ALE funding in the past, one charter school, SAI Tech in Little Rock, received ALE funding for the 2017-2018 and 2018-19 school years.

The number of ALE programs operating as stand-alone schools have been dwindling in the past decade. For instance, there were 12 in 2011 but only three are open in 2019-2020.

As to how ALE programs are structured and the services they provide, DESE’s rules for ALEs provide some parameters by which programs must adhere. They are not to be punitive in nature, but instead they are to provide intervention services to address students’ specific educational and behavioral needs, including access to a school counselor, mental health

professional, nurse and other support services that are “substantially equivalent” to those provided to students in the traditional school environment.<sup>21</sup>

ALEs are to provide a curriculum that includes the basic subjects – math, science, social studies and English language arts – that adhere to the Arkansas academic standards. ALEs can incorporate computer-based instruction for up to 49% of total instruction in any one course unless the division has approved a program’s use of distance learning or computer-based instruction that exceeds that amount. Students who are at least 16 years old may pursue a curriculum aligned with a high school equivalency test if they lack sufficient credits to graduate by the age of 18 and have their parents’ or guardians’ consent.

**TEACHERS AND STAFF**

Districts’ alternative learning environment classes were initially funded in 2003 to support a 1:15 teacher-student ratio for grades 7-12 and a 1:10 ratio for kindergarten through sixth grade. That funding increased for the 2007-08 school year with the purpose of supporting a 1:12 student teacher ratio.

Even though the funding increased, the original mandated student-to-teacher ratios remained in place, and actually are the same today (see table below). Those ratios provided more staffing per student than the 1:20 ratio for ALE that existed pre-*Lake View*, but the minimum ratio for the 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades falls short of the current recommendation by the National Alternative Education Association of one teacher for every 12 students.<sup>22</sup>

Class Size Limits	Traditional Classroom	ALE Classroom
Kindergarten	20, or 22 w/aide	10, or 12 w/aide <sup>23</sup>
Grades 1-3	25	
Grades 4-6	28	
Grades 7-12	30	15, or 18 w/aide

In 2006, the General Assembly increased Arkansas’s ALE funding to support one teacher for every 12 ALE students starting with the 2007-08 school year because of changes in the student-count methodology and complaints that alternative learning environments were underfunded. In other words, ALE was funded at \$4,063 per full-time equivalent ALE student, providing \$48,750 to cover a teacher’s salary. However, that new funding level was based on the teacher salary included in the 2005 matrix, causing the new funding level to start off with a lag.

What’s more, increases in ALE funding have most often not kept pace with foundation funding through the years (funding levels will be discussed in more detail in the next section). The result is that the current funding does not support one teacher for every 12 ALE students, if the teacher salary and benefits amount in the foundation funding matrix is used as the cost of a teacher. For example, the 2019-20 ALE funding amount of \$4,700 provides \$56,400 for the cost of a teacher. The salary and benefits level in the foundation matrix, on the other hand, provides \$67,127 in salary and benefits for a teacher – more than \$10,000 more.

<sup>21</sup> Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Distribution of Student Special Needs Funding and the Determination of Allowable Expenditures of Those Funds, §§4.01.2.1 and 4.01.2.2

<sup>22</sup> “Exemplary Practices 2.0: Standards of Quality and Program Evaluation 2014.”

<sup>23</sup> Middle school programs that encompasses 5<sup>th</sup> and/or 6<sup>th</sup> grade mixed in with 7<sup>th</sup> and/or 8<sup>th</sup> grade may have a ratio of 15, or 18 with an aide, according to DESE. Email from Jared Hogue dated Jan. 23, 2020.

In 2018-19, the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) ALE teachers in the 159 school districts that reported any teacher as being paid for ALE (using both ALE categorical and other nonfederal funds) was 452.6, compared with 561.6 FTEs in 2015-16. The average FTE ALE teacher salary paid out of all funds in 2018-19 was \$50,425.<sup>24</sup> The number of ALE FTE teachers reported ranged from .03 in the South Conway County School District to 42.4 in the Springdale School District. Districts hired 286 paraprofessionals in 2018-19 in addition to certified teachers to cover class loads, down almost 50 from the 330 paraprofessionals employed in ALE in 2015-16.<sup>25</sup>

During the 2018-19 school year, no districts were noted by the ALE Unit for being out of compliance with the required teacher-to-student ratios. ALE teachers are not required to obtain special endorsements or licenses to teach in an alternative learning environment, but DESE's rules do require training related to specific needs and characteristics of students in alternative learning environments. (§4.03.3.1). Many teachers attend the summer professional development conference offered jointly by DESE and the state's Alternative Learning Association.<sup>26</sup>

ALE programs also utilize other professionals to address behavioral, social and emotional needs of children. These services are described in each program's program description that must be approved by DESE's ALE Unit. Specifically, question five on the program description form asks programs to describe how they provide counseling services to ALE students.

Most programs utilize both school-based personnel as well as contracted mental health professionals. These services often seemed to be available to the entire student body and not exclusively to ALE students.

#### **An Example of Providing Counseling within an ALE Program**

*Once into an ALE program in Rogers, students have access to a counselor on-site as well as a social workers [sic] who is available to the student for individual counseling as well as crisis intervention or to share knowledge of community resources. A student having difficulty meeting basic needs, having academic difficulty, having difficulty coping, or having attendance issues, is directed to the counseling staff. The counselor or social worker meets with the student and helps him/her develop a plan for addressing the situation at hand. The counselor or social worker monitors the student's progress and maintains a close contact with the classroom teachers. On average, the counselors spend 25% of their time meeting with individual students. The District also enters into Mental Health Agreements with local providers to establish services for site-based counseling for those students needing mental health treatment and counseling.*

*The progressive step counseling piece (informal, formal, intensive) is also part of our discipline policy. Individual groups are developed to meet the individual needs of students. Parenting classes for students with children or expecting children is another program that has high participation. For the students unable to regulate their emotional outbursts, we offer Anger Management as a counseling intervention. Students who self-report drug use or students who have a positive drug screen, participate in an Insight Drug Group.*

--Rogers Public School District's  
Crossroads ALE 2019-20 program description

<sup>24</sup> Analysis of APSCN ALE data.

<sup>25</sup> 2019 Legislative Report: Alternative Education, Arkansas Department of Education.

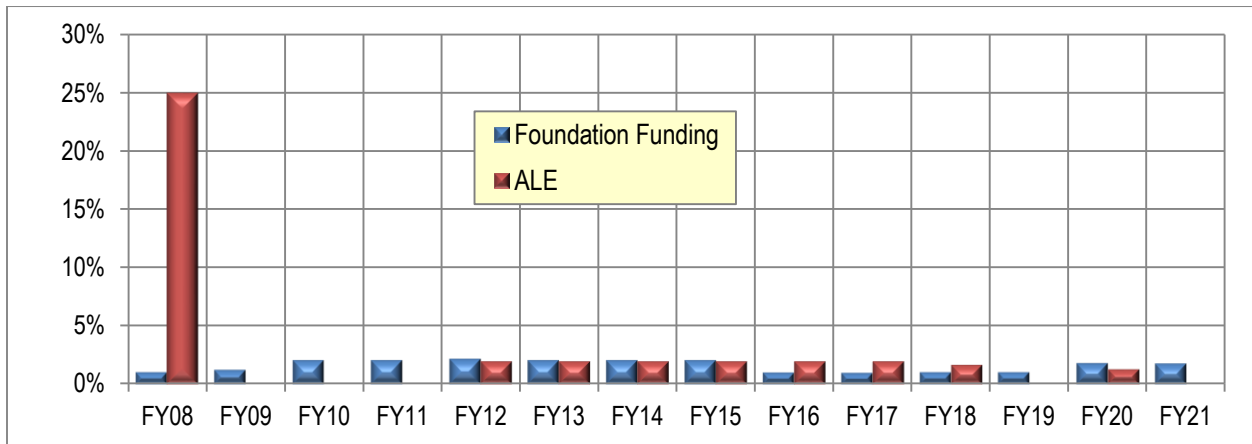
<sup>26</sup> Meeting with Lori Lamb.

**FUNDING OF ALE**

Act 59 of 2003, passed as part of the education reform laws in response to *Lake View*, created the per-student categorical funding methodology for alternative learning environments that is still in use today. Funding is distributed from the state to school districts and, as stated above, the amount is based on the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students in the district during the previous year. An eligible ALE student for FTE purposes is a student who has been in an alternative learning environment for 20 or more consecutive days. The calculation accounts for the portion of the day and year that the student actually attends class in the alternative learning environment.

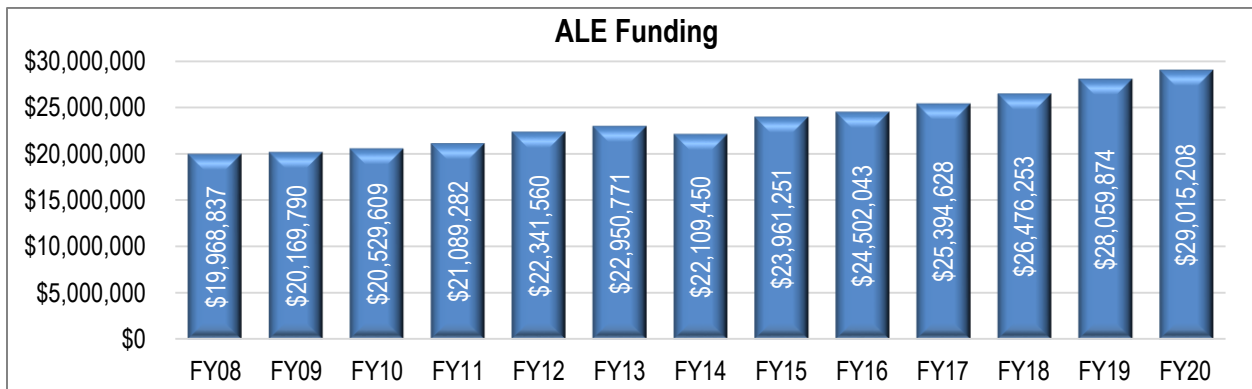
The per-student funding for ALE has increased over the years, though not necessarily at the same rate as per-student foundation funding. Markedly, the percentage increase in ALE funding in 2008 to support the 1:12 teacher-student ratio far surpassed the percentage increase in foundation funding, but that dramatic difference remains an anomaly. Annual funding increases by percentage since then are shown in the following chart:

**Percentage Increases by Year: Foundation and ALE Funding**



The annual increases combined with growing numbers of FTEs have resulted in gradual, if not steady, increases to total funding amounts over the years. The decrease in funding that occurred in 2013-14 is due to a drop in FTEs the previous year.

**ALE Total Funding per Year**



NOTE: FY20 data are not final and includes districts only; FY18 and FY19 data include districts and one charter school.

In addition to foundation and ALE categorical funds, schools receive other forms of categorical funding: for enhanced student achievement (ESA), for English language learners (ELL) and for professional development (PD). Foundation money can be used for any expense a school

district has, while categorical funding must be spent on expenses related directly to one of the four categories. These are funded on a per-student basis as shown in the following table:

**Foundation and Categorical Funding Levels per Student**

Funding Type	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Foundation	\$6,781	\$6,899	\$7,018
ALE	\$4,640	\$4,700	\$4,700
ELL	\$338	\$345	\$352
ESA (< 70%)*	\$526	\$526	\$526
ESA (70% - 90%)*	\$1,051	\$1,051	\$1,051
ESA (90% <)*	\$1,576	\$1,576	\$1,576
Prof. Development*	\$32.40	\$32.40	\$40.8

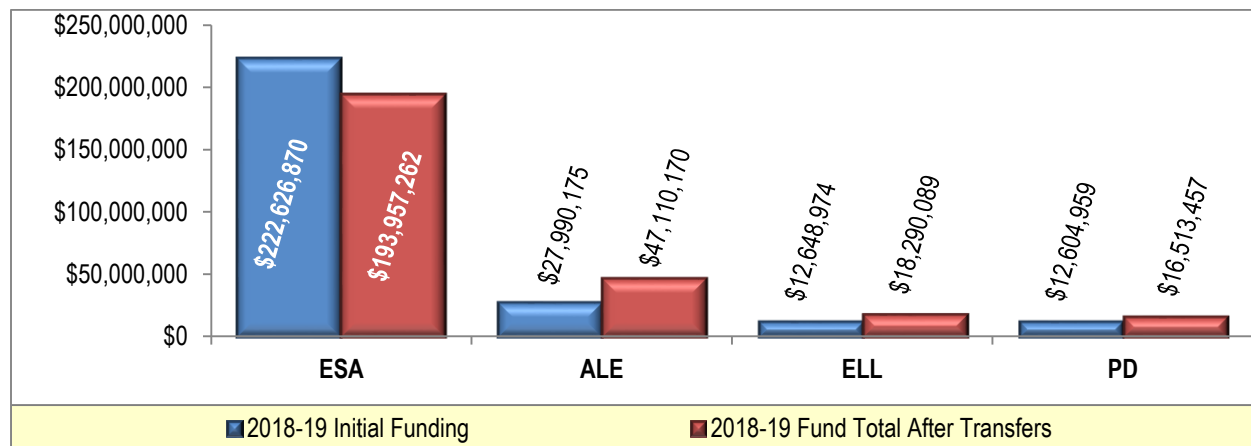
\*Excludes additional NSL funding for matching grants and PD funding available to districts for professional learning communities

It is common for school districts to transfer their categorical funds among categories for spending purposes. During the 2018-19 school year, school districts (excluding charters) transferred \$24,266,353 from other categorical funds to ALE, most of it from their ESA funding.

- \$57,646 from ELL
- \$25,000 from PD
- \$19,256,009 from ESA

The net after the transfers equals an additional \$3,106 for each FTE in funding available for ALE use. Total transfers by the districts show a net increase in ALE funds after the transfers:

**Pre- and Post-transfer Totals for Categorical Funds (2018-19)**



\*Only one charter school received ALE funding in 2018-19; PD does not include online PD funding.

**ALE EXPENDITURES**

The following table shows the expenditures districts made for all ALE programs and services. These figures include expenditures made using money transferred to ALE from other categorical funds. The table also shows the amount of additional funding – beyond categorical funding – that was spent on ALE programs. This would include foundation funding and any other funding spent on ALE programs.



	Total Expenditures from ALE Categorical Funds*	Total Expenditures on ALE Programs Using Funds Other than ALE Categorical Funds	Total Expenditures on ALE Programs**
2015-16	\$38,895,021 (68.4%)	\$17,962,255 (31.6%)	\$56,857,276
2016-17	\$41,940,616 (70.8%)	\$17,274,712 (29.2%)	\$59,215,328
2017-18	\$46,545,601 (76.8%)	\$14,078,005 (23.2%)	\$60,623,606
2018-19	\$46,088,330 (75.0%)	\$15,302,095 (25.0%)	\$61,390,425

\*Note: These expenditures include those made using ALE funds and other categorical funds that were transferred to ALE funds. They also exclude ALE funds that were transferred to other categorical programs.

\*\*Note: These expenditures likely include payments some districts made to other school districts or education service cooperatives as part of an ALE consortium. Districts that participate in ALE consortia may send their ALE students to another district or cooperative site for an ALE program. The sending district receives the ALE funding for their students and may pay the receiving district for providing services (pass-through payments). Because the sending district records a payment to the receiving district or education cooperative and the receiving district records expenditures for ALE services provided, the expenditures for the ALE students may be double counted when calculating total statewide expenses. (Education service cooperative expenses are not included in the calculation of expenses, however.) The payments among districts are difficult to definitively identify in the APSCN system as school districts appear to use different codes to log the payments.

Because categorical funds are intended to supplement resources needed for more challenging populations of students, it is money provided above the foundation funding amount. Therefore, each full-time equivalent student represents the per-student amount of foundation funding plus the per-student amount of ALE funding for a school district. In FY2020, that is:

$$\text{\$6,899 (foundation) + \$4,700 (ALE) = \$11,599 / FTE student}$$

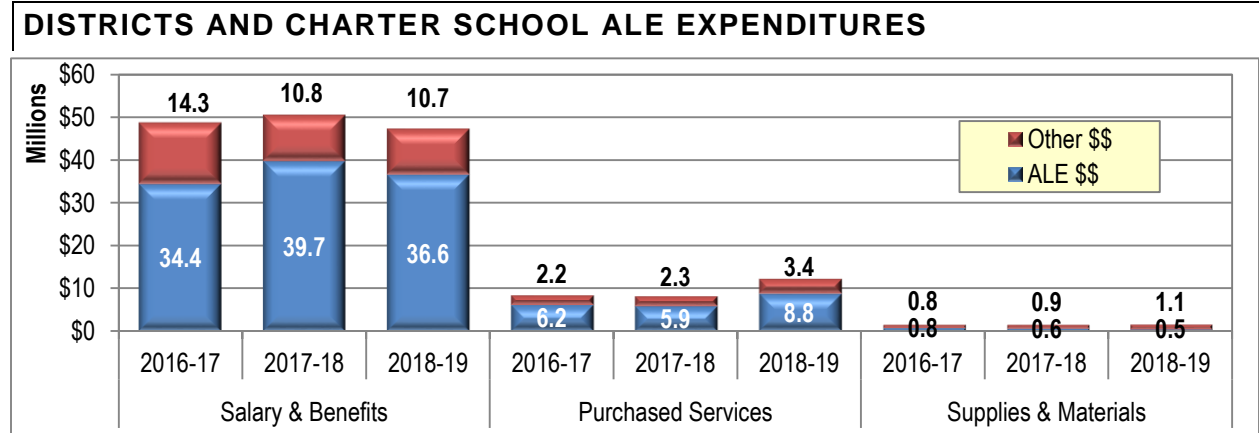
The table below shows an analysis of spending by districts on a per-student basis compared with the amount of funding provided each year. Interpreting this analysis is more complicated than it might appear. While school districts receive both foundation and ALE funding for each ALE FTE, not every expense that is included in the funding matrix (the formula on which foundation funding is based) is for a resource that districts would code as an ALE expense – the costs of transportation and administrators, for example. That most likely results in an ALE student costing more than is reflected in the final column of student ALE expenses. So, while the total of ALE plus foundation funding amount for 2018-19 appears to be slightly more than the cost per student, that presents an incomplete picture. Rather, it's very likely that ALE and foundation funding together do not cover all expenses for ALE students. This may help explain why the categorical transfers amounting to another \$3,106 per student are made.

	Per Student ALE Funding	Per Student Foundation Funding	Per Student ALE + Foundation	Per Student ALE Program Expenditures*
2016-17	\$4,560	\$6,646	\$11,206	\$10,633
2017-18	\$4,640	\$6,713	\$11,353	\$10,612
2018-19	\$4,700	\$6,781	\$11,481	\$10,169

\*The per-student expenditures above use the ALE FTE student count in the year in which funding was based. For example, the 2019 per student expense was calculated using expenditures for the 2018-19 school year and the ALE FTE count for the 2017-18 school year.

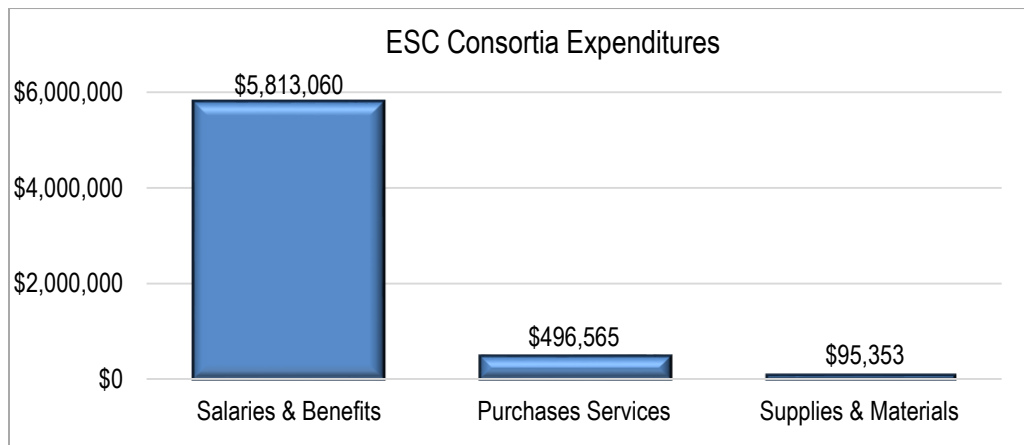
The following table shows the distribution of districts' expenditures for ALE programs over the three most recent years for which the data is complete. The table shows the district expenditures from ALE categorical funds (including funds transferred into ALE funds) and expenditures made using other district resources. The vast majority of the expenditures were made on salaries and benefits of ALE staff, although 2018-19 was the first year that amount has decreased in the last six years at least. Purchased services received a notable increase the same year. The four largest expenditures in that category, totaling \$9.6 million collectively, were for "instruction services," "other professional and technical services," "tuition reimbursements to

other LEAs with the state,” or “miscellaneous purchased service to other LEAs within the state” – all of which could represent payments for ALE consortia fees.



*Note: The expenditures in the chart do not include transfers made from ALE funds to other categorical funds.*

Of the 32 superintendents who made additional comments regarding ALE on the BLR Adequacy Survey administered in fall 2019, three stated that their district’s ALE funds were not sufficient to cover the costs of providing alternative education services to their ALE students.



*Note: Most of these expenditures are made out of general operating funds as the education service cooperatives generally do not receive per student ALE categorical funding.*

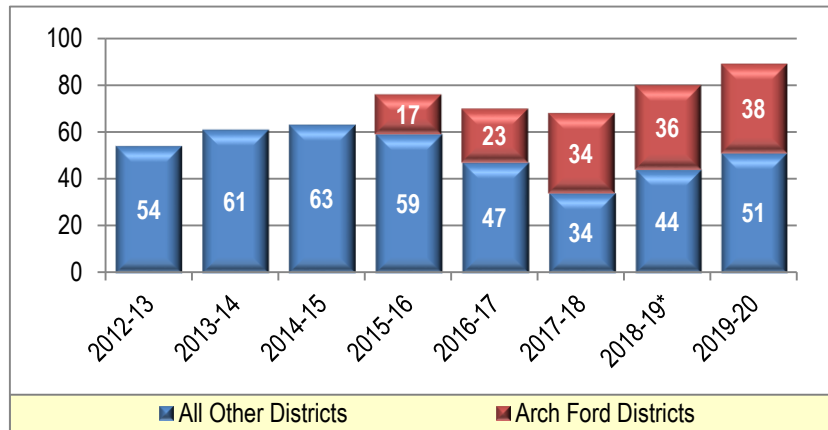
## FUND BALANCES

Despite spending well over the amount of money provided specifically for ALE programs, districts retained small amounts of funding in their ALE categorical funds. This money rolls over to the following year to be spent on ALE programs. Districts carry year-end ALE fund balances, in part, so they have money for professional development and other expenditures during the summer months. Additionally, because the first ALE funding payment to districts usually is not made until October, fund balances also allow districts to cover expenses at the start of the school year. Act 1220 of 2011, however, limited the aggregate fund balance of all categorical funds to 20% of the total aggregate categorical funding for the year. The following table shows the beginning fund balances for ALE funds for recent years:

	Total ALE Fund Balance	Districts with a Balance	Districts w/out a Balance
2016-17	\$1,753,495.16	149	86
2017-18	\$1,961,649.41	144	91
2018-19	\$1,919,870.73	134	101
Number of Districts			
Ending Fund Balance	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
\$0	86	91	101
\$.01 - \$1,000	33	37	31
\$1,001 - \$10,000	75	71	71
\$10,001 - \$50,000	32	29	24
More than \$50,000	9	7	8

## CONSORTIA

A trend that’s occurred with alternative education in Arkansas over the last several years is the number of school districts participating in ALE consortia, and the growth of one consortium in particular. If a school district chooses not to operate its own ALE program, it may join in a consortium with other school districts or one that is operated by one of the state’s education service cooperatives.



In 2018-19, 80 districts were participating in consortia, according to DESE’s 2019 ALE Report to the Legislature.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, although all but one of the 235 superintendents responded to BLR’s survey of superintendents, only 61 of them self-reported<sup>28</sup> to BLR that they had paid “another district or education service cooperative to provide” ALE services for “any” of their students in 2018-19. Of those, 31 responded that they were paying the Arch Ford Education Services Cooperative (ECS), 22 reported paying other school districts, one reported paying another ECS and one reported paying STRIVE (a program for adjudicated youth as well as for students referred by their home school districts).

The BLR survey also asked superintendents to note the amounts paid and the number of FTE students served. The responses show that:

- 30 districts paid Arch Ford ESC \$4,889,593 to serve 1,078 FTE ALE students, which translates to **\$4,536/FTE**.<sup>29</sup>
- 1 district paid the Arkansas River ESC \$120,000 to serve 22 FTE ALE students, which translates to **\$5,455/FTE**.

<sup>27</sup> Arch Ford ECS supplied a list of 36 school districts participating in the cooperative’s ALE program in 2018-19.

<sup>28</sup> BLR’s Adequacy survey of districts administered in early fall 2019 with a 99.9% response rate.

<sup>29</sup> One district did not report paying any funds to Arch Ford for the ALE services though they said they participated with Arch Ford.

- 23 districts paid school district-based consortia \$1,123,174 to serve 178 FTE ALE students, which translates to **\$6,310/FTE**.
- 1 district paid STRIVE<sup>30</sup> \$80,000 to serve 10 ALE students, which translates to **\$8,000/FTE**.

## ARCH FORD'S ESC ALE CONSORTIUM

According to DESE, when the number of districts participating in consortia first peaked (during the 2016-16 school year), 17 districts were participating in the Arch Ford consortium at its Conway, Atkins, River Valley or Quitman campuses. By comparison, DESE's ALE unit provided BLR a list of ALE programs for the 2018-19 school year that show 41 districts to be participating in the Arch Ford consortium.

The program descriptions submitted to DESE by districts participating in the Arch Ford ALEs describe two types of ALE programs offered by Arch Ford. One is a more traditional, classroom-based ALE program for students in K-12, which operate under several different names. The other is called the Hub. It is operated for high school students and involves a jobs-focus through a partnership with the national program Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG). Hub programs were first offered during the 2016-17 school year.

Arch Ford says that the Hub ALE model includes flexible scheduling for its "associates," the term used for students in the program description. Three levels of flexible learning time have allow for direct instruction and time at a job. Instruction may be classroom based or offered through the cooperative's partnership with Virtual Arkansas and supplemented by other online services such and Kahn Academy and Google Classrooms. In addition, project-based learning units are selected to address students' individual needs. These learning time levels are:

- **Bronze** – full day on campus, five days a week. According to Arch Ford, this level serves mostly 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders who may be pursuing credit recovery.
- **Silver** – half day on campus, five days a week. This level serves mostly juniors.
- **Gold** – 2 days a week on campus each week. This level serves mostly seniors, who attend 90-minute courses throughout the week equivalent to two-days' worth of classes. With online time, Arch Ford says students average 30-hours per week instruction time<sup>31</sup>
- **Platinum** -- fully online. This level was added after the passage of Act 867 in 2017, which repealed the requirement for students in grades 9-12 to attend a full day of school or for teachers to record attendance as physical presence. (The program had operated with the use of waivers from seat time requirements before then.) This level is not supposed to be a school-free option but rather a way to address extraordinary circumstances on a temporary basis, according to the program representative. Associates at this level have often either dropped out of school or have indicated that dropping out is likely.<sup>32</sup>

DESE maintains copies of the memorandums of understanding (MOUs) that are signed by districts and Arch Ford Educational Cooperative officials regarding ALE services the co-op provides and the fees the districts commit to pay for them. DESE provided MOUs between 38 districts and Arch Ford for ALE services in 2019-20.

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<sup>30</sup> STRIVE is designed to serve adjudicated youth or youth with disciplinary issues. The six school districts participating in STRIVE in 2018-19<sup>30</sup>, which are all located in eastern Arkansas, send qualifying students to that program while also operating or participating in traditional ALE programs for their non-adjudicated ALE students, according to their ALE program descriptions.

<sup>31</sup> Email from Jason Burkman, March 25, 2020. Online time is verified with time logs.

<sup>32</sup> Jason Burkman, March 25, 2020.

District	Seats / Slots	Cost	Cost per Seat/Slot
Ashdown	*	\$8,500	*
Atkins	12 ALE	\$0	\$0
Bald Knob	31 ALE; 45 Hub	\$275,000	\$3,618
Beebe	50 ALE; 60 Hub	\$420,000	\$3,818
Benton	70 ALE; 60 Hub	\$410,000	\$3,154
Carlisle	26 ALE; 20 Hub	\$87,500	\$1,902
Clinton	18 ALE	\$72,220	\$4,012
Conway	102 ALE; 80 Hub	\$831,300	\$4,568
Cutter-Morning Star	15 ALE	\$75,000	\$5,000
Dover	20 ALE; 45 Hub	\$139,026	\$2139
East End	8 ALE	\$45,670	\$5,709
El Dorado	*	\$395,000	*
Fountain Lake	40 ALE	\$168,000	\$4,200
Greenbrier	21 ALE; 5 Hub	\$124,945	\$4,806
Guy-Perkins	5 ALE; 5 Hub	\$36,000	\$3,600
Hazen	26 ALE; 20 Hub	\$87,500	\$1,902
Hector	7 ALE; 10 Hub	\$36,000	\$2,118
Hot Springs	78 ALE; 60 Hub	\$580,000	\$4,203
Jacksonville N. Pulaski County	60 ALE; 60 Hub	\$556,800	\$4,640
Lake Hamilton	9 ALE	\$45,000	\$5,000
Lakeside (Garland)	25 ALE	\$125,000	\$5,000
Magnolia	43 ALE; 60 Hub	\$372,000	\$3,612
Marion	96 ALE; 60 Hub	\$580,000	\$3,718
Mayflower	16 ALE; 30 Hub	\$93,554	\$2,034
Mt. Vernon/Enola	5 ALE; 5 Hub	\$36,000	\$3,600
Nemo Vista	2 ALE; 8 Hub	\$26,762	\$2,676
Perryville	5 ALE; 10 Hub	\$39,596	\$2,640
Pottsville	30 ALE	\$135,000	\$4,500
Quitman	10 ALE; 5 Hub	\$48,900	\$3,260
Rosebud	5 ALE; 5 Hub	\$36,000	\$3,600
South Conway County	10 ALE; 60 Hub	\$156,300	\$2,233
Shirley	20 Hub	\$32,500	\$1,625
South Side	5 ALE; 15 Hub	\$48,900	\$2445
Texarkana	80 ALE; 60 Hub; 15 Tier 3	\$674,160	\$4,349
Van Buren	*	\$850,000	*
Vilonia	9 ALE; 60 Hub	\$107,000	\$1,551
West Side	5 ALE; 5 Hub	\$36,000	\$3,600
Wonderview	2 ALE; 3 Hub	\$13,381	\$2,676

\*MOU does not list # of ALE/Hub seats

Looked at in terms of per-seat costs, the ALE seats or Hub slots range in price from \$0 to \$5,709 with only five districts paying more per Arch Ford slot than the \$4,700 allocated in per-FTE categorical funding this year. Arch Ford said its program can be more cost effective for some districts because it is able to combine statewide resources to address students' needs.<sup>33</sup>

The official with the Arch Ford Hub and ALE programs attributed the differences to several main factors:

- The level of involvement Arch Ford had in the ALE. Sometimes the Co-op operates in a supportive role for a district's program while for others it fully runs the total ALE program. Some districts
- The district's ability to share program costs with other school districts.

<sup>33</sup> Jason Burkman, March 25, 2020.

- The number and type of interventions the students would require. For instance, younger students in the ALE program often need more behavioral and mental health interventions than do older students who were participating in the Hub program, the official explained.<sup>34</sup>

The Arch Ford Educational Service Cooperative reported nearly \$6.7 million in ALE expenditures in 2018-19, including \$5.6 million in salaries and benefits, \$488,000 in purchased services and \$93,000 in supplies and materials. Meanwhile, the Arkansas River ECS reported far fewer expenditures with just under \$200,000 being spent on salaries and benefits, \$8,500 for purchased services and \$26,500 for supplies and materials.

Another consortium – STRIVE – shows up in the submitted program descriptions for recent school years. This consortium is designed to serve adjudicated youth or youth with difficult-to-address disciplinary issues. The six school districts participating in STRIVE in 2018-19<sup>35</sup>, which are all located in eastern Arkansas, send qualifying students to that program while also operating or participating in traditional ALE programs for their non-adjudicated ALE students.<sup>36</sup> STRIVE's expenditures are not tracked in APSCN.

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND OUTCOMES

The goals of today's alternative learning environments are fairly obvious – to keep students in school and to lead to better outcomes for them. Yet, because ALEs look so different from state to state, measures for determining success of those programs vary as well.<sup>37</sup> No federal standards for measuring quality exist.<sup>38</sup>

Adding to the confusion is that the expansion of alternative education has largely coincided with the shift to greater academic accountability in schools.<sup>39</sup> The measures of academic success – performance on standardized tests and graduation rates – are parallel but not exactly the same as historical measures of successful ALE programs: improved grades, attendance and graduation rates; decreases in disruptive and violent behavior; and students having developed an improved sense of self and the choices they make.<sup>40</sup>

According to a policy brief released jointly in November 2017 by two nonprofit organizations that concentrate on youth and education policy issues, “States must develop sufficiently nuanced and specialized approaches to accountability for alternative settings that accurately reflect the extent to which those institutions effectively serve their unique student populations, while also ensuring that those settings are held to equally rigorous standards of quality as traditional settings.”<sup>41</sup>

Arkansas state statute requires DESE to promulgate rules that establish “measures of effectiveness for alternative learning environments.” Act 1118 of 2011 calls for these measures to assess the ALE program's effect on students' 1) school performance, 2) need for ALE intervention, and 3) school attendance and dropout rates. State law then requires DESE to evaluate ALE programs based on those measures.

<sup>34</sup> Jason Burkman, Oct. 9, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> List of approved ALE programs by cohort, DESE.

<sup>36</sup> Email from Lori Lamb, Oct. 11, 2017.

<sup>37</sup> “Reinventing Alternative Education: An Assessment of Current State Policy and how to Improve It,” Jobs for the Future (2010). Retrieved at <http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/AltEdBrief-090810.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> “A Comparison of State Alternative Education Accountability Policies and Frameworks,” A. Schlessman and K Hurtado, Rose Management Group, 2012.

<sup>39</sup> “Critical Analysis of Accountability Policy in Alternative Schools: Implications for School Leaders.”

<sup>40</sup> “Critical Analysis of Accountability Policy in Alternative Schools: Implications for School Leaders.”

<sup>41</sup> “Measuring Success: Accountability for Alternative Education,” American Youth Policy and Civic Enterprises, November 2017.

The ALE rules found in Section 4 of the Rules Governing the Distribution of Student Special Needs Funding and the Determination of Allowable Expenditures of Those Funds, last updated in May 2016, still do not reflect all of the aforementioned effectiveness measures. DESE does include some of this information in its annual report on ALE to the legislature.

According to DESE, accountability for ALE programs in Arkansas are the responsibility of two separate units at the Arkansas Department of Education. DESE's four-person ALE Unit, which is dedicated to monitoring and supporting ALE programs in the state, comprises a program coordinator, two program advisors and an administrative assistant (currently vacant). These staff members approve each ALE program description for program approval, now required every three years. They also visit ALE programs, provide program advice and identify corrections that should be made.

If schools do not address areas of noncompliance within 30 days or so, the ALE Unit will bring in the Standards Unit to assist with accountability and rectification efforts.<sup>42</sup> Specifically, the units have been responsible for monitoring the following items, either through desk audits or onsite observations:

- Does the school have clear documents that describe the purpose of alternative education and are they available to parents and the community in an ALE?
- Do the grade levels enrolled in the ALE program match the ALE program description submitted to DESE for approval?
- Do ALE students participate in school-wide activities?
- Are the individuals who determine a student's participation in an ALE appropriate for that role?
- Is direct instruction the primary educational component in the ALE?
- Is there evidence demonstrating social skills education, career, college, vocational and transitional life skills are occurring in the ALE?

The ALE Unit also documents ALE programs for noncompliance in the following areas:

- Reporting required ALE program data through APSCN
- Having ALE students
- Receiving DESE approval of their program description
- Operating a program that matches its approved program description

If a district is found to be out of compliance in any of these areas, its non-compliance is reported on the district's annual report card, which is published on the districts' and the division's websites. (§ 6-48-104(b)(2))

Arkansas school districts are required to report data on their ALE programs and students through their regular APSCN reporting. The reported data are then compiled and submitted to the House and Senate Education committees each September as DESE's annual ALE report. According to Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-48-104(d), the report must contain the following information:

- Information on race and gender of ALE students
- An assurance statement that each district is in compliance with state law with regard to ALE
- Any other information on ALE students that DESE requires by rule. These items, which are listed in rule but not statute, include:
  - The number of ALE students by grade level
  - The number of ALE students who returned to a regular educational environment, dropped out or received a GED (The report actually provides the district drop-out rate, not the rate for ALE students)
  - The number of graduating students who were ever in ALE for 20 or more consecutive days
  - The number of ALE students participating in Workforce/Secondary Career Centers
  - The number of ALE students receiving special education services
  - The number of ALE students receiving special education services

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<sup>42</sup> Meeting with Jared Hogue.

- o The number of students enrolled in an ALE program who had previously exited an ALE program in the second or third prior school year (The report provides that data for the current and immediate prior year.)
- o The total amount of funds expended to operate the ALE program for the school year
- o The total amount of ALE funding received that school year
- o The total number of ALE students per district with attendance improvements after beginning ALE (This information is not included in the report.)
- o The total number of ALE high school students per district with improved credit attainment after participating in ALE (This information is not included in the report.)

Information is provided on the following effectiveness measures on the 2019 ALE Legislative Report:

ALE Students - Indicators	All Districts		Arch Ford Districts	
Returned to traditional educational environment	2,487	21.8%	327	15.5%
Graduates who received ALE intervention at any point during K-12	2,519	8.1% of all graduates	504	9.7% of all graduates
Receiving a GED	135	1.2%	27	1.2%
Exited ALE in previous year returning to ALE in 2018-19	2,980	25.8%	515	22.9%
Exiting ALE in 2018-19 and returning in 2018-19	694	6.0%	88	3.9%

*Note: Not all students in districts participating in Arch Ford's ALE consortium attended ALE within the Arch Ford programs as some districts offered their own campus-based programs as well.*

Because of the number of districts participating in the Arch Ford ECS ALE programs, BLR examined outcome data for those districts as well. School districts participating with Arch Ford may send all or only some of their ALE students to the Arch Ford program – there is no code in DESE's computer system that tracks where a student is receiving his or her alternative education.

Two additional indicators that the Bureau of Legislative Research analyzed regarding ALE program effectiveness are a comparison of test scores and of dropout rates.

## TEST SCORE COMPARISON

Historically, ALE students (those attending at least 20 consecutive days in an ALE program) have been far less likely to score as well on state standardized tests, whether that was the State Benchmark and End-of-Course exams, which ended in 2013-14, the PARCC exams, which ended in 2014-15, or the ACT Aspire exams, which are administered currently. The trend has not changed, as a comparison of the 2019 ACT Aspire Math and English Language Arts scores show. A score of 3 or 4 on the ACT Aspire is considered proficient or above, though in ACT terms, a 3 is "ready" and a 4 is "exceeding."

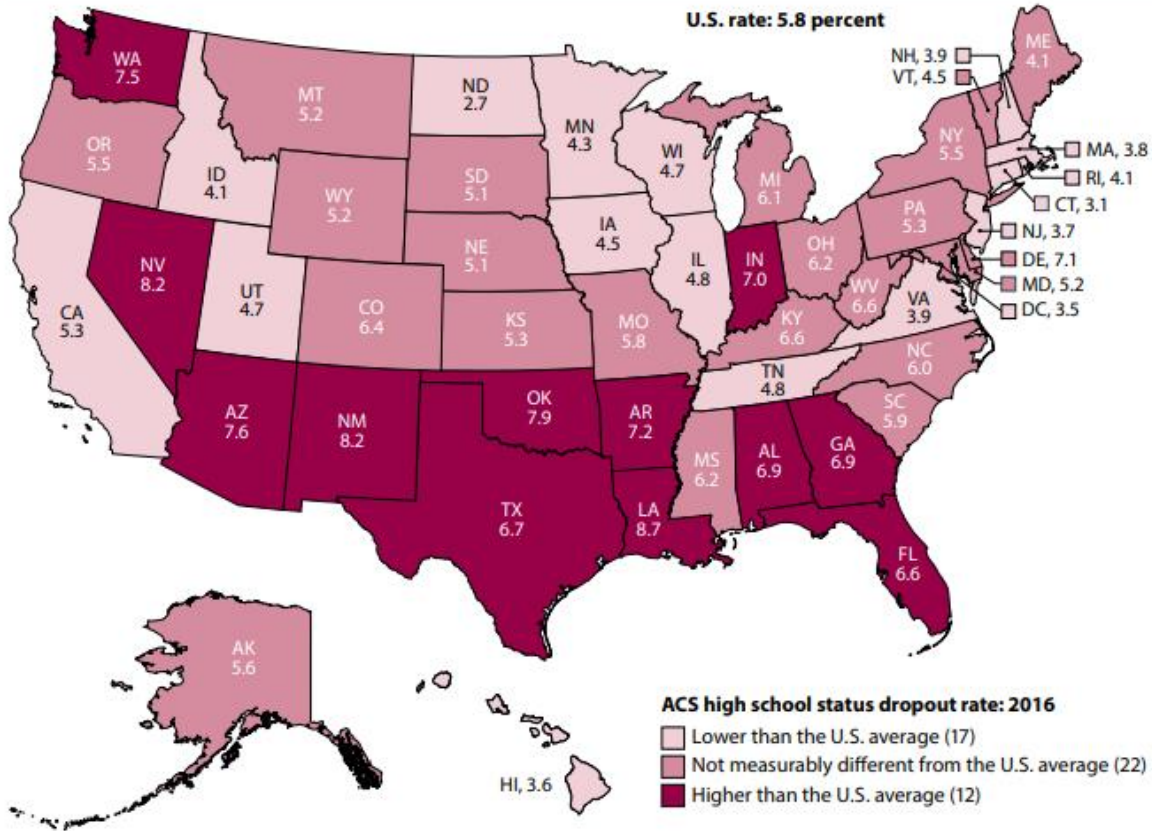
2018-19	# of Test-Takers	District % scoring 3 or 4		Arch Ford Districts % Scoring 3 or 4	
		Math	English Language Arts	Math	English Language Arts
ALE Students	4,617	8.6%	9.7%	9.2%	9.9%
Non-ALE Students	287,335	48.2%	45.2%	53.3%	49.4%



**DROPOUT RATES**

Dropout prevention is a primary goal of alternative education nationally.

For the sake of context, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, Arkansas has one of the higher statewide dropout rates among 16-24 year olds who have left without completing high school in the nation. These rates, represented in the map on the following page, is calculated from U.S. Census data.



National Center for Education Statistics

The Bureau analyzed dropout rates between ALE and non-ALE students. This rate calculation is not directly comparable to the map above because it looks only at the students in grades 9 through 12. Using APSCN data, the Bureau examined all individual students who dropped out of school for one of the reasons used to identify “dropouts” and their APSCN-reported cause for leaving school:

- Failing grades
- Conflict with school
- Peer conflict
- Health problems
- Suspended or expelled
- Economic hardship
- Enrolled in GED
- Other
- Lack of interest
- Pregnancy/marriage
- Alcohol/drugs

When the number of 9<sup>th</sup>- through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade ALE students dropping out for one of the above reasons is divided by the number of individual 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade ALE students in the same district, **the average proportion of ALE students who dropped out of school during the 2018-19 school year was 12.1% compared with 1.2% of non-ALE students using the same calculation. When considering only districts participating in Arch Ford ESC’s ALE programs, the percentage of dropouts among ALE students is 10.3%. While it is not**

possible to know how many more students may have dropped out of school without ALE services, the dropout rate for ALE students is almost 10 times higher than it is for those students who are not enrolled in ALE. Another interesting comparison is between the overall dropout rate for schools with ALE students (1.58%) and the dropout rate of the schools that reported in APSCN as having no ALE students (1.13%) in 2018-19.