

University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff & Pine Bluff School District Strategic Education Partnership

The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) and the Pine Bluff School District (PBSD) partner to accelerate student achievement and build a sustainable educator workforce in Southeast Arkansas. Through literacy intervention, a paid teacher residency model, and an integrated community school's framework, the partnership increases reading support, expands dual licensure in high-need areas, improves teacher retention, and strengthens alignment between higher education and K–12 systems in direct support of Arkansas LEARNS priorities.

AR KIDS Read – Literacy Acceleration & Early Workforce Pipeline

AR KIDS Read is a coordinated literacy partnership between UAPB, and the Pine Bluff School District designed to accelerate early reading achievement while strengthening the local educator pipeline. UAPB teacher candidates provide structured, Science of Reading–aligned tutoring and small-group instruction in elementary schools. Currently, 10 work-study students serve up to 20 hours per week, expanding literacy intervention capacity and directly supporting third grade reading proficiency goals. This initiative increases instructional support in classrooms while preparing classroom-ready educators aligned with Arkansas state standards.

TEACH PRIDE Teacher Residency – Paid, Year-Long Model

The TEACH PRIDE Residency (Perseverance, Rapport, Integrity, Determination, Excellence) is a grow-your-own teacher workforce pipeline developed by UAPB in partnership with the Pine Bluff School District to address educator shortages and improve long-term retention. Currently, UAPB supports 16 residents, with 14 placed in PBSD classrooms, 13 serving as paraprofessionals and one as an Aspiring Educator, while completing a dual licensure pathway in content and Special Education. Residents are embedded full-time in classrooms and supported through coordinated professional development provided jointly by UAPB and PBSD. This model strengthens staffing stability in high-need schools, builds local instructional capacity, and improves first-year teacher effectiveness.

Pine Bluff Community Schools Initiative – Integrated Student Supports

The Pine Bluff Community Schools Initiative is a comprehensive school improvement strategy that integrates academic supports, health services, and family engagement to strengthen student success. The initiative includes a full-time Community School Coordinator, a Mobile Parent Resource Center providing Wi-Fi access, literacy materials, and workforce referrals, expanded school-based health partnerships, literacy and financial literacy programming, and coordinated case management through community partners. By addressing both academic and non-academic barriers to learning, the initiative improves attendance, increases engagement, and positions schools as hubs for community stability and workforce development.