



Opportunity to Learn Campaign

ARKANSAS

Who We Are:

- A coalition of statewide organizations, community leaders, parents, students, educators, policymakers and others committed to public education in Arkansas
- Funded through the Schott Foundation for Public Education, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Charles Frueauff Foundation and affiliated with the National Opportunity to Learn Campaign.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

WE ENVISION AN ARKANSAS WHERE THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF EACH STUDENT ARE ADDRESSED, AND WHERE EVERY CHILD ENTERS SCHOOL READY TO LEARN, RECEIVES A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION, AND GRADUATES FROM HIGH SCHOOL PREPARED FOR COLLEGE, CAREER AND LIFE AS A PRODUCTIVE MEMBER OF A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY.

WE ARE WORKING TO ENGAGE ALL PUBLIC EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTCOMES IN ARKANSAS. WE ARE STRIVING FOR AN EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT GUARANTEES EACH CHILD AN EQUITABLE AND EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN.

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT FROM OTHER COALITIONS?

- We are not just educators, not just education organizations, not just organizations interested in policy development...
- We are a campaign that blends advocacy organizations, policy-makers and grassroots groups..
- We are committed to bridging the gaps that too often separate educators and education groups from communities served by our public schools.

NATIONAL OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN CAMPAIGN

- **The Opportunity to Learn (OTL) Campaign unites a growing coalition of advocates and organizers from across the country working to ensure that all students have access to a high quality public education. The Campaign includes local, state and national organizations, grassroots community leaders, policymakers, youth organizers, business leaders and philanthropic partners.**
- **Standards-based reform, and the high-stakes testing that goes with it, has been our nation's dominant education policy in recent decades. But this approach has done nothing to address the deep inequities in access to educational opportunity, particularly for low-income students and students of color. By focusing solely on the achievement gap, our nation has failed to address the opportunity gap that creates it.**
- **The OTL Campaign advocates for a supports-based reform agenda that provides students with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.**

ARKANSAS OTL PRIORITY GOALS

- Increase access to high-quality Pre-K programs and work towards universal access
- Expand quality afterschool and summer programs
- Improve teacher and administrator preparation and development
- Increase parent, student, community, and school partnerships
- Pass the Arkansas DREAM Act
- Modernizing Career and Technical Education

From the National OTL Blog...

In 17 States, Majority of Students Live in Poverty

Posted on: Thursday October 24th, 2013

A [new report](#) from the Southern Education Foundation highlights the dire need for school services aimed at supporting students living in poverty: In 2011, 60% of public school students in the US were from low-income families. The report finds that for the first time in four decades, a majority of children in 17 states, including most of the South and several Western states, are living in poverty.

From the Washington Post (emphasis added)

- "The analysis by the Southern Education Foundation, the nation's oldest education philanthropy, is based on the number of students from preschool through 12th grade who were eligible for the federal free and reduced-price meals program in the 2010-11 school year.
- The meals program run by the Department of Agriculture is a rough proxy for poverty, because a family of four could earn no more than \$40,793 a year to qualify in 2011.

Children from those low-income families dominated classrooms in 13 states in the South and the four Western states with the largest populations in 2011, researchers found. **A decade earlier, just four states reported poor children as a majority of the student population in their public schools.**“

Ensuring that every student has access to a quality public education means addressing the academic, social and health needs that students living in poverty bring to the classroom.

Providing high quality pre-K programs will help low-income children start off on equal footing with their better-off peers. And building a system of wraparound supports – such as school-based health clinics, after-school tutoring and summer programs, and guidance and college counselors – will ensure every student has access to the same resources and opportunities throughout their school careers.

INCREASE ACCESS TO HIGH –QUALITY PRE-K

- Students who participate in Pre-K programs score higher in language in Kindergarten and higher in language and math in 1st grade
- Pre-K programs are the single indicator of closing the achievement gap between racial and SES group
- Pre-K programs not only prepares students for success in kindergarten but throughout their academic career

students who participate in Pre-K programs
are:

Less likely to receive special education
services

Less likely to repeat a grade

More likely to graduate from high school

More likely to attend a four-year college

More likely to read on grade level

Report by [AACF \(2012\)](#) shows that
Presently, the state-funded ABC/ABCSS and federally-funded Head
Start programs served a total of 47 percent of eligible three-year-
old children (11,210) and 80 percent of four-year-old children
(19,001) statewide

High-quality, publicly-funded programs for low-income families are
either at full capacity or their funding has remained stagnant for
several years, making expansion impossible.

The state needs to increase investment in quality programs to
reach more children, especially those that are under the age of
three when their brain development is so critical.

New and Continuing Challenges Facing Arkansas

- The need to educate well all half a million public school students has never been greater
- Almost 300,000 students come from low-income homes/neighborhoods, and there is increasing evidence that they will need not only a better school day, but more and better afterschool and summer opportunities---they are out of school 75-80% of time
- Better education increasingly is the only pathway to be self-sufficient/achieve middle-income
- The number of working families is increasing; “home alone” for their children is not a “funny move.”

As our world has become increasing complex



- Schools alone cannot support all of the learning needs for children to be prepared for careers, college and life.
- Young people will require a greater set of skills and dispositions to succeed.
- Today's learners need more opportunities to explore, test, venture and create.
- Innovative school-community partnerships in afterschool and summers are well suited to provide these opportunities. (Former US Secretary of Education Dick Riley, 2013)

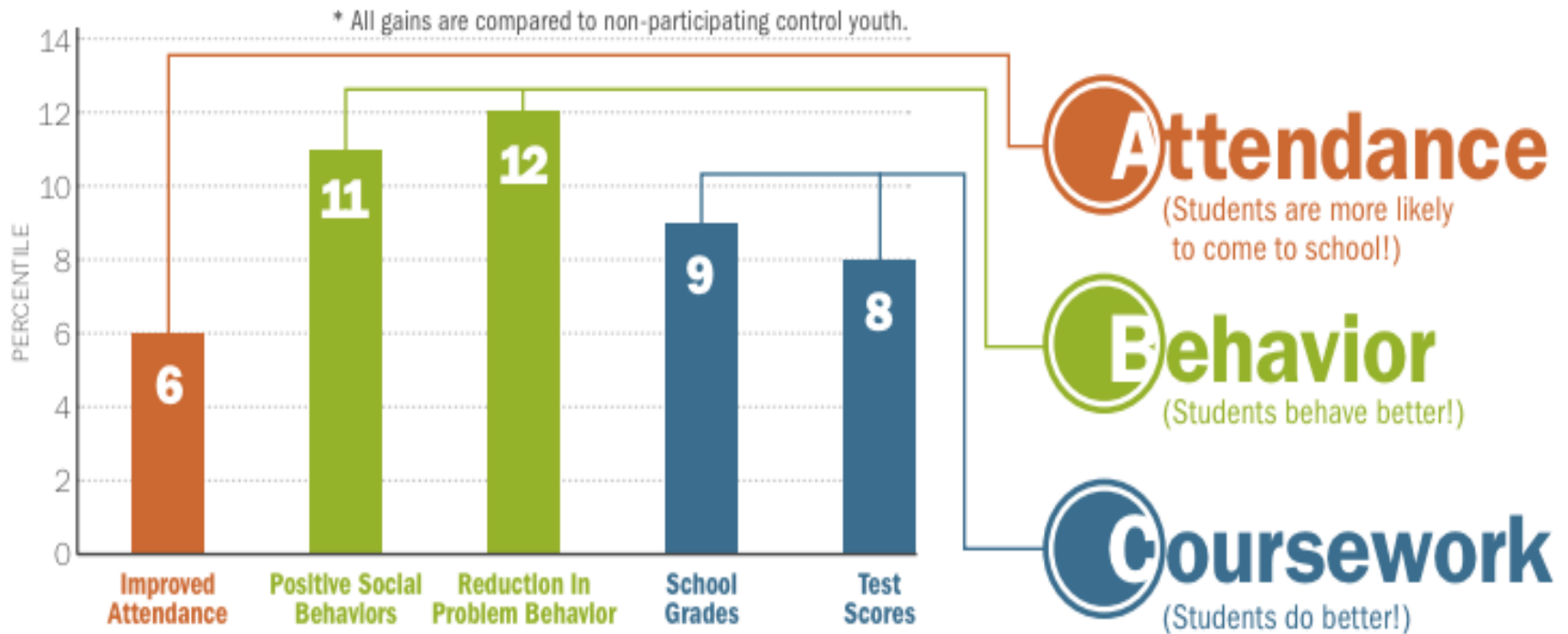
The Lack of Quality Afterschool and Summer Learning and Enrichment Maybe a New, Critical Inequality

A recent profound finding clearly demonstrates that high income families understand the critical nature of this “third space for learning and development.”

This study found that on average top-income families are now spending almost \$9,000 a year on enrichment outside the regular school day and year for their children plus a lot of their personal time (*“The American Dream, Then and Now”*)

On the 50th Anniversary of the Brown decision, adding an out of school time learning inequality to inequalities in classroom resources is NOT GOOD!

High quality afterschool programs are proven to accelerate student achievement and development



Durlak & Weissberg, Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning;
Expanding Minds, p. 196

Improve Teacher and Administrator Preparation and Development

- **Recruiting diverse and talented individuals into the teaching profession**
- **Preparing teachers for the classroom and for leadership**
- **Supporting ongoing professional learning and development**
- **Addressing teaching and learning conditions**
- **Funding a sustainable teaching force**
- **Promoting comprehensive teaching quality strategies**

Increase Parent, Student, Teacher, Community and School Partnerships

- Research clearly shows that significant parent, family and community engagement in the public schools correlates with higher student achievement, and school improvement. When schools, families and the broader community work together to support learning, students earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer and enroll in higher level learning opportunities.
- While some measure of parental/community involvement has long been a part of public schools, usually it has been guided by schools and focused on fundraising, volunteering and supporting school activities.

We now understand that families and the broader community also must be included in decision-making and school governance. Learning that occurs within the family and community contribute to school success, and so we must give greater recognition and support to these collaborative efforts.