



# KidsCount Bulletin

## Positive Trends in Education

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### Arkansas Is Preparing More College Ready Students

The state has made significant progress in preparing more students to attend college. Seventy-three percent of high school students who take the ACT test in Arkansas have completed a college preparatory core curriculum. This represents a 37% improvement over the past ten years. The required core includes: 4 English, 4 Math, 3 Science, and 3 Social Studies (History) courses. The State's commitment to curriculum reform, which requires more out of students who choose to attend college, appears to be paying off.

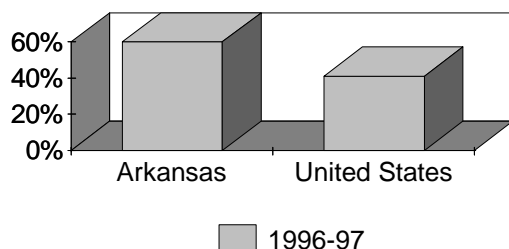
### Commitment to Curriculum Reform Paying Dividends

In addition, the number of high school seniors taking the ACT in Arkansas exceeds the national average by 20%. This illustrates that the message about the importance of higher education is getting across to our students.

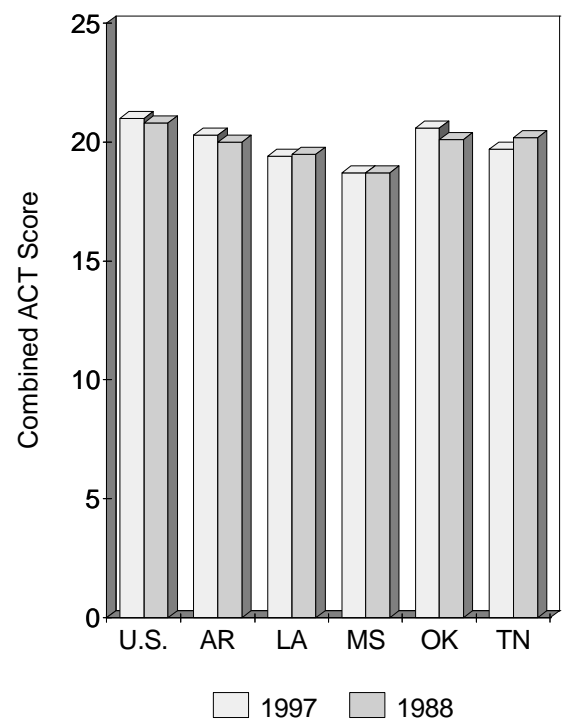
### Students who take the ACT and Complete a Core College Prep Curriculum

	1988	1997
United States	41%	59%
Arkansas	36%	73%
Louisiana	61%	66%
Mississippi	49%	61%
Oklahoma	39%	51%
Tennessee	27%	54%

### High School Seniors Taking The ACT



### ACT Score Trends



### ACT SCORES -- How Do Arkansas Students Compare?

College bound High School students in Arkansas compare favorably to students from neighboring states in ACT test score averages. Arkansas, at 20.3, is only slightly below the National ACT average score of 21.0, and the ten year trend suggests that scores should continue to rise. Even with more Arkansas students taking the test each year, the average Combined ACT score has risen every year this decade.

**A POSITIVE EDUCATIONAL TREND IN ARKANSAS?**

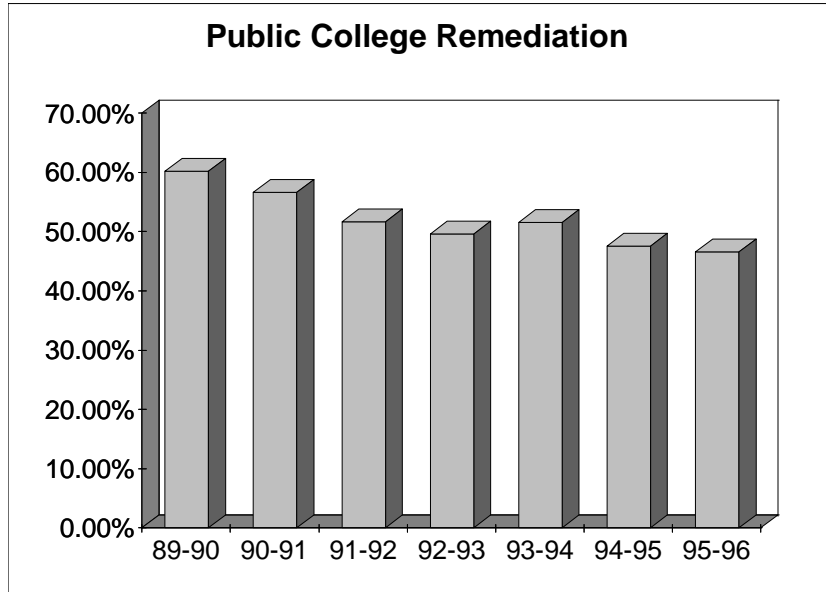
The state’s continued emphasis on core curriculum standards has contributed to a decreasing remediation rate. The number of incoming college freshmen who must spend part of their first year’s class schedules taking remedial Math and English is decreasing. The Arkansas public college remediation rate has fallen over 12% since 1989-90, from 60.2% in 89-90 to 46.6% in 95-96. Arkansas’ rate is still higher than the national average (approximately 33% of freshmen entering public colleges across the U.S. require some type of remedial instruction), but if the state trend continues the national norm is within reach.

On average, Arkansas students are at or above the required ACT score of most public colleges in the state, thus decreasing the need to take remedial courses. But, as college requirements go up, so will the need for students to score higher on the ACT.

**ACT Score Needed to Avoid Remedial Courses**

Public College	Combined ACT Score
ASU	19
UAPB	19
UAM	18/19
UALR	21
UAF	19*
UCA	19*

\* Expected to change



**STATE EDUCATION LEADER SUPPORTS RAISING STANDARDS**

Ray Simon, director of the Arkansas Department of Education, recently remarked at the Arkansas School Boards Conference that higher education institutions in Arkansas spent \$27 million in 1995-96 on remedial instruction. Mr. Simon supports raising the “minimum” core standards required for high school students, because he feels the benefits of higher standards and expectations make strong practical and economic sense.

Having more of Arkansas’ students better prepared for higher education will have a lasting impact on the state’s economic future. On the average, a person with a college degree is able to earn over 40% more in salary/wages compared to a person with only a high school diploma.

For more information about these and other educational trends you may contact the State Department of Education Arkansas Office of Higher Education 371-2000, and Arkansas Friends for Better Schools at 373-5882. Nationally, sources include the Southern Regional Education Board, Claire Geddes at the National Center for Education Statistics (202)219-1370 or www.ed.gov/NCES/, American College Testing, and the Educational Trust in Washington DC at (202) 293-121’

For more information on emerging educational issues contact Connie Whitfield at Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families by phone at (501) 371-9678, or write 103 E. 7th Street, Suite 931, Little Rock, AR 72201. Please visit our website as well - the address is: aradvocates.org

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