

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

THE STATE OF BLACK MEN AND BOYS IN ARKANSAS AND

HOW WE CAN BEGIN EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY

Part III: Education



AUGUST 2018





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Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF)

Central Arkansas Office:
Union Station
1400 W. Markham St., Suite 306
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 371-9678

Northwest Arkansas Office:
614 E. Emma Avenue, Suite 235
Springdale, AR 72764
(479) 927-9800

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by Ginny Blankenship, Ed.D.
AACF Education Policy Director
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OVERVIEW

This is the third data snapshot in a series that details the state of black men and boys in Arkansas. Across the board, our black men and boys encounter significant barriers. They face a higher rate of infant mortality, child poverty, and incarceration than their white peers. They also have lower high school graduation rates and family income levels. These outcomes are a result of decades of policy decisions that negatively impacted black Arkansans.

This snapshot focuses on what we do know about where black men and boys stand in education and offers policy solutions that can help black men and boys succeed. Unfortunately, state-level education data that is disaggregated by both race and gender is hard to find. In a future report, we'll take an in-depth look at the root causes of these inequities.

EDUCATION AND ARKANSAS'S BLACK MEN AND BOYS

Values Statement: Every child — regardless of race, ethnicity, or zip code — deserves an excellent education that begins in early childhood and continues through affordable, accessible higher education. We know that a strong start with support along the way propels kids to be kindergarten-ready, to read on grade level by third grade, and to graduate from high school ready for college or careers. With solid policy decisions today, we can set the stage for higher earnings later in life for black boys.

What If? What if every black boy grew up with the expectation of earning a college degree or specialized

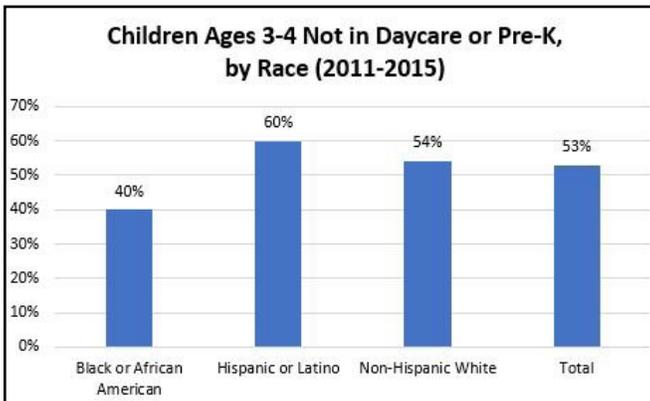
credential? Based on national data for all adults, earnings would increase by \$6,240 a year for those with a two-year degree compared to [those who have a high school diploma \(\\$35,256\)](#).¹ Earnings would increase by a whopping \$23,868 to \$59,124 annually for those with a four-year degree compared to those with a high school diploma.





Young Children Not Enrolled in Early Childhood Programs, by Race

Three- and four-year-old black children are more likely to be enrolled in early childhood education programs, such as daycare, Head Start, or pre-kindergarten. According to the latest Census data, about 60 percent of young black children were enrolled in such programs. However, this data does not tell us anything about the quality of the programs that are serving children of any race. More research is needed on whether there are racial disparities in access to high-quality programs.



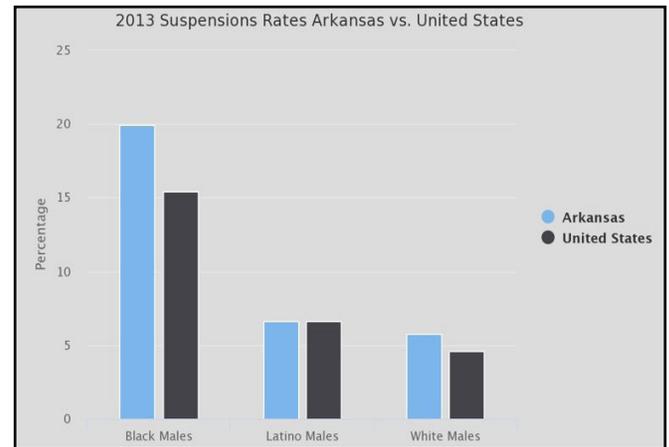
Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-09, 2010-14, and 2011-15 five-year American Community Survey. Retrieved from the Kids Count Data Center. Data not available for race by gender.

School Suspensions, by Race and Gender

The Schott Foundation produced a report in 2015, “Black Lives Matter: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males,” which compared the educational outcomes of black boys compared to their white peers in each state and nationally. Much of the data in the following section is taken from [that report](#).²

One of the report’s indicators was school suspensions. The following graph shows that black boys are far more likely to be suspended from school in Arkansas, as well as across the country. Research also shows

that African-American students are far more likely to be suspended for the same minor infractions and punished more harshly than their non-black peers.



Source for this chart and the three on opposite page: The Schott Foundation for Public Education. “Black Lives Matter: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males.”

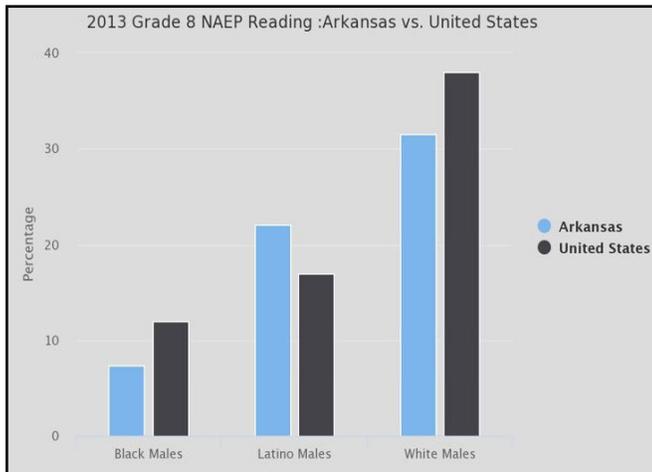
Fortunately, a new state law passed in 2017 (Act 1059) prohibits out-of-school suspensions or expulsions for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The law allows exceptions for students who pose a “physical risk” to themselves or others or who cause a “serious disruption” that cannot be addressed through other means.

NAEP Reading and Math Scores, by Race and Gender

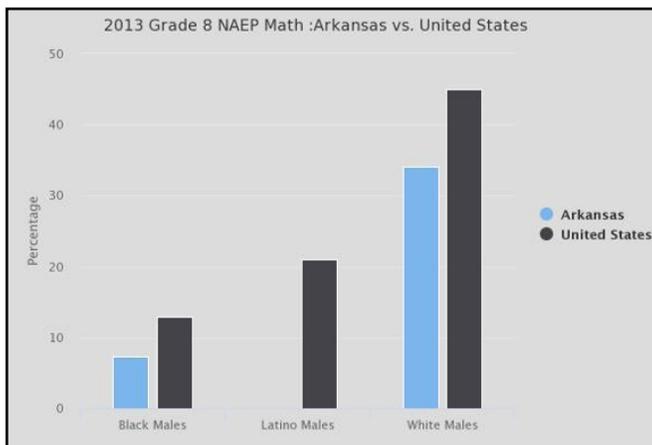
The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a norm-referenced test administered to a random sample of students in all 50 states every few years in reading, math, and other subjects. As is the case with most standardized tests, our state’s black boys are performing far below their peers — even far lower than Latino boys in reading, many of whom do not speak English as their native language.

Advanced Placement (AP) Enrollment, by Race and Gender

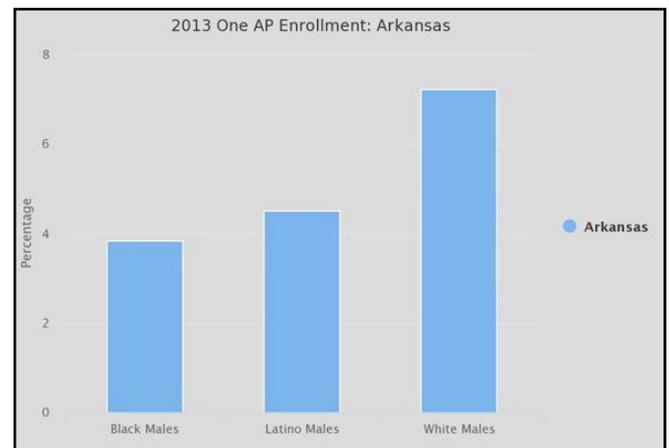
Access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and performance on AP exams at a level that allows high school students to earn college credit, is often thought of as a measure of school quality and rigor. Once again, white boys were enrolled in AP courses in Arkansas at nearly twice the rate as African-American boys.



**Percentage performing at or above proficient*



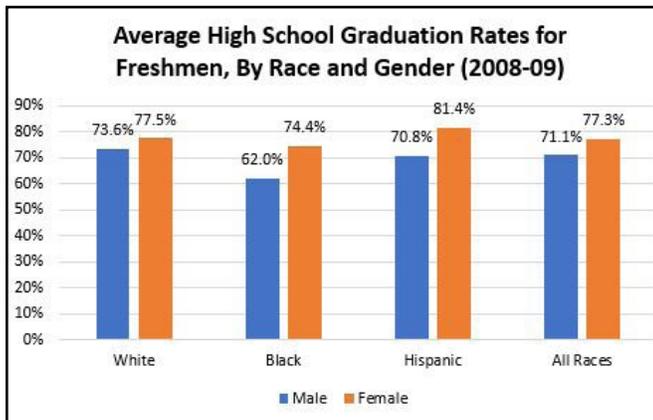
**Percentage performing at or above proficient*



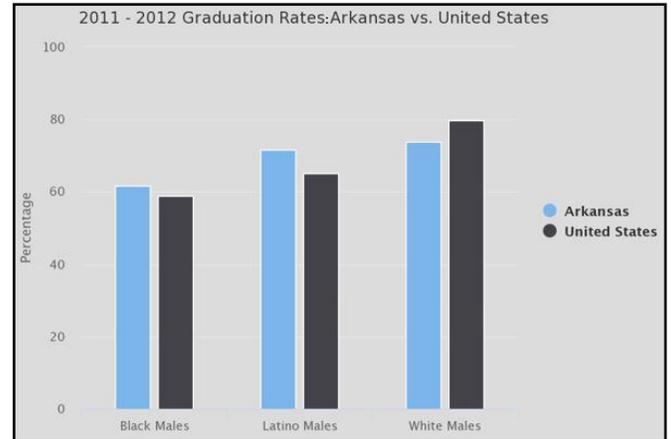


High School Graduation Rates, by Race and Gender

According to the latest available data for Arkansas, from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), only 62 percent of black boys are graduating from high school on time, compared to more than 70 percent of black girls and white boys, almost 80 percent of white girls, and more than 90 percent of Hispanic girls.³ This rate has remained relatively constant since 2012, when the Schott Foundation’s report⁴ found that 61.7 percent of black boys graduated on time in Arkansas.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Table 4. Averaged Freshmen High School Graduation Rate (AFGR) by race/ethnicity, gender, state or jurisdiction, and year: School years 2002–03 through 2008–09.



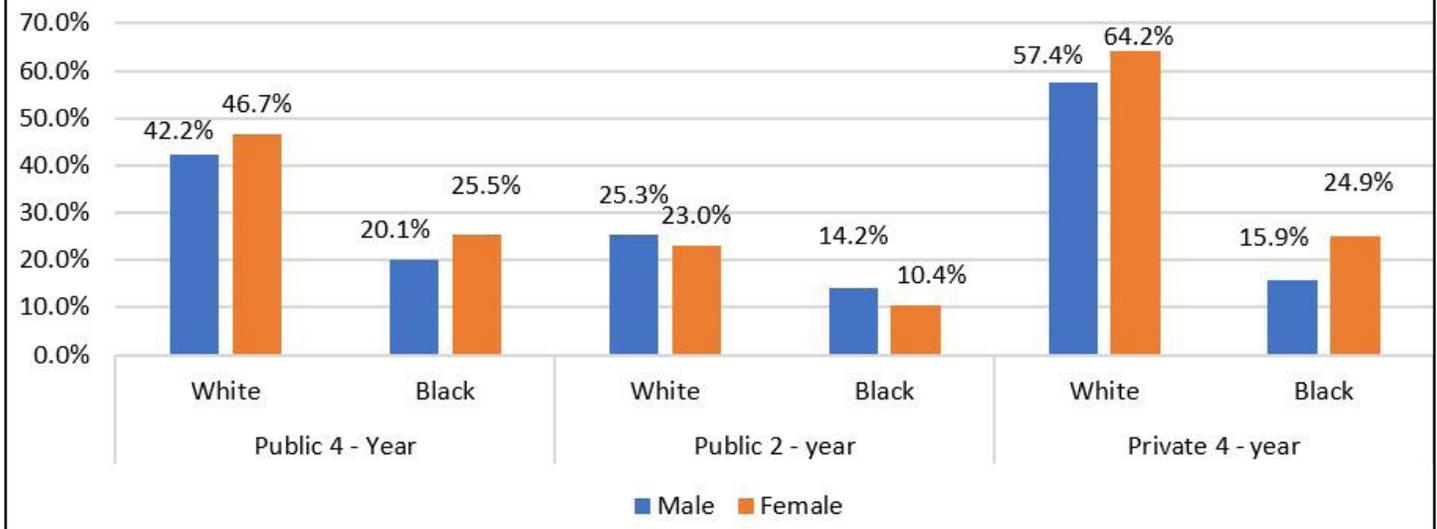
Source: The Schott Foundation for Public Education. “Black Lives Matter: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males.”

College Graduation Rates, by Race and Gender

The graph at right shows the percentage of students in Arkansas that graduated in six years from a public four-year program, a public two-year program, or a private four-year program in 2013, by race and gender. In all three categories, white students had a higher graduation rate than black students. Also, women had higher graduation rates than men at public four-year institutions and private four-year institutions. Black men are graduating from college at much lower rates than white men, regardless of type of school.



College Graduation Rates in Arkansas, By Race and Gender (2012-13)



Source: *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, "College Completion." http://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/state/#state=ar§or=public_four

POLICY SOLUTIONS

Continuing a dialog about the obstacles facing black men and boys in our state is a necessary first step on our journey to become a more equitable Arkansas, one in which all people, regardless of race, can thrive. Here are some key policy solutions that would help improve educational outcomes for all Arkansas students, especially students of color:

1. **Support high-quality early childhood education and afterschool and summer programs**,⁵ which provide a strong start and continuing support for students as they grow.
2. **Ensure that all Arkansas public schools are implementing the "science of reading"**— a proven method of phonics-based instruction that helps students read on grade-level and addresses reading difficulties early on.
3. **Adopt equitable and effective school discipline policies**, such as Conscious Discipline, restorative justice, and alternatives to suspensions, to keep more black boys in school, ready to learn. We also need to expand the new ban on out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for grades K-5 to include grades 6-12.
4. **Increase high school and college completion rates among black boys by monitoring students' progress** through more frequent and focused academic and financial advising.

5. **Ensure that National School Lunch (NSL) funding is targeted to those whom it was intended to help: low-income children** — a large percentage of which are African-American boys. Also, this funding should be restricted to strategies that have been proven to improve educational outcomes and help close the achievement gap.
6. **Continue efforts to improve teacher quality, recruitment, and retention**, especially in schools with high percentages of minority and low-income students.

ENDNOTES

1. Employment Projections, Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor. <https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm>.
2. "Black Lives Matter: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males," Schott Foundation for Public Education, (2015). <http://blackboysreport.org>.
3. "Average Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) by race/ethnicity, gender, state or jurisdiction, and year: School years 2002-03 through 2008-09," National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/AFGR.asp>.
4. Schott Foundation, (2015).
5. "What Do #ARKIDSNEED From Birth to 8?" November 2015, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. <http://www.aradvocates.org/publications/what-do-arkidsneed-from-birth-to-age-eight>.



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