

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Clinton School of Public Service



# The Demand for After-School Programs in Arkansas

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## **Executive Summary**

In August 2007, the Clinton School of Public Service and Governor's Taskforce on Best Practices for After-School and Summer Programs partnered to investigate the demand for after-school programs in the state of Arkansas. The goal of the project was to develop and conduct a statewide after-school demand study to assess the value, need and availability of after-school programs within the state.

### **STUDY METHODOLOGY**

Approximately 3,700 middle and high school students were administered surveys in public schools throughout Arkansas between January and April 2008. In addition, the Clinton School team administered surveys to school principals and conducted focus groups with parents. Surveys and focus groups were administered in public schools because they could provide greater access to a diverse group of students and parents, as well as allowing contact with school principals.

Participating schools were selected within each of the state's four congressional districts to achieve a geographically representative sample. Two schools from each of the four districts were randomly selected, resulting in a total of 16 schools participating in the study. Principal data was collected in 12 out of the 16 participating schools. At least one parent focus group was conducted in each congressional district.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

- 1) Almost half of students are unsupervised after school on a regular basis. Regardless of gender, race or grade level, a large proportion of students are unsupervised after school, and this is more likely with older students.
- 2) The majority of students in every geographic region reported they would consider attending an after-school program if their school offered one.
- 3) Students who do not know if their school offers an after-school program are the most likely to be home alone on a regular basis. Student and parent knowledge of after-school programs appears to decrease the likelihood that students will be left unsupervised after school.

- 4) Hispanic students are the least likely to currently be enrolled in an after-school program even though they are most likely to report they would consider participating if one were available.
- 5) Students attending schools in central Arkansas have the least unmet demand for after-school programs, as their knowledge of the availability of programs and the number of schools offering after-school programs is higher than in any other geographic region. Students in northwestern Arkansas demonstrate the greatest unmet demand.
- 6) Current after-school programs focus on offering additional academic services, which creates a gap between what parents and students desire and what is actually available. Students and parents are not interested in after-school programs that are an extension of the classroom. Students are more interested in recreational activities, and parents would like recreational activities and life skills lessons.
- 7) Middle school students demonstrate greater demand for after-school programs than high school students.
- 8) Students that attend after-school programs are most likely to attend a program at their school.
- 9) According to parents and students, providing after-school programs at the schools reduces problems with student transportation to the after-school program. Parents cited transportation to and from after-school programs as a key factor in participation.
- 10) According to parents, the affordability of after-school programs is the most important factor for participation, even more than location. Most schools are currently offering free programs, but school principals are concerned about securing adequate funding to operate.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) Existing and newly created programs should work to lessen the gap between what types of after-school activities parents and students are interested in and what is actually offered. After-school programs should be developed to cater to students' recreational and social needs. However, offering homework assistance should remain a key component of programs.
- 2) The state of Arkansas should examine marketing efforts to increase student and parent awareness of the availability of after-school programs in their communities.
- 3) Low-cost after-school programs should be developed within schools, as students usually attend programs at their schools and transportation and cost are frequently cited as parental concerns.

- 4) The state should develop recruitment methods to attract Hispanic students, as they are the least likely to participate yet demonstrate a significant interest in after-school programs.
- 5) Emphasis should be placed on the northwestern region of the state as a priority area for encouraging more programs and awareness of after-school programs.
- 6) Focus should be placed on meeting the demand at the middle school level, as middle school students are the group expressing the most interest in attending after-school programs.
- 7) The state should concentrate efforts on making sure after-school providers have funding sources in order to ensure that parents and children have access to affordable after-school programs.

## **1. Project Background**

On March 9, 2006, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee held a Governors Summit on Extra Learning Opportunities to launch a three year campaign to expand, support and improve after-school and summer school programs in Arkansas. The Arkansas Out of School Network (AOSN) was highlighted as a leader in this campaign and began holding regional meetings throughout the state to introduce local communities to the campaign and to garner support for after-school and summer school. The AOSN has since worked to bring together children, parents, government and businesses to share in a common goal of expanding learning opportunities for Arkansas youth.

As part of a 31 state campaign to develop school-based and school-linked programs, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation provided funds to support the development of after-school policy in the state of Arkansas. The Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services has supplied matching funds.

To continue the campaign that began in 2006, Governor Mike Beebe created the Governor's Taskforce on Best Practices for After-School and Summer Programs. The Taskforce held its inaugural meeting in January 2008 to discuss the scope of the work to be undertaken. The group, which is made up of after-school advocates, parents, teachers, school administrators and Arkansas Department of Education staff, focuses on providing recommendations to Governor Beebe pertaining to potential after-school legislation for the 2009 session.

In August 2007, the Clinton School of Public Service and the Governor's Taskforce on Best Practices for After-School and Summer Programs partnered to create several student teams to work on after-school issues throughout the state. The Clinton School demand study team was assigned to investigate the demand for after-school programs throughout Arkansas.

Since partnering with the Governor's Taskforce in August 2007, the demand study team has designed, implemented, and analyzed a comprehensive after-school demand study for the state of Arkansas.

This final report presents the data collected by the Clinton School team. The report includes the following research instruments: a passive permission form, a student survey, a principal survey and a focus group script. Additionally, a comprehensive analysis of existing data on after-school programs is included that synthesizes important findings about the current state of after-school, both at the national level and in Arkansas. Finally, summary charts and tables are included.

## 2. Comparisons of Geographic Regions

In order to note variations by geography, this section compares student responses from Arkansas' four congressional districts on several topics of interest.

Table 4.2.1 presents respondents race by district.

**Table 4.2.1 – Geographic Regions Comparison – Student Demographics**

Demographics by Race (%)	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	Arkansas
American Indian / Alaska Native	4.1	1.6	2.8	1.6	2.4
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	0	0.2	1.2	0.4	0.5
Asian / Asian American	0.2	2	6.3	0.5	2.6
Black / African American	4.1	35.7	8.5	57.5	28.8
Hispanic / Latino	2.5	5.5	29.7	1.5	11.5
White / Caucasian (Non-Hispanic)	72.3	44.3	40.3	31.1	43.4
Other	9.7	6.5	8.9	3.2	6.8
Not Reported	7.2	4.1	2.5	4.2	4.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

### Knowledge of After-School Programs

This section presents a comparison of student knowledge of after-school programs by district.

Table 4.2.2 indicates that a larger proportion of students in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional Districts reported they did not know what an after-school program was than in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>

Congressional Districts. Table 4.2.3 indicates that students in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional Districts mostly reported their schools offered an after-school program.

**Table 4.2.2 – Geographic Regions Comparison –Do you know what an after-school program is? (%)**

	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	Arkansas
No	15	2.3	8.2	3.1	6.3
Yes	50.7	72.1	44.2	91.9	65.9
Don't Know	34.3	25.6	47.6	5	27.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.2.3 – Geographic Regions Comparison – Does your school offer an after-school program? (%)**

	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	Arkansas
No	18.2	5.5	16.2	4.6	10.5
Yes	81.8	94.5	83.8	95.4	89.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Participation in After-School Programs

Table 4.2.4 presents a comparison of students that attend an after-school program on a regular basis by congressional district. Overall, participation in after-school programs was low for each district. However, District 1 stood out in that over 90% of students reported they do not attend at after-school program.

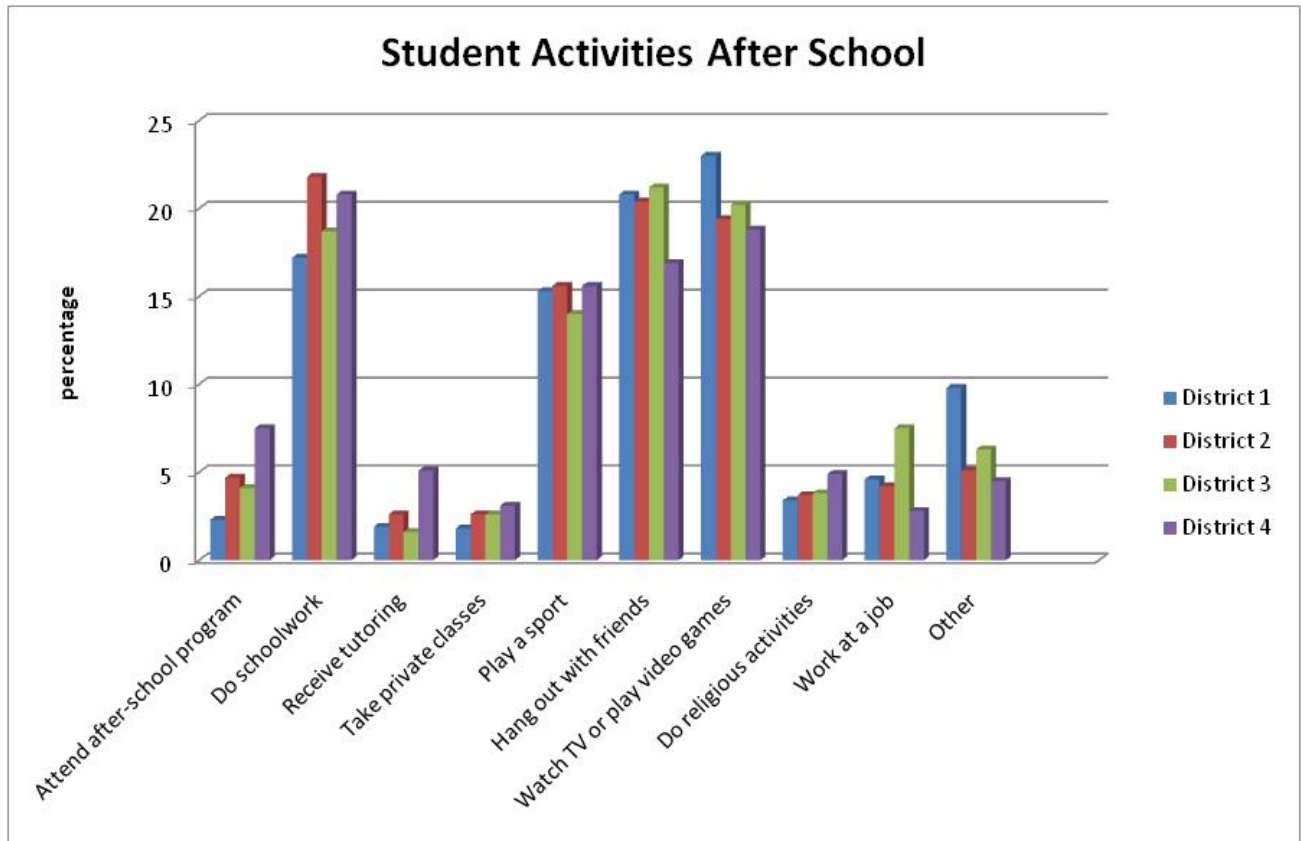
**Table 4.2.4 – Geographic Regions Comparison – Do you go to an after-school program at least three days a week? (%)**

	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	Arkansas
No	92.2	82.2	85.2	81.3	84.4
Yes	7.8	17.8	14.8	18.7	15.6
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100

What Students Do After School

Table 4.2.5 presents a comparison of the activities that student engage in after school, by congressional district. Students in every district reported that they do school work, hang out with friends or watch TV and play video games as their top three choices.

**Table 4.2.5 – Geographic Regions Comparison – What do you usually do after school is over? (%)**



## Demand for After-School Programs

Finally, this section compares demand for after-school programs by congressional district. Table 4.2.6 indicates that students in Districts 1 and 3 were the most likely to report they would consider attending an after-school program at their school. Table 4.2.7 presents a cross tabulation of students without adult supervision at least once a week and their interest in attending an after-school program. The largest proportion of students (about 50%) that were unsupervised after school on a regular basis and reported they would think about attending an after-school program were in District 1. In comparison, District 4 had the smallest proportion of students report that they would think about attending an after-school program. Table 4.2.8 presents a cross tabulation of students that are not enrolled in an after-school program and their interest in attending. District 4 had the smallest proportion of students who are not currently enrolled in an after-school program indicate that they would think about attending an after-school program, but this district ranked second for students reporting they would most likely attend an after-school program.

**Table 4.2.6 – Geographic Regions Comparison – Would you attend an after-school program if your school had one? (%)**

	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	Arkansas
Not Reported	5.5	3.2	3	4.1	3.7
Most likely attend	20.1	13	14.3	17.1	15.7
Would think about attending	46.3	44.8	46.6	29.2	40.9
Would not attend	21.6	27.9	27.7	27.8	26.8
Already attend	6.5	11.1	8.4	21.8	12.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.2.7 – Geographic Regions Comparison – Interest of students unsupervised after school in an after-school program (%)**

	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	Arkansas
Not Reported	1.4	1.3	1.7	1.5	1.5
Most likely attend	20.9	15.1	14.6	18.2	16.6
Would think about attending	50.3	46.1	47.8	32.6	43.6
Would not attend	18.9	26.8	27.9	26.2	25.9
Already attend	8.4	10.7	8	21.5	12.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.2.8 – Geographic Regions Comparison – Interest of students not currently participating in a program in an after-school program (%)**

	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	Arkansas
Not Reported	5.6	3.4	3.3	4.1	4.1
Most likely attend	20.1	12.6	12.4	16.5	16.7
Would think about attending	48.7	49.6	49.8	32	45.4
Would not attend	23.2	32.7	30.7	32.9	27.1
Already attend	2.5	1.8	3.8	14.4	6.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>



### **3. Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Knowledge of After-School Programs**

A commonly perceived barrier to student access to after-school programs is the availability of information about these programs. Groups that are more likely to have access to information are the most likely to participate. Arkansas high school students were more likely to be unaware of the availability of an after-school program at their schools. Comparing geographic regions, students in district in the northwest and district 3 in the northeast portion of Arkansas were least likely to know if their school offered an after-school program. In comparison, 90 percent of students in district 4 in the southern part of Arkansas knew that their school offered an after-school program. Finally, Hispanic students in district 1 were the least likely to be aware of the availability of an after-school program at their school.

#### **Recommendations:**

- More efforts must be made to ensure that high school students and their parents have information about after-school programs.
- Efforts should be concentrated on increasing parent and student awareness of after-school programs in the northern regions of the state.
- Efforts to disperse information in the northeast region of the state should focus on outreach to Hispanic students.

#### **Participation in After-School Programs**

Only 15 percent of the students surveyed statewide reported attending an after-school program on a regular basis. This finding corresponds with existing data estimating that 8 percent of Arkansas students in public schools who want to attend an after-school program cannot attend. Our research also revealed that students in grade 5 and 12, as well as Hispanic students attend after-school programs the least. Previous research supports this finding that older students and Hispanic students have the least access to after-school programs. It is also important to note that Hispanic students were also the most likely to report that they would think about attending a program or would most likely attend a program at their school if one were available. Additionally, high school students were most likely to report attending a job after school, thereby demonstrating less demand. Comparing regions, the fewest number of students in district 1 attend an after-school program. District 4 had the most students report that they attended an after-school program. *It is important to note that one of the schools participating in the study in district 4 has a well established 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC after-school program.*

#### **Recommendations:**

- Recruitment of students for after-school programs should focus more on middle school students and less on high school students.

- Hispanic students should be highlighted as a key group for further program development and identifying barriers to participation in after-school programs.

### **What Students Do After School**

Almost half of students reported being left home alone on a regular basis. This finding is supported by existing evidence suggesting that 18% of school age children have to care for themselves after school until parents arrive home. In every district, at least 40 percent of students reported being home alone on a regular basis. This number grew larger with high school students. When cross referenced with the availability of an after-school program within the school, almost 50 percent of students statewide that were home alone on a regular basis also did not know if their school offered an after school program. However, in districts 1 and 3 in the northern part of Arkansas, whether the school offered an after-school program did not have an impact on students being home alone after school. Students that were home alone the most in the northern regions often responded that a program was available at school. Compared with the data suggesting there are a small number of after-school programs in these regions, it is likely that the main problem is not student awareness of after-school but that after-school programs do not have the capacity to accommodate all of the students interested in attending.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The northern region of the state should be highlighted as a key region for further program development.
- Further research should explore reasons why students do not participate in after-school programs when they are available.

### **Reasons for Attending an After-School Program**

Arkansas students reported that they attended an after-school program because there are interesting things to do, for help with homework and because their friends attend. The majority of students indicated they would like sports teams, help with homework and arts and crafts. These findings indicate that students are most interested in after-school programs as a social outlet and for participation in activities that are not offered during the school day. The only geographic region where students expressed an interest in advanced-placement classes after-school was in central Arkansas.

#### **Recommendation:**

- After-school programs should offer more recreational activities in addition to homework assistance.

## **Demand for After-School Programs**

In order to directly examine the demand for after-school programs among students, we examined the likelihood that they would think about attending a program if it were available at their schools. The majority of students in every geographic region reported they would consider attending an after-school program if their school offered one. This suggests there is a great amount of demand for after-school programs. Middle school students were the most likely to report that they would attend, which corresponds with data suggesting that many high school students work jobs after school. In district 4, Black students were more likely to report that they would think about attending an after-school program while more White students said they would not attend. This suggests that there is greater demand for after-school programs among Black students in Southern Arkansas.

Also students in district 1 and 3 were the most likely to express interest in attending an after-school program. Also, district 1 had the largest proportion of students who reported they did not know if their school offered an after-school program. These findings suggest that students in district 1 express demand for after-school programs, while having the least knowledge of program availability. Additionally, over 90 percent of students in district 1 did not attend an after-school program.

Finally, students who reported being alone after-school were examined based on their interest in participating in an after-school program. At least 40 percent of all students that were unsupervised at least twice a week said they would consider attending an after-school program. Additionally, 45 percent of those not attending an after-school program said they would consider attending and 16 percent reported they would most likely attend. This suggests there is a large population of Arkansas students that have an unmet demand for after-school programming. District 1 also had the most students that were unsupervised after school report that they would consider attending an after-school program.

### **Recommendations:**

- Efforts for programs to accommodate students interested in attending after-school programs should focus on middle school students.
- Efforts for program recruitment should focus on students that are unsupervised after school.
- Additional programs should be created to meet the unmet demand for after-school programs, particularly in the northwestern part of the state.

## **After-School Program Location**

Over 70 percent of students reported that their after-school program was located at their school. This was overwhelmingly the case in every geographic region. This also reduced the need for

transportation to the program. However, another consideration to take into account is how students are transported home.

Recommendation:

- Explore if there is a preference for after-school programs to be located in schools.

**Principal Data**

In line with existing research, principals reported that after-school programs have benefits for schools, parents and students in the form of increased involvement, improved academic performance and a reduction in risky behaviors. The majority of schools highlighted that it was important for them to continue to offer these services.

However, there appears to be a gap between what types of activities students would like to have available and what services after-school programs are actually offering. Services offered were primarily academic in nature. When compared to student opinions, the only service that principals reported that aligned with student desires was tutoring. Other services available include standardized test prep and language classes. Sports teams and arts and crafts were the least offered, even though students rate these as two of their top desires for after-school activities. This is especially important, since most principals identified increasing student attendance as their greatest challenge and primary goal of expansion efforts.

Recommendation:

- Programs should accommodate student interest more as a means of increasing their participation, perhaps by integrating recreational activities with additional academic support.

Principals that offer after-school programs reported that a lack of money was their biggest obstacle. Since all but 10 percent of programs reported their services are free, this is of great importance in continuing to offer after-school programs at no cost to parents. If schools are required to charge fees this might reduce participation in programs. As noted in the next section, parents are most interested in their children participating in free, quality programs. Schools that do not offer after-school programs noted that the primary reasons they could not offer the programs were related to having limited resources such as funds, transportation and staff.

Recommendation:

- Efforts should concentrate on continuing to offer free or low-cost after-school programs.

## **Parent Opinions**

Parents throughout the state expressed a demand for after-school programs. Like students, parents wanted after-school programs that were not a continuation of the school day. They wanted even academic activities such as tutoring to be made enjoyable for students. Parents and students both shared interests in recreational and social activities such as sport and arts and crafts. Additionally, parents expressed an interest in students learning skills not acquired during the school day such as life skills on money management, time management and careers.

### **Recommendation:**

- Programs should offer more recreational and social activities, as well as life skills and avoid simply extending the school day.

Parents also had a preference for programs at the school or at churches for a variety of reasons. The low-cost of these programs was the key reason. Since schools typically offered free programs parents had a preference of this location. Also, locating programs at the school was more convenient for parents because they were not required to transport their child to and usually from the program. Students and principals confirmed this convenience. In addition to transportation, parents reported that they would like for after-school programs to offer extended hours. Principals reported that their programs were mostly offered between 3 – 6pm.

### **Recommendations:**

- Programs should focus on offering low-cost services.
- Programs should explore ways of offering extended times of operation.

## **Summary Conclusions**

- Almost half of students are unsupervised after school on a regular basis. Regardless of gender, race or grade level, a large proportion of students are unsupervised after school and this is more likely with older students.
- The majority of students in every geographic region reported they would consider attending an after-school program if their school offered one.
- Students who do not know if their school offers an after-school program are the most likely to be home alone on a regular basis. Student and parent knowledge of after-school programs appears to decrease the likelihood that students will be left unsupervised after school.
- Hispanic students are the least likely to currently be enrolled in an after school program even though they are most likely to report they would consider participating if one were available.
- Students attending schools in central Arkansas have the least unmet demand for after-school programs as their knowledge of the availability of programs and amount of schools offering after school programs is higher than any other geographic region. Students in the Northwest are the most likely to demonstrate

an unmet demand, as they have the lowest participation rates but the most interest in attending an after-school program.

- Current after-school programs focus on offering additional academic services, which creates a gap between what parent and students desire and what is actually available. Students and parents are not interested in after-school programs that are an extension of the classroom. Students are more interested in recreational activities, and parents would like recreational activities and life skills lessons.
- Middle school students demonstrate greater demand for after-school programs than high school students.
- Students that attend an after-school program are most likely to attend a program at their school.
- According to parents and students, providing after-school programs at the schools reduces problems with student transportation to the after-school program. Parents cited transportation to and from after-school programs as a key factor in participation.
- According to parents, the affordability of after-school programs is the most important factor for participation, even more than location. Most schools are currently offering free programs, but school principals are concerned about securing adequate funding to operate.

### **Summary Recommendations**

- Existing and newly created programs should work to lessen the gap between what types of after-school activities parents and students are interested in and what is actually offered. After-school programs should be developed to cater to students recreational and social needs. However, offering homework assistance should remain a key component of programs.
- The state of Arkansas should examine marketing efforts to increase student and parent awareness of the availability of after-school programs in their communities.
- Low-cost after-school programs should be developed within schools, as students usually attend programs at their schools and transportation is frequently cited as a parental concern
- The state should develop recruitment methods to attract Hispanic students, as they are the least likely to participate yet demonstrate a significant interest in after-school programs.
- Emphasis should be placed on the Northwestern region of the state as a priority area for encouraging more programs and awareness of after-school programs.
- Focus should be placed on meeting the demand at the middle school level, as they are the group expressing the most interest in attending after-school programs.
- The state should concentrate efforts on making sure after-school providers have funding sources in order to ensure that parents and children have access to affordable after-school programs.

To view or download a copy of the full report on  
*The Demand for After-School Programs in Arkansas*  
Please visit [www.aosn.org](http://www.aosn.org)

For more information on state and local efforts to expand access to quality afterschool and summer programs in Arkansas contact the Arkansas Out of School Network.



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