

# Health Workforce: Inform & Inspire

ARHP initiatives to generate interest in and access to healthcare professions

## THE FACTS

### MATH & READING SCORES

**Young students** (3rd grade) in the region **perform poorer than their peers** in other parts of the state and country [Reading: 2.5 vs. 2.9 & 3.1), Math: 2.5 vs. 2.8 & 3].<sup>1</sup>

### SCHOOL FUNDING ADEQUACY

On average, **funding for public school students** in the 23-county service area **is substantially less** (\$6,868 per student deficiency) compared to the state (\$3,073 deficiency) and nation (\$1,062).<sup>1</sup>

### COLLEGE READINESS

**Arkansas students are not as academically competitive as their respective U.S. peers.** The graduating class of 2022 ACT Superscore (mean) for Arkansas (19.5) was less than the nation (20.2). In comparison, New York (25.9) and California (27.0) students scored considerably higher.<sup>2</sup>

### EDUCATION

85% are high school graduates, while 16% hold a Bachelor's degree or higher. **Many are first-generation college students** and require additional support.<sup>3</sup>



## What if the rising generation doesn't have to say, "If I knew then what I know now?"

**Y**oung students throughout the 23-county ARHP South Arkansas service area (predominantly Delta) face a host of challenges. Lack of infrastructure and funding limit the availability of education and support services before a child reaches preschool. Early childhood developmental delays often go undetected. For those receiving a diagnosis, the number of young patients needing care far outweighs locally available speech, occupational, and physical therapists. Without realizing it, many parents and caregivers are unaware that their child is missing developmental milestones that could impact their young student's life

trajectory. Fast forward a few years. Parents that struggle with reading themselves often have trouble supporting their student's language acquisition, core skills key to a lifetime of growth and learning. Apathy, long-held cultural beliefs ("It's always been this way"), and poor mental health begin to affect parents and students alike. Significantly underfunded public school systems struggle to offer challenging learning environments. Many students graduate high school without adequate college readiness (i.e. ACT test prep,



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# SHAPING TOMORROW'S LEADERS IN RURAL ARKANSAS

STEM classes, extracurricular and/or gifted and talented programs). Promising career opportunities are often out of reach or out of town. ARHP is committed to helping rewrite the narrative of future generations so that a new wave of young rural Arkansans find themselves at the head of the class and at the helm of rural health systems throughout the region.

## **ARHP Health Workforce Mobile Unit.**

Many students throughout the region have had little to no exposure to health careers and yet health professionals from rural regions have the greatest likelihood of serving and staying in rural. ARHP recognized the need to inform students (beginning in middle school)

of available health career opportunities and needs. In 2022, the organization upfitted a mobile unit to bring an immersive health careers experience to rural residents. Individuals enter the mobile unit and engage with touch screens and the interactive ARHP Health Careers website to learn about the demand and availability of healthcare jobs, related education requirements, and potential salaries. While on the mobile unit, individuals can take the next step and directly connect with college

and career counselors and student success coaches to begin the enrollment process (including financial aid). Initial funding for the mobile unit came through a partnership with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and Community Health Centers of Arkansas. To date, the mobile unit has reached over 2,200 students and participated in over 50 events.

**ARHP Health Careers Website.** In 2022, ARHP created and launched a dedicated website to support community education efforts regarding the health workforce pipeline. This innovative tool is promoted at local schools, community & outreach events, as well as state and national conferences. The site hosts over 40 careers (with 27 videos) and was viewed more than 8,000 times in 2022.

