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SREB states make progress in education

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Arkansas Shows Gains in Education Outcomes, Policy

High School Graduation Rate Exceeded Nation

Atlanta, Georgia — July 12, 2016 — Arkansas continues to improve public education by several key measures, according to a new report from the Southern Regional Education Board.

[**Gauging Progress, Accelerating Pace**](#) reports on recent growth on outcomes and policy activity in the SREB region. The reports show the 16-state SREB region leading the nation on early childhood education access and quality, narrowing some achievement gaps between racial and ethnic groups, and surpassing the national average for high school graduation rates. Yet the report's demographic and student achievement data foreshadow the difficult job states face: getting more students college- and career-ready so they can become successful adults and states can meet future workforce needs.

This report focuses on the region's progress — and on determining what it will take to help each state accelerate pace.

Notable outcomes for Arkansas students

- The state led the region — and is third in the nation — in access to state-funded pre-K for 3-year-olds.
- Arkansas's high school graduation rate exceeded rates for the nation and the SREB region.
- The percentage of graduating seniors who took an AP exam while in high school increased at a rate that outpaced the national rate.
- The average composite ACT score exceeded the regional average score, while statewide participation on the test rose.
- The percentage of students with disabilities who graduated with standard diplomas exceeded that of the respective peer group nationwide.

Strong policy in Arkansas

- The state is one of 10 states in the nation — all in the SREB region — that require school districts to offer full-day kindergarten programs.
- The state established a goal to increase credentials in high-demand career fields.
- New alternatively certified career and technical education teachers must pass a core-academic test.

"Higher graduation rates are great news for Arkansas and other states," said SREB President Dave Spence. "Far too many of these high school graduates are still unprepared for college-level work, though. States need

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[Arkansas: Gauging Progress, Accelerating Pace](#) details:

- state demographic and income trends
- student achievement from pre-K through postsecondary
- priorities for teacher evaluation and educational technology

SREB monitors progress of its 16 states on the SREB Challenge to Lead Goals for Education adopted by state leaders to help the region lead the nation in educational progress at all levels.

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The Southern Regional Education Board works with 16 member states to improve public education: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Based in Atlanta, SREB was created in 1948 by Southern governors and legislatures to help leaders in education and government advance education and improve the social and economic life of the region.

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