

# The School of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Arkansas

Schools across Arkansas are implementing the School of the 21st Century (21C) Program, a school-based or school-linked model providing services and programs -- such as home visitations, all day early care and education, before-, after-school, and vacation care, and more -- to families with children from birth to age 12. The AR21C programs are part of a national network of more than 1,300 schools around the country that use the 21C model. Grants from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation provided support to start a state-wide 21C initiative in Arkansas.



## INTRODUCTION TO 21C

Schools of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (21C) provide an innovative range of early learning and family support services to address the modern-day needs of children and families in their communities. These schools become year-round, multi-service community hubs dedicated to the healthy growth and development of children beginning at birth, creating an all-important platform to build on for success in school and beyond.

Developed at Yale University in 1988, the 21C model has proven successful in urban, rural, and suburban areas, as well as in affluent, middle class, and low-income communities, taking root in over 1,300 schools nationwide.

Six core program components of 21C are designed to be adaptable to the vision and resources of a given community, while meeting the diverse needs of children and families:

### Core Components

- Guidance and Support for Parents
- Early Care and Education for Young Children
- Before-School, After-School and Vacation Programs for School-Age Children
- Health Education and Services
- Networks and Training for Childcare Providers
- Information and Referral Services

Once the core components are implemented, a 21C school can expand its range of services to meet other community needs, such as youth development or adult education and job training. New components can be added or existing services, such as Head Start, Even Start, or other publicly funded programs, can be brought under the 21C umbrella. Each 21C school is unique, but they all share a common goal – the optimum development of all children – and uphold the six guiding principles:

### Guiding Principles

- Strong Parental Support and Involvement
- Focus on the Overall Development of the Child
- High Quality Programming
- Universal Access to Childcare
- Non-Compulsory Programs
- Professional Training and Advancement Opportunities for Childcare Providers



## 21C AND ARKANSAS LEGISLATION

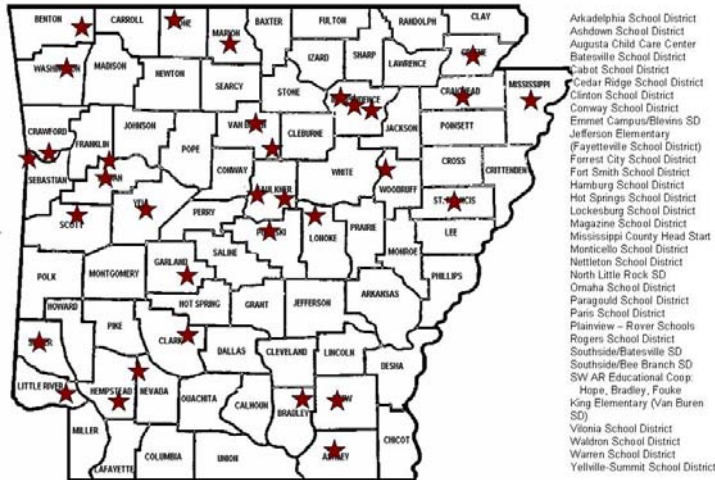
Recent Arkansas legislation intertwines with 21C programs.

**Act 603** (2002) requires parent involvement in the schools. 21C programs help address this, through multiple activities that develop relationships between parents and their schools.

**Act 1220** (2003) involves the role of the schools in health and nutrition of their students. 21C staff promote healthy eating and activities in their programs with children and their families.

**Act 49** (2004) establishes increased eligibility and funding levels for the Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program, which provides for quality education and care for three and four year olds. 21C programs are well prepared to apply for and implement quality preschool programs that meet ABC guidelines.

## 21C PROGRAMS IN ARKANSAS



All AR21C programs received support from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation. Arkadelphia is also funded by the Ross Foundation.



### Guidance and support for new parents:

- Children who participate in home visiting programs exhibit significant advances in language and social development, problem solving and other intellectual tasks than comparison children. They show greater school readiness and have higher performance in later grades including higher graduation rates.
- Research also shows a positive impact of these programs on parents' involvement with their children's education, and that these results can be successfully reproduced in various settings.

### Access to health education and services:

- Young children treated for iron deficiency experience a reversal in behavioral disturbances and developmental delays.
- Children who are not obese are at lower risk of hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, and chronic health problems later in life.



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Excerpted from the AR21C brochure written by Kim Bohlen

### NEED FOR 21C

Data from Arkansas<sup>1</sup> reveal the need for investments in childcare and early education, health care, and family support.

- Childcare and early education:** 66% of Arkansas mothers with children under age five work. In 2005, publicly-funded early care programs served 60% of children in eligible families in the state.
- After-school care and educational activities:** 75% of all children in Arkansas live in families in which the parents work. 1 in 3 children in Arkansas lives in single parent homes.
- Health education and services:** 11% of Arkansas children lack health insurance; 33% of those diagnosed with mental health disorders receive treatment. 42% of Arkansas' children live in communities without fluoridated water, and nationally, because of dental problems, children miss 52 million school hours annually. 38% of Arkansas children are overweight or at risk for becoming overweight, while 12.5% of Arkansas preschoolers are iron deficient.
- Family support:** 30% of all children in Arkansas live in poverty, which puts them at risk.

### BENEFITS OF 21C

Research<sup>2</sup> on the 21C components indicate their positive results for children and families:

#### Quality childcare and early childhood education:

- Children's early care and education experiences are a major predictor of their later success in school and as adults, related to employment, marriage, and involvement in crime.
- Parents miss work less often and are more productive when their children are in quality preschool settings.

#### Regular attendance at high quality after-school programs:

- Children who regularly attend high quality after-school programs have better peer relations and emotional adjustment, better grades and conduct in school, better attendance at school, more academic and enrichment opportunities, and spend less time watching television.
- Children who spend 1 to 4 hours in after-school activities are half as likely to use drugs and 1/3 as likely to become teen parents.

<sup>1</sup> Arkansas Kids Count 2002, 2005; AR Division of Childcare and Early Childhood Education

<sup>2</sup> School of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Yale University and the Arkansas Kids Count Coalition