

# ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

June 24, 2013

---

## La. plans to pay Ark. school to take students (Associated Press)

BATON ROUGE, La. —

Louisiana officials plan to pay an Arkansas school to continue accepting Louisiana students.

The state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education has approved plans for up to 100 students in Claiborne Parish to attend school in Junction City, Ark, The Advocate reports. (<http://bit.ly/16rP68j>)

State aid of up to \$700,000 will be routed through a charter school in Delhi, La.

Louisiana education officials said the agreement, the only one of its kind in Louisiana, would allow students to remain in Junction City rather than being bused to low-performing schools in the Claiborne Parish system.

Junction City straddles the state line. In February, the Claiborne Parish School Board ended the nearly century-old practice of paying Arkansas to take students from the Louisiana side.

After the board's move, some parents decided to set up a charter school, which would then execute a contract with the Junction City school system similar to the one Claiborne Parish was ending.

But the plan could not be finalized for the 2013-14 school year.

Instead, the state board approved an arrangement, prompted by parents, in which Delhi Charter School in Richland Parish will enroll the students from Claiborne Parish.

Delhi Charter School, which can accept students from anywhere in Louisiana, would then contract with the Arkansas system.

Scott Richard, executive director of the Louisiana School Boards Association, was critical of the decision.

"There are lots of policy issues that are unanswered," he said.

Richard said the Junction City students could attend Claiborne Parish's Summerfield High School, which includes students from prekindergarten through 12th grade.

The school, 10 miles southwest of Junction City, is rated "C" by the state.

Students will take Louisiana's state tests and the results will count on Delhi Charter School's annual school performance score, officials said.

---

## **Ranking on kids improves (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

Arkansas climbed to 40th place in the 2013 edition of Kids Count, a state by-state ranking of child well-being based on indicators in the areas of child health, education, economics, and family and community environment.

Last year, the Natural State was 42nd in the rankings, compiled by the Baltimore-based Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The state's climb in the report continued several years of improvement. Until last year, the state ranked in the bottom five or six states since 2000.

The state showed the most progress in health indicators. Like many other states, it showed declines in economic factors.

State policymakers use the report to track Arkansas' progress relative to other states and to help set budget priorities when funding is limited.

"I think the challenge is to really point out what are the specific policies that can have the most impact," said Rich Huddleston, executive director of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. "You have to make a commitment to funding some of them, and part of our job is to sort out which are the most effective."

The report measured states' progress by tracking improvements in four indicators for each of the four main categories. It relied on data collected between 2009 and 2011 by the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts ranked first, second and third, respectively.

The bottom five states - New Mexico, Mississippi, Nevada, Arizona and Louisiana - are in the southern half of the country, where states are more likely to have high poverty rates, the report said.

Arkansas ranked 39th in economic indicators. In the state, 28 percent, or 197,000 Arkansans, under age 18 lived in households with incomes below 100 percent of the U.S. poverty threshold, compared with 23 percent nationwide, the report said. In addition, 36 percent, or 253,000 Arkansans, under 18 lived in households where no parent had full-time, regular, year-round employment, compared with 32 percent nationwide, the report said.

The report's authors urged policymakers to use resources wisely as economic issues and public revenue remain concerns.

“Children are our nation’s most precious resource, as well as our future leaders, employees, citizens and parents,” said Patrick McCarthy, the foundation’s president and CEO. “The early years of their lives are a critical juncture in their development. As our economic recovery continues, we cannot lose sight of doing whatever it takes to help kids, particularly kids in low-income families, reach their full potential - and that includes laying a solid foundation from the moment they are born.”

Arkansas made the most improvements in health-care indicators this year. In that cluster of indicators, the state ranked 30th.

Just 6 percent, or 40,000, of Arkansas children lack insurance, compared with 7 percent nationwide, the study showed. That’s an improvement from previous years, when the rates of uninsured children in the state reached the double digits, Huddleston said.

“We’ve made huge strides in making sure that most kids have coverage,” he said. “We’re still not where we need to be yet, but 6 percent is a huge improvement, and that affects a lot of the other indicators.”

Health leaders expect additional children who already qualify for the ARKids insurance program to be enrolled as more adults seek coverage Jan. 1. That’s when the state’s health insurance exchange, mandated by the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, will begin offering coverage to people who did not previously have it.

Huddleston said lawmakers’ approval of the so-called private option, which will allow Arkansans below 138 percent of the federal poverty level to purchase private insurance through the exchange using Medicaid funds, may have the secondary effect of adding children to the state’s health insurance rolls as their parents seek coverage.

Arkansas ranked 45th in family and community indicators as the state’s rates of children in single-parent families and children living in high poverty areas increased. But the state saw improvements in teen-birth rates and a drop in the number of households led by a parent without a high school diploma.

The state ranked 36th in education, with 52 percent, or 42,000, of its children ages 3 and 4 not enrolled in preschool, the study showed.

The state’s publicly funded preschool program, Arkansas Better Chance, receives about \$111 million annually, an amount that hasn’t increased since 2007, said Amy Webb, spokesman for the Arkansas Department of Human Services, which helps administer the program.

Webb said the agency has appreciated a stable level of funding while many other states are cutting preschool programs.

Huddleston urged increases in funding for the program in the future. Early childhood education has the potential to boost a child’s success in other areas, such as reading proficiency and even high school graduation, he said.

“If you start talking about five to six years of no funding increases, at some point you have to talk about either serving less kids or you have to cut back on the quality parts of your program,” Huddleston said.

All Arkansans should be concerned about how the state’s children fare, even those who aren’t parents, he said.

“The quality of the state’s work force and our ability to compete for jobs depends in large parts on how well-educated your work force is,” Huddleston said. “You cannot have large segments of your work force that are not prepared, that are not well educated, that do not have higher degrees.”