



Making a Difference Together

Schools of the 21st Century in Arkansas





About the Sc

Schools of the 21st 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 more than 1,300 schools around the country during its first 15 years.

Six core program components of the School of the 21st Century 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 Child Care Providers
- Information and Referral Services



chools of the 21st Century

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 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

ARKANSAS AND THE WINTHROP ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

In 1992, the 21C model was first implemented in Paragould, Arkansas. Over the next eight years, the model spread to six other sites in the state. The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (WRF) became aware of the seven-year, multi-million dollar commitment by the Ross Foundation to support the imple-

mentation of 21C in the Arkadelphia school district. WRF was asked to provide a small grant to support the dissemination of this project's results. In 2002, envisioning 21C as a means to address the early care and education needs of all children in the state, the Foundation made a five-year grant to Yale University to expand the number of 21C sites in the state and establish an *Arkansas 21C Network*.

The ultimate goal of the *Arkansas 21C Network* is to ensure that more children and families throughout the state have the benefit of high quality preschool and other 21C services in their communities. As a result of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation and Ross Foundation support—as well as program-specific grants from Arkansas state agencies—there are now a total of 23 School of the 21st Century sites in Arkansas that are distinguished for both their quality and sustainability. Both Foundations hope that lessons from the *Arkansas 21C Network* will influence Arkansas' state leaders as they make policy and funding decisions regarding early learning and care. An unintended outcome of the initiative is that it positions Arkansas as a leader in early care and education that other states can look to for experience and direction as they make decisions about how best to support young children and families.

The following pages provide snapshots of the participants in the *Arkansas 21C Network*. Statewide, 21C communities embrace four common themes:

- Partnering with Parents
- Providing Early Care and Out-of-School-Time Learning Opportunities
- Accessing Community Resources
- Enhancing the Quality of Early Care and Education



Partnering with Parents

Guidance and Support for Parents

Recognizing the important role parents play in their children's development before the children ever arrive at school, 21C schools offer home visits, playgroups and workshops for parents of children ages 0–5 to educate them about child development and effective parenting. 21C schools are committed to reaching out to and involving parents of school-age children as well. Parents in 21C schools have frequent opportunities to meet and discuss a wide range of parenting issues and to be involved in their children's education.

■ PARENT INVOLVEMENT

As a response to research indicating that parent involvement can significantly impact student achievement, the **Yellville-Summit School District** has devised a strategy for engaging elementary school parents in their children's learning. In a trailer on campus, the school has created a PIE Shop (Parents Involved in Education). The PIE Shop has a "menu" of math, reading and other subject area activities, compiled grade-by-grade and subject-by-subject, designed to engage parents in learning along with their children. Parents can stop by any time, or teachers can "place orders" for math, reading and other subject area activities that the parents can then have "filled" at the PIE shop. The PIE Shop has tables and chairs where parents can work with their children amidst this treasure trove of supplies, or they can take the materials home. The **Monticello School District** is creating a similar

Parent Center where parents can find a friendly, accessible atmosphere to gather resources and information to understand the district's academic standards and help their children achieve.

■ PARENT EDUCATION

In the **Fort Smith School District**, many parents are involved in Parents as Teachers, Head Start, Even Start and other programs, but Parent Services Supervisor Kathryn O'Brien says, "We still knew we were missing some parents." As a result, the district launched a program to reach out to parents in the workplace. Working with a local advisory group made up of representatives from the United Way, area banks and local industries, the 21C program developed two options to offer area employers. One, called "Right From Birth," is a program of 12 one-hour sessions offered at the workplace. It consists of short videos, discussions and written

materials focused on different developmental stages and the parents' role in supporting their children's growth. With the second option, (for employers who might have less flexibility with workers' schedules), the district offers to come into the workplace once, make a short presentation on the available resources, and have the parents complete a brief intake form. Then the 21C program follows up with regular mailings directly to parents to encourage and support their pre-literacy efforts and the development of effective parenting skills. Of the initiative, O'Brien says, "Parents tell us they'd like more information but they are frustrated because they don't have the time or they don't know where to go. We wanted to come up with a way to get information into the hands of people who need it and want it." The program has been so successful the district now reaches out to parents through nonprofit organizations too.



■ **PLAYGROUPS AND HOME VISITS**

Once a month, a room at the high school in the **Rogers School District** fills up with children under age three and their parents. The English- and Spanish-speaking parents mix and mingle with each other and with the staff of the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, making friends and finding answers to the myriad

challenges of raising young children. The 90-minute meetings give children time to learn and play at various activity centers designed to instruct the parents on appropriate ways to stimulate and nurture their children's cognitive, social, linguistic and motor development. The staff members, several of whom are bilingual, model ways for parents to enhance their children's development

and answer parents' questions about everything from eating and sleeping to potty training to language development. In addition to these monthly meetings that occur both in the morning and in the evening, staff visit each family's home once a month, providing one-on-one support and guidance, laying the groundwork for the children's future school success. Rogers also offers HIPPY (Home

“Our intent is to give our parents a clear and sure picture of what schools do for their children and what their role is in the entire educational success of their children.”

Gina Woodard
Warren School District/SEACBEC

■ **OUTREACH**

Stars and stripes covered every table, wall and person, when **Forrest City School District** held their annual “Round-up” event in April to register 3-, 4- and 5-year olds for kindergarten and preschool. When the doors opened at 10 a.m., more than 100 people eagerly waited to approach the tables decorated with patriotic flowers, balloons and flags, and staffed by teachers wearing “Uncle Sam” hats. By the end of the day, more than 400 people had been welcomed and registered, and each child received a red-white-and-blue pinwheel and balloon, happy reminders of their plans for the upcoming school year. In addition to enrolling their children in the appropriate programs, all parents received a calendar with suggested learning activities for every day of the summer to help prepare their children for school.

Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters), another home visiting program that focuses on 4–5 year-olds. 21C Director, Karen Benham says, “Together the PAT and HIPPY programs serve more than 100 families whose children ultimately attend all 12 of Rogers’ elementary schools.”



Providing Early Care and Out-of-School-Ti

Early Care and Education for Young Children

Either at the school or at a linked site, 21C schools provide high quality, developmentally appropriate, full-day, year-round childcare and education services for preschool age children, which lay the groundwork for positive interactions between schools and families and children's later success in school. Some 21C schools offer childcare services for infants beginning as early as six weeks of age.

■ PRESCHOOL

Three- and four-year old children in the **Van Buren School District** are taking music, art, library and physical education—all the same “special” classes as regular elementary students—as part of the 21C preschool program at **King Elementary**. It is not just the children who are integrated into the school, however; parents of preschool students participate in the PTA, and preschool teachers participate in curriculum planning with the other elementary teachers. The preschool, which opened in January 2002, is a developmental program, with a focus on school readiness and early literacy. Parents of a 4-year-old boy wrote, “He is always getting objects, saying the name of the object and trying to sound out the letters. We are amazed by what he is learning.” The center currently serves 30 children and has more than 100 on the waiting list, verifying the district's initial assessment that preschool was an

unmet community need. The preschool is funded through fees based on a sliding scale according to family income. Though space is a constraint, the superintendent would like to see the program expand into all the elementary schools. Asked how the rest of the district views her preschool program, Principal Martha Ragar says with a smile, “Everyone is jealous.”

■ SCHOOL READINESS

If the term “boot camp” conjures images of young adults undergoing grueling physical conditioning, think again. The only boot camp operating in the **Plainview-Rover Schools** serves five-year old children and is fun—in addition to being an important way to help them make the transition to school. “Kindergarten Boot Camp” runs for six weeks during the summer and serves 20 children, which in this small school district accounts for about 90 percent of the incoming kindergarten students. Preschool teacher Rhonda Christian, who

directs the program, says it enables children to “develop a rapport” with the kindergarten teacher, and “learn the social behaviors expected of them.” The program is designed with a literacy focus, with activities centered on one particular book each week. Emphasizing how the program helps children learn the routines of school, including how to navigate the cafeteria, Principal Kerry Cunningham says, “It's great. The kids are ready to jump right into the curriculum when school starts.”

■ INFANT CARE

Several Arkansas 21C programs have responded to a critical need for infant and toddler care in their communities. For example, the **Warren School District** provides care for children beginning at six weeks of age. This has been a benefit to many school staff who take advantage of the program, as well as one of the ways the 21C program addresses the needs of at-risk children and families.

me Learning Opportunities



Before-School, After-School and Vacation Programs for School-Age Children

Either on site or at a linked site, 21C schools provide diverse, supervised activities for children during out-of-school time. School-age programs enable children to learn, grow and socialize in a safe and stimulating environment while also meeting the needs of working families. In addition to providing care, out-of-school time programs offer important continuity in learning opportunities and support for children's academic achievement.

■ AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Superintendent Gene Ross says he has no doubt that the **Emmet School District's** after-school program meets the needs of families in his community. A small town of 540 people in southwestern Arkansas, the district was losing enrollment when Ross became superintendent in 1988. At the time, the school district served a total of 150 children grades K–12, and many working parents were sending their children to the

neighboring school districts of Prescott and Hope, both of which had after-school programs. After surveying the parents, Emmet launched its own after-school program, to provide care for children from the time school was dismissed until 6 p.m. Since then, the overall district enrollment has more than doubled, with the town currently serving 315 children from preschool to grade 12. Ross is delighted that, “we’ve gotten a lot of

those families to come back to our district.” He also notes that the district has launched preschool classes for 4-year olds, a need that was identified by the parents in 1988, but which they were not able to fund until now. Across the state in Jonesboro, the **Nettleton School District** recently purchased new resource materials and furnishings to upgrade the quality of its three 21C after-school sites, which serve approximately 250 children.

■ SUMMER PROGRAMS

In Arkadelphia's Feaster Park, children can learn not only how to ride a bike but also the mechanics of how to repair one through the summer program offered by the **Arkadelphia Public Schools** and the Community Family Enrichment Center, Inc. According to 21C Coordinator Patricia Donlow, “the bicycle program is just one aspect of the nutrition and fitness focus of *Learning in the Park*,” the district's eight-week summer program. After discovering how to repair abandoned bicycles donated by the police department, children use the park's trails to practice riding, and they compete in a “bike rodeo” at the end of the summer. Operating from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., *Learning in the Park* serves 150 children ages 5–12, half of whom are also served by the district's 21C after-school program during the school year. Housed in the Community Family Enrichment Center, the summer program has access to

the park's newly constructed recreation and aquatic centers. The focus on nutrition includes daily breakfast and lunch served “family style” to promote social skills, and a daily activity called “Kids in the Kitchen,” which teaches children basics about nutrition, food preparation and cooking through the preparation of two daily snacks. In addition to eating well and staying fit, children have ample opportunities for academic enrichment with activities such as reading clubs, arts and crafts, and Quiz Bowl competitions. The summer program draws not only on the regular after-school staff, but also taps into the community by involving foster grandparent volunteers and college students from Henderson State University and Ouachita Baptist University. *Learning in the Park* is part of the larger 21C program supported by generous funding from the Ross Foundation.



Accessing Community Resources

Information and Referral Services

21C schools partner with other community organizations and agencies to meet the needs of children and families and stay up-to-date on the range of programs and services that are available in the community. In this way, 21C schools are able to inform families about childcare options, health care, financial assistance, social services and other family support services as needed.

■ BACK-TO-SCHOOL

Some adults may remember the last Saturday of summer as a time to lament the end of long, lazy vacation days. But not the students at **Jefferson Elementary in Fayetteville!** About 600 people turn out for Jefferson's annual Readifest event, a festive celebration that provides all the resources and information families need to start school on Monday morning. Children can get free haircuts and immunizations, find out who their new teachers will be, and learn where to catch the school bus. They also get a preview of donated school supplies they will receive on the first day of school, courtesy of local merchants. While listening to live music and munching on free food, parents can obtain everything from library cards to referrals for health care at more than a dozen information booths set up by local nonprofit and social service organizations. Principal Tracy Mulvenon recalls how one family newly arrived in town came to the Readifest one year and met with

the school's social worker. Through that single connection, the family was able to find housing and employment practically overnight. Mulvenon says, "This event truly connects families with the resources in this community and empowers them to make decisions that are going to help their children and themselves."

■ COLLABORATION

Located in the mountainous terrain of north central Arkansas, the **Omaha Public School** district serves approximately 470 children in grades preschool through grade twelve. Until 1998, the nearest licensed child care facility was 25 miles away. That year, the district launched the Omaha Child Development Center in a small local church. While grateful for the space, staff was frustrated the program had to be dismantled at the end of every week to make room for weekend church activities. In 1999, when the county learned of a grant from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

that could turn an existing subdivision into low-income housing for the community, partnerships quickly started forming. The county, the city and the school district worked together to apply for the grant that would not only provide housing but would also enable them to create space for local child care and education services. In November 1999, they received the grant. By renovating a "model home" at the subdivision—turning the doors of its two car garage into a big bay window for the toddlers' room—they transformed the home into a new child-care and education facility, nearly doubling the Center's capacity and enabling them to serve infants as well. 21C Coordinator Beth Roberts says, "We felt like we went from a mobile home to a mansion." Of the partnerships that enabled them to obtain the HUD grant, Superintendent David Land says, "Everyone wanted different things, but we pulled together so we could all get what we wanted."



Health Education and Services

In collaboration with community-based health care providers, 21C schools offer a range of services including: health, nutrition and fitness education, physical health services, care for children with special needs, developmental assessments, dental assessments and mental health services. 21C schools also work to improve the nutritional quality of school meals and snacks. Since development occurs along multiple pathways—physical, social, emotional and cognitive—it is critical to attend to all these areas to ensure optimal school readiness.

■ SUPPORT SERVICES

Drawing on community needs assessments, stepped up efforts at networking, and the insights of the local advisory board, the **Newark School District** has discovered a wealth of services that exist in the community and can be made available to children and families through the 21C umbrella. For example, through a partnership with the North Arkansas Human Services system, the district has been able to offer free counseling and mental health services at the high school for children and families. Through another partnership with the University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville, free GED classes are now being offered to 21C parents and others at the high school. 21C Coordinator Phyllis Rambin says partnerships like these have also helped the district open its new Family Resource Center in an old community center downtown and provided imaginative thematic programming on topics such as butterflies and outer space for its summer programs as well.

■ EARLY INTERVENTION

When a bilingual family, whose 8-year-old son had won the district spelling bee the year before, enrolled their 3-year-old son in the **Hamburg School District's** HIPPY program, they noted with concern that the younger boy had not spoken a word in his life—in Spanish or English. After an initial screening determined that the young boy's hearing was fine, the 21C program arranged, through one of its many partnerships, for a speech therapist to provide services in the family's home. In less than two weeks, the boy astounded his family by naming the colors of the rainbow, and in a matter of months he was speaking clear sentences in English. The modest intervention that helped this child speak perfectly illustrates how 21C health services can address the needs of young children before they start kindergarten, preventing potentially costly “downstream” inter-

ventions and, in the words of Marilyn Chambers, Special Programs Director, “truly getting them ready to learn.” In similar recognition of the importance of good health to successful learning, the **Conway School District** has expanded its health services to provide immunizations and flu shots for parents and children and offer free transportation to the Health Department twice a month to help families gain access to other health services.



Enhancing the Quality of Early Care and Ed

Networks and Training for Childcare Providers

To strengthen the quality of local childcare and early learning opportunities that better prepare children for school, 21C schools offer workshops, training opportunities, support groups and newsletters to support childcare providers—both center-based and family day care homes—in the community.

■ SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Pat Sanders spends every Thursday morning driving around with buckets of toys, books, videos, teacher's guides and other learning materials in the back of her van. Her job—delivery and pick up of materials requested by any of the 44 different childcare providers she works with through the Childcare Resource Center in Batesville—entails much more than merely delivering materials. As an early childhood educator by training, Sanders has a wealth of knowledge both about the 2,000 items available through the Center's library, as well as about child development and quality care. Many of the providers she visits are women working in their homes, with little or no formal training in education or child development. As a result, Sanders has found herself dispensing all kinds of advice and support in addition to the materials. In one family day care home, she introduced the concept

of “learning centers” and spent the morning helping the provider rearrange her space and toys to create separate dramatic play, blocks, and arts areas. She said the provider reported astonishment at how a seemingly simple change had such an immediate impact on some of the behavioral issues she had been struggling to resolve.

The Resource Center is a partnership among the **Batesville School District**, the **Southside School District**, the **University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville**, and the **Children of Northcentral Arkansas**, a childcare resource and referral agency. Any licensed childcare provider in a five county area can borrow the materials in the Center. As for the seeming luxury of the delivery system, Sanders says, “Well, we had all these materials just sitting there, so we started to think how can we get the materials out there to help kids get ready for school!” The Network

also sponsors very popular “make and take” workshops that help providers learn how to embed certain skills into thematic activities, as well as informational sessions on topics such as discipline or early literacy.

■ TRAINING IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

“The more education in child development our staff has, the better job we do with the children,” says Paulette Shields, Director of the **Augusta Child Care Center**. Shields is proud that her Center has obtained a quality rating from the Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, since the 2000–2001 school year. She attributes the quality of the program to the

The home visitor made me feel as a parent; she taught me that child.... These programs excite parents' eyes light up when they can do.

Lee Ann Holland, former parent participant in current parent educator

training her staff—all of whom grew up in the local community—has received either before or during their work at the center. Though not all her staff had education in early childhood when they started, they all now have a CDA as a minimum credential and several hold master's degrees and are certified teachers. Shields' first-hand experience obtaining her own GED and bachelor's degree—while working as a single parent—helps explain why she is so supportive of her staff's ongoing education. Shields enthusiastically credits the *Arkansas 21C Network* for providing her staff previously unavailable training opportunities at national conferences, specifically in infant and toddler care and development.

*so good about myself
I could actually teach my
me so much, especially seeing
y learn what their children*

one of Rogers' home visiting programs and



21C Programs are High Quality

A recent national study of 21C schools funded by the US Department of Education found many indicators of *high quality* among the preschool programs. In the five states—Colorado, Connecticut, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri—participating in the three-year evaluation (2000–2003), the findings include:

- > The preschool programs had a mean score of 5.7 out of 7 on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS);
- > The programs were child centered, with teachers reporting an average of two hours a day on child-initiated activities;
- > Among the preschool teachers, the median number of years teaching preschool was 8.5 years and about 80 percent of the teachers had a bachelors or masters degree in early childhood and the rest had CDAs;
- > Staff turnover, another indicator of quality, was much lower than the national average, with teachers reporting a median of seven years working in the 21C preschool programs.

Source Henrich, C. et al (in progress).

What Does 'Quality Program' Mean?

Schools of the 21st Century are committed to applying knowledge of child development to create the highest quality early care and education programs. Educators design their programs to reflect knowledge of typical age-related characteristics, as well as what is known about the strengths, interests, needs and cultural experiences of each individual child in the group. This knowledge drives decisions about what activities, materials, interactions, or experiences will be safe, healthy, interesting, achievable, meaningful and challenging to the children. In general, using such developmentally appropriate practices creates a program that responds to the natural curiosity of children, affirms their sense of self and promotes a positive disposition towards learning, laying an important foundation for future success in school and beyond.

Various tools have been developed to measure quality both in early childhood and school age learning and care programs. Among the important components of high quality care and education are: child to staff ratios appropriate for the age of the children; responsive interaction between the provider and the child; a healthy, safe and stimulating environment; qualified and well-compensated staff who are given opportunities for ongoing professional development; and developmentally appropriate curriculum and activities as described above. Arkansas is one of a small number of states that has created an accreditation system designed to improve childcare quality statewide. In addition to meeting a variety of other standards, for a center to maintain a quality rating from the state, all staff working directly with children must obtain a minimum of fifteen hours of training annually in a topic relating directly to early childhood.



What People

Parents say...

I feel truly lucky to have my son in such a wonderful pre-school. I have placed my one-year old daughter on the waiting list in the hopes that when she is old enough, she may attend King Preschool. I think it is great that the Van Buren School District offers this to the community. *Angie Jones, Van Buren, Arkansas*

My son has been going...here since he was two. Just knowing that he would know his alphabet, and that he would know his numbers ...I think it made him a lot more comfortable in school and a lot more confident. When he started kindergarten, he was ready to learn. *Erin Somer Clark, Augusta, Arkansas*

I wanted my children to do the Parents As Teachers (PAT) program because they did not go to [childcare] and I did not want them to get behind. PAT reinforced my ideas about how important reading to my children was, offered me information on things I wasn't sure of, and provided me a lot of resources that I might not have known about. *Becky Cornett, Batesville, Arkansas*



Are Saying About 21C

Elected officials say...

We're creating results that will be extremely far-reaching. It's not an overnight solution, but we're going to see these children better educated, getting better degrees, getting better jobs, improving their communities. *Lieutenant Governor Winthrop Rockefeller, Vice Chair of the Board of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation*

There is no question that the School of the 21st Century initiative is responding to the needs of students and families within the Paris and Magazine communities. Combining child care with the school system more readily allows resources to be accessed for families. In addition, I believe that the improvement in test scores and maintenance of grade level skills are directly tied to high quality preschool experiences. *Herschel W. Cleveland, Speaker of the House, 84th Arkansas General Assembly*

21C in Omaha has been a great asset to our community, providing much needed child care and resources for young children and their families. 21C has also provided a way to coordinate all these services—even in a town as small as this, coordination can be difficult, but 21C makes it work. *Michael Roberts, Mayor, Omaha*

Educators say...

There is no comparison between our district before 21C and after—we have so many wonderful services to offer parents and children. While some of the services might have existed before, now we have terrific collaboration and cooperation between the schools and all the service providers and greatly enhanced parent involvement. *Wanda O'Quinn, Principal, Perritt Primary School, Arkadelphia*

If I leave tomorrow, the next person will easily see the benefits. We've seen the data; these kids are successful in school. *Tom Kimbrell, Superintendent, Paragould*

When you start them out with a foundation that school's a fun place to go and you learn a lot of neat things, then you get them interested in coming. Then for the next few years, that's how they are thinking; they're thinking school is a good place to be! *Lisa Batt, preschool teacher, Forrest City*

The flexibility of the 21C program makes it a natural fit to complement other local initiatives to assist families with young children. *Benny L. Gooden, Superintendent, Fort Smith*

How is 21C Funded?



There is enormous variety in the ways that districts finance their 21C programs. Some schools are able to fund the child-care and early learning components through sliding scale fees paid by parents. In less affluent communities, some 21C services can be paid for through public funds such as Title I, Even Start, childcare vouchers or other subsidies. From the beginning, 21C schools have been creative and entrepreneurial about blending and braiding funding streams and tapping into new sources of support for the schools.

In Arkansas, Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) grants from the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education enable schools to provide preschool and infant care to children birth through five years of age who are identified as “at-risk” due to poverty, low birth weight or other related factors. Many 21C schools in Arkansas have also been able to obtain funding through the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant program administered by the state.

21C schools usually require some initial start-up funds to create or renovate space or pay for outreach components. Start-up grants often come from local foundations, businesses or through reallocation of existing school district funds. Several state education departments including Arkansas, Connecticut and Kentucky have made funding available to launch and support 21C programs.

Perhaps the most important thing that has been learned through the implementation process is that many services are available to the Newark community without charge to the 21C program or the school district.

Phyllis Rambin
21C Coordinator, Newark School District

HOW ONE DISTRICT IN ARKANSAS FUNDS ITS PROGRAM

Start-up funding for the **Paragould** School of the 21st Century program was provided by local businesses in 1992. Lee Vent, the Superintendent at the time, successfully persuaded business leaders that providing high quality, affordable childcare and early education would help their bottom line by helping their employees. The start-up funds paid to renovate an existing elementary school, furnish it and pay initial staff salaries. Since that time, under the leadership of Superintendent Tom Kimbrell, Paragould has been extremely successful at blending funds from a variety of sources to pay for its program, a national School of the 21st Century Demonstration Site since 1996.

In the 2002–2003 school year, Paragould’s program was supported by a combination of federal and state grants and entitlements, business and private foundation donations, in-kind and salary contributions from the school district, and fees paid by families on a sliding scale according to income. Even Start, Title I, Special Education and the Reading Is Fundamental, Family of Readers program were among the federal grants and subsidies that paid for Paragould’s 21C services. The state provided preschool funding through Arkansas Better Chance and Parents As Teachers grants, and childcare vouchers for low-income families. The school district paid for one third of the Director’s salary and provided in-kind support including the building, maintenance, utilities and custodial services. As well, because the staff are district employees, they had access to district benefits such as health insurance and teacher retirement, which the 21C program paid for.

Reflecting 21C’s emphasis on partnerships, local businesses such as Turner Dairy, Mazzio’s Pizza and Dr. Pepper contributed food and money for many special events, including parent meetings. Additional grants funded a new infant-toddler care provider and enabled the 21C program to provide long-awaited raises to 30 veteran staff, and fund additional

staff training. Finally, weekly fees of up to \$18 paid by families for preschool and before and after-school care continued to provide approximately half of Paragould’s operating budget. Though many of the children in the preschool program were fully subsidized—through Arkansas Better Chance, Special Needs Program, Even Start, etc.—they were fully integrated with children whose families pay fees, thus creating a true universally accessible program.

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

Thanks to the generous support of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, financial assistance has been made available to 23 programs in Arkansas that are implementing 21C. Through the *Arkansas 21C Network*, schools are able to participate in statewide training activities and receive on-site technical assistance provided by Yale University. Yale is also conducting an evaluation to document the benefits of 21C to Arkansas children and families and identify the characteristics that contribute to successful school-based early care and education programs, a topic of current interest to educators and policymakers nationwide. In addition, the Ross Foundation had made a substantial investment in the Arkadelphia School District, to enable district-wide implementation of 21C and outreach to the local community.

We have a very simple choice. We can make a small, intense investment in our children at an early age and see them become productive members of society, or we can ignore the first five years and then deal with the problems at an ever-increasing cost. The beauty of the Schools of the 21st Century is that it doesn’t take major dollars.

Lieutenant Governor Winthrop Rockefeller,
Vice Chair of the Board of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

According to a February 2002 poll of registered Arkansas voters, 75 percent think public schools or state-supported education programs should make early learning opportunities available for all 3- and 4-year-olds. 59 percent are willing to pay higher taxes so the state could offer quality learning programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds.

*Arkansas Advocates for Children
& Families*



Making a Difference

Research Says 21C Works

Substantial research has been conducted on many of the components of the 21C model, indicating the positive results for children and families:

BENEFITS OF 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, including employment, marriage and involvement in crime.
- Parents miss work less often and are more productive when their children are in quality preschool care settings.

BENEFITS OF 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 one third as likely to become teen parents.

BENEFITS OF 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 a variety of settings.

BENEFITS OF ACCESS TO HEALTH EDUCATION AND SERVICES

- Young children who receive treatment 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.

The 21C model is designed to meet the needs of today's children and families. Data from Arkansas reveal the need for investments in childcare and early education, health care and family support.

NEED FOR CHILDCARE AND EARLY EDUCATION

66% of Arkansas mothers with children under age five work. Arkansas' publicly funded childcare programs serve less than 16% of children in eligible families. Only 16% of the state's licensed childcare facilities have received a "quality" rating.

NEED FOR 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 live in single parent homes. Nationwide, an estimated 8–15 million children are left on their own after school after age 12. Research indicates that unsupervised after school and summer hours can lead to increased rates of drug use, sexual activity and juvenile crime.

NEED FOR HEALTH EDUCATION AND SERVICES

14% of Arkansas' children have no health insurance. 20% need treatment for mental illness. 42% of Arkansas' children live in communities without fluoridated water, and because of dental problems, children miss 52 million school hours annually. Almost 10% of preschoolers and 11% of high school students in Arkansas are obese. 12.5% of Arkansas preschoolers are iron deficient.

NEED FOR FAMILY SUPPORT

30% of all children in Arkansas live in poverty. Children growing up in low-income homes are more likely to get pregnant as teens, drop out of high school, and have low incomes as adults.

Source Arkansas Kids Count, 2002

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAINS

At **Jefferson Elementary in Fayetteville**, Principal Tracy Mulvenon has no doubt that in the six years since they have had a 21C program, it has had an impact on her students' achievement. At Jefferson, where 87 percent of the children qualify for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program, students have shown marked increases in state benchmark tests given in fourth grade. In 2001, 79 percent of fourth graders scored at or above grade level in literacy (up from 24 percent the year before) and 57 percent scored at or above grade level in math (up from 39 percent the year before). Mulvenon says, "We have the highest poverty rate and the highest mobility rate in the district, yet we tied for third best in the district in reading. If we help families and children with their basic needs, then the kids are definitely going to do better in school."

Plainview-Rover Schools' Principal Kerry Cunningham has also been pleased by test results that have shown the impact of the 21C preschool on children's school readiness and early reading and math success. On the Stanford Early School Achievement Test in 2001, children in Grade 1 who attended preschool exceeded the scores of children who did not on measures such as sounds and letters, word reading, sentence reading, mathematics and listening. Children in Grades 2 and 3 who had attended preschool also scored higher than children who had not. **Forrest City** has also tracked the results of its Arkansas Better Chance preschool program, examining the academic results of students who participated in for seven years, from 1991–1998. These children have consistently excelled in school, with the vast majority (an average of 76 percent) earning overall grades of A or B, and many participating in gifted and talented programs and the honor society. These impressive results are all the more noteworthy because

the students who qualified for the Forrest City program were low income, low birth weight, from abusive households, or their parents had low educational attainment, all factors putting them at risk of academic failure.

In the **Cabot School District**, the after-school program, called "Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO)," helped students make remarkable academic gains in 2003. After three and a half months, students in the ELO program at Southside Elementary had gained an average reading improvement of 7.1 months. This was compared to an average improvement of 3.6 months for a control group that mirrored the ELO group in its beginning test scores and socioeconomic background. Students in the same program had an average math improvement of 7.4 months (versus 4.9 for the control group). While the five other schools with the program showed less dramatic gains, the overall positive impact has been impressive.

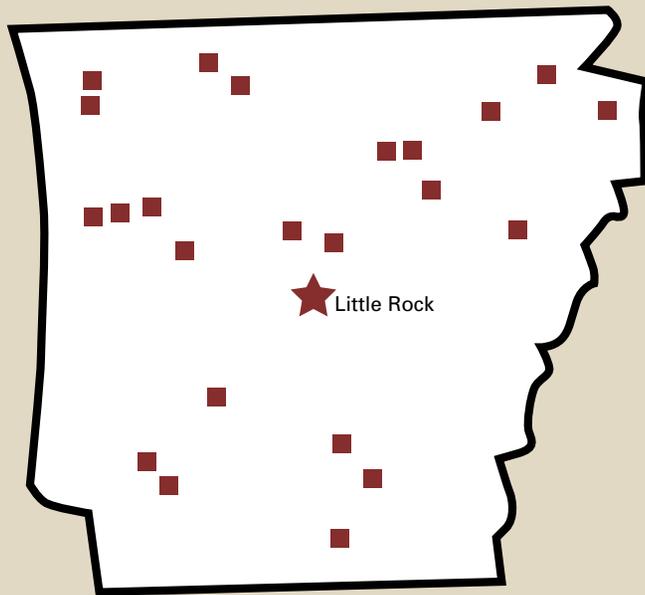
The 21C model has given us an 'adhesive glue' to create coherent community-wide programs that people value, support and believe in. And the partnership with Yale has provided the necessary research and networking systems to validate and bolster these efforts to serve children, families and schools.

Susan Underwood, Early Childhood Program Coordinator,
Arkansas Department of Education

21C is all about giving children the best chance of succeeding at school. What could be more worthwhile than that?

Mavis Elrod
Early Childhood Director,
Batesville School District

Regional Initiatives



Where are the Schools of the 21st Century in Arkansas?

- Arkadelphia Public Schools
- Augusta Child Care Center
- Batesville School District
- Cabot School District
- Conway Public School District
- Emmet School District
- Forrest City School District
- Fort Smith School District
- Hamburg School District
- Jefferson Elementary/Fayetteville School District
- King Elementary/Van Buren School District
- Mississippi County Head Start
- Monticello School District
- Nettleton School District
- Newark School District
- Omaha School District
- Paragould–School of the 21st Century
- Paris School District
- Plainview-Rover School District
- Rogers School District
- Southwest Arkansas Educational Cooperative (Hope and Bradley School Districts)
- Warren School District/SEACBEC
- Yellville-Summit School District

The 21C initiative in Arkansas offers a compelling example of private philanthropy serving as a catalyst to expand a successful strategy beyond a single community. Beyond increasing the number of schools providing 21C services, the *Arkansas 21C Network* has extended the model's reach by also supporting several regional collaborations. For example, the **Paris School District** has built on its success with the 21C model by enlarging its well-developed early childhood program to serve the small nearby district of **Magazine**. **Mississippi County Head Start** is collaborating with six districts within that county to help improve the transition from Head Start to kindergarten, an experience that research has shown to be a critical factor in children's educational success. And the **Southwest Arkansas Educational Cooperative** is working with two school districts to create new "inclusive," developmental preschool programs that will combine children with and without disabilities, and helping address the significant need for educationally at-risk children in the district to prepare for kindergarten.

The School of the 21st Century model exemplifies our vision for early care and education in Arkansas. It's a real partnership and we know that when we join together to improve services for children and families it really works!

Janie Huddleston, Director, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Arkansas Department of Human Services

Find Out More

Schools interested in implementing the School of the 21st Century model are encouraged to become members of the National 21C Network, established and maintained by the School of the 21st Century initiative at Yale University. Through the National 21C Network, Yale keeps 21C schools informed about implementation strategies, relevant research, new funding opportunities, evaluation findings and more. The 21C Network provides different levels of membership, tailored to meet the needs of sites just beginning implementation, as well as mature sites interested in continuous quality improvement.

For detailed information about 21C and membership options, contact those participating in the *Arkansas 21C Network* or the Yale office:

School of the 21st Century
Yale University
310 Prospect Street
New Haven, CT 06511-2187
203.432.9944/9945 (FAX)

Other Important Partners in Arkansas

Arkansas Department of Education
Early Childhood Program
#4 Capital Mall, Little Rock, AR 72201

Arkansas Department of Human Services
Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
P.O. Box 1437, Slot S160, Little Rock, AR 72203-1437

Arkansas Head Start–State Collaboration Project
523 South Louisiana, Suite 301, Little Rock, AR 72201



We know that children have opportunities for optimal development and learning when they participate in high quality early childhood programs, engage in constructive activities during after-school hours, have access to preventive health services, and have parents who are involved with their education. 21C schools provide these needed services. Our partnership with Yale University is an investment in the future of Arkansas and will ensure that communities throughout the state have the necessary resources to establish these valuable programs.

Sybil Hampton, President, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

Writer/Editor Kim Bohen
Graphic Designer Maura Gianakos, Yale RIS
Photographer Matt Bradley

Photographs courtesy of the Arkadelphia, Hope/Southwest Arkansas Educational Cooperative and Rogers school districts

I'm a firm believer in the 21C concept—the importance of upstream solutions to downstream problems.

Lee Vent, Superintendent, Forrest City

Parents have commented on what a relief it is to know that their children in the after-school program have gotten a healthy snack and have been offered both time and assistance with homework. Parents appreciate how much less hectic and stressful time at home, including dinner, bath and bed, has become.

Marilyn Chambers, Special Programs Director, Hamburg School District

Though it can be hard work, we have had enormous success gaining funding and services from a variety of sources for our 21C program. People all over the community understand its value and want to support us.

Vicki Shelby, School of the 21st Century Director, Paragould

In Arkansas, where people are terribly independent and want things that really reflect their own community's needs, the 21C model is absolutely the right fit. It allows people to buy into the guiding principles and design programs and services that specifically fit the needs in the community and the community's resources.

Sybil Hampton, President, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation



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