



# Arkansas Department of Education

*Transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education*

**Johnny Key**  
*Commissioner*

August 30, 2017

**State Board  
of Education**

**Dr. Jay Barth**  
*Little Rock*  
**Chair**

Representative David Branscum  
Chair, Arkansas Legislative Council  
Room 315, State Capitol Building  
Little Rock, AR 72201

**Joe Black**  
*Newport*  
**Vice Chair**

Re: Arkansas Department of Education Report Pursuant to Arkansas Code  
Annotated §6-18-1501

**Susan Chambers**  
*Bella Vista*

Dear Representative Branscum:

**Charisse Dean**  
*Little Rock*

Enclosed please find the Annual Summary Report of Vision Screenings in Arkansas  
Public and Charter Schools School Year 2016-2017.

**Dr. Fitz Hill**  
*Little Rock*

If you need any additional information, please contact Michelle Griffin at 501-682-  
4265.

**Ouida Newton**  
*Poyen*

Sincerely,

**Mireya Reith**  
*Fayetteville*

**R. Brett Williamson**  
*El Dorado*

Johnny Key  
Commissioner of Education

**Diane Zook**  
*Melbourne*

Enclosures

Four Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR  
72201-1019  
(501) 682-4475  
ArkansasEd.gov

*An Equal  
Opportunity  
Employer*

# Annual Summary Report of Vision Screenings

In

Arkansas Public and Charter Schools

School Year 2016-2017

As required by A.C.A §6-18-1501

Prepared by Cheria Lindsey, BSN, RN  
State School Nurse Consultant  
Arkansas Department of Education  
Arkansas Department of Health

## **Vision Summary Report for 2016-2017**

The vision screening for school-age children in Arkansas public and charter schools includes Pre-K (4 year old), K, 1, 2, 4, 6, 8 grades, any transfer student, or if a student is suspected of having a problem by a parent, teacher, or other school personnel. Only school nurses certified for vision screening in the schools may perform the vision screening procedure mandated by A.C.A §6-18-1501 (2005). If a child has been evaluated by an optometrist or ophthalmologist in the last six months and documentation is provided to the district, a screening is not required. In the 2016-2017 school year, Arkansas school nurses screened 207,337 students in the required grades of which 21,704 were referred for follow-up. Of those referred, 8,314 students received a follow-up exam and 6,646 (80%) were confirmed to have difficulty and received treatment.

According to A.C.A §6-18-1501 (2005), the Arkansas Commission on Eye and Vision Care of School Age Children and the Department of Education implemented the tests, procedures, equipment, and instrument requirements used in screening school-age children. This protocol continues as best practice. The regional Community Health Nurse Specialists (CHNS) with the Arkansas Department of Health housed at the local education cooperatives train and assist school nurses on the protocol and procedure for vision screening in school districts. The CHNS, with forward insight, have provided school nurses with additional training and education using experts in specific areas for school nurses on vision issues affecting student behavior and perception development.

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) has received several requests from school districts to use updated devices for vision screenings, such as auto refractors. As a result, the ADE in consultation with the Arkansas Commission on Eye and Vision Care are drafting a formal recommendation for these items to be used in conjunction with the required screening equipment. The recommendation will provide criteria and protocol for the vision screener auto refractor instrument to be used as an additional resource to perform additional vision screening tests beyond state requirements in certain circumstances. However, it is not recommended to add the requested equipment items to the approved vision screening instrument list, as these items do not perform the vision screening test required by A.C.A §6-18-1501 (2005).

The vision screenings for the 2016-2017 school year for those children receiving exams, continues to resemble the past screening data. Since it is important to detect problems before a child's development is compromised, possible vision disorders should be identified by screenings and followed-up with a comprehensive eye exam performed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist. Together, both the screening and examination are essential to provide a strong education and public health approach to vision and eye health. Many children with vision disorders have unmet needs for care, leaving them vulnerable to learning and development delays. Much work is needed to build awareness in the significance of vision disorders at an early age and for access to diagnostic exams and treatment. It is important to provide a system of services to contribute to a comprehensive approach in supporting the whole child. Better health makes better learners, and identifying gaps with school-age children will strengthen the actions necessary to convene stakeholders to promote vision and eye health. Five (5) of the thirty-three (33) School-Based Health Centers established in Arkansas schools are providing optometry services to students in addition to the provision of medical and mental health services. Access to care is a key component to promoting better vision and eye health.

#### **Total Screened for all Grades Pre-K-12<sup>th</sup>**

##### **235,661 students**

- 25,156-Referred to a physician/and or eye doctor (11%)
- 9638-Received exam (38%)
- 7764-Confirmed to have difficulty and treated (81%)
- 1874-Confirmed normal, no treatment and/or lenses (19%)

#### **Total Screened for Required Mandated Grades Only (includes Pre-K, 1, 2, 4, 6, 8)**

##### **207, 337 students**

- 21,704-Referred to a physician/and or eye doctor (10%)
- 8314-Received exam (38%)
- 6646-Confirmed to have difficulty and treated (80%)
- 1668-Confirmed normal, no treatment and/or lenses (20%)

**Pre-Kindergarten (6723 students screened)**

- 567-Referred to a physician/and or eye doctor (8%)
- 254-Received exam (45%)
- 180-Confirmed to have difficulty and treated (71%)
- 74-Confirmed normal, no treatment and/or lenses (29%)

**Kindergarten (32,808 students screened)**

- 3194-Referred to a physician/and or eye doctor (10%)
- 1409-Received exam (44%)
- 1017-Confirmed to have difficulty and treated (72%)
- 392-Confirmed normal, no treatment and/or lenses (28%)

**First Grade (33,372 students screened)**

- 3494-Referred to a physician/and or eye doctor (10%)
- 1512-Received exam (43%)
- 1137-Confirmed to have difficulty and treated (75%)
- 375-Confirmed normal, no treatment and/or lenses (25%)

**Second Grade (34,190 students screened)**

- 3639-Referred to a physician/and or eye doctor (11%)
- 1545-Received exam (42%)
- 1217-Confirmed to have difficulty and treated (79%)
- 328-Confirmed normal, no treatment and/or lenses (21%)

**Fourth Grade (34,594 students screened)**

- 3956-Referred to a physician/and or eye doctor (11%)
- 1531-Received exam (39%)
- 1285-Confirmed to have difficulty and treated (84%)
- 246-Confirmed normal, no treatment and/or lenses (16%)

**Sixth Grade (32,962 students screened)**

- 3650-Referred to a physician/and or eye doctor (11%)
- 1274-Received exam (35%)
- 1110-Confirmed to have difficulty and treated (87%)
- 164-Confirmed normal, no treatment and/or lenses (13%)

**Eighth Grade (32,688 students screened)**

- 3204-Referred to a physician/and or eye doctor (10%)
- 789-Received exam (25%)
- 700-Confirmed to have difficulty and treated (89%)
- 89-Confirmed normal, no treatment and/or lenses (11%)

Resources utilized by school districts to help assist parents with diagnostic eye exams and treatment:

- VSP Global® for *Sight for Students*®, an *Eyes of Hope*® gift certificate program, school nurses that are members of the National Association of School Nurses receive 25 vouchers yearly for those who qualify
- Brandon Burlsworth Foundation, Eyes of Champion program (online certificate service)
- List of Optometrists and Ophthalmologists for Arkansas
- Local chapter of Lions Club International
- Benefits and FAQ sheet for parents
- Referral to the school-based health center, if available

**VISION SCREENINGS - 2016-2017**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Screened</b>	<b>Referred</b>	<b>Received Exam</b>	<b>Confirmed Difficulty</b>	<b>Confirmed Normal</b>
Pre-Kindergarten	6723	567	254	180	74
Kindergarten	32808	3194	1409	1017	392
First	33372	3494	1512	1137	375
Second	34190	3639	1545	1217	328
Fourth	34594	3956	1531	1285	246
Sixth	32962	3650	1274	1110	164
Eighth	32688	3204	789	700	89
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>207337</b>	<b>21704</b>	<b>8314</b>	<b>6646</b>	<b>1668</b>

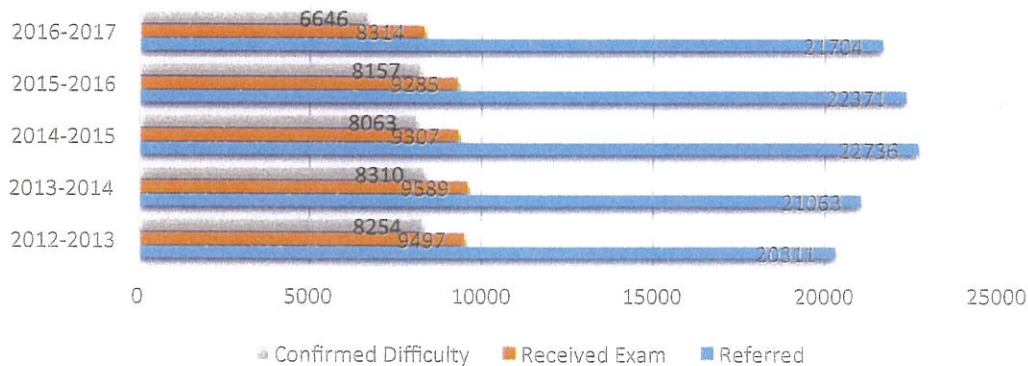
### VISION SCREENINGS - 2015-2016

Grade	Screened	Referred	Received Exam	Confirmed Difficulty	Confirmed Normal
Pre-Kindergarten	8755	565	249	190	59
Kindergarten	35363	3045	1356	1133	223
First	36536	3757	1709	1438	271
Second	37152	4117	1877	1630	247
Fourth	34479	3836	1590	1430	160
Sixth	34100	3643	1422	1323	99
Eighth	34025	3408	1082	1013	69
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>220410</b>	<b>22371</b>	<b>9285</b>	<b>8157</b>	<b>1128</b>

### Vision Screenings: A 5 Year Comparison

	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Referred	20311	21063	22736	22371	21704
Received Exam	9497	9589	9307	9285	8314
Confirmed Difficulty	8254	8310	8063	8157	6646

5 Year Chart



In summary, school nurses serving Arkansas public and charter schools are able to screen school-age children for the mandated grades. Approximately 10% of children in the mandated grades are referred to a physician and/or eye doctor, yet only 38% of those referred received a comprehensive eye exam. 13,390 (62%) of the 21,704 students referred did not receive a comprehensive eye exam with a doctor for a follow-up exam. If 80% of the students referred by a school nurse this last school year were confirmed to have difficulty and treated, then the potential 10,712 students are at risk for possible learning and reading difficulties. Thus, identifying a solution to the gap between the school nurse screening and the follow-up exam with a doctor is needed to ensure a comprehensive approach to vision and eye health for Arkansas students.