

Arkansas City, Kansas

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Arkansas (Ark) City is located in south central Kansas in Cowley County. Hispanic immigration to Ark City has been predicated upon the availability of work in a beef processing plant located in the community. Creekstone Farms purchased bankrupt Future Beef and has been operating in Ark City for four years and is considered a major employer in the county. Aggregate numbers total approximately 900 employees.

New immigration has created a dramatic effect upon Ark City. All service oriented facilities have felt the need for expansion to meet the diverse needs of rapid growth. Salient domains impacted include housing, medical facilities, law enforcement, the need for bilingual services, and the availability of emergency supplies such as food and clothing. Equally impacted has been public education. Currently, Ark City Public Schools is expecting additional migrant families as the ban on imported beef to Japan will be lifted and production increases at Creekstone Farms.

Within a period of five years, the demographics in the community changed dramatically. Currently, 13% of the population in Ark City is Hispanic. During the same time period the K-12 population went from 20% minority to over 30%. Currently, we serve a Hispanic school population of 286.

Changes in demographics have been addressed through professional development in multiculturalism via Wichita State University. Our disaggregated groups of learners are making adequate yearly progress and migrant students continue to participate fully in school life. The Ark City community enjoys the fruits of migrant influence and incomes.

Nevertheless, forward thinking community and school leaders have prompted initiatives toward inclusion of Hispanics. Project ACCES supports migrant education by creating a family literacy process linkage adult basic education, GED education, ESL, early childhood education and parenting to give families access to an "Even Start". Using existing resources, local organizations collaborate to provide the integrated learning and support services that promote literacy and lifelong learning skills for migrant family success. Project ACCES is committed to providing comprehensive services for migrant families, where parents and their children (age 0-7) learn together, building support for parents to succeed with their educational goals and developing life-long learning habits for their well-being. Existing community resources (Parents As Teachers, Creekstone Farms, Title I, Cowley College, Cowley County Health Department, Head Start, Southwestern College and 4 Year Old At-Risk) are collaborating partners which broaden access to success as measured by gain toward family goals and literacy achievement. Project ACCES is a community project based in schools, businesses and homes and is administered by the public schools under the leadership of people who know and are part of the community. Our objectives will improve and increase migrant parents' ability to: 1) provide literacy opportunities for parents and their children; 2) act as positive literacy models; 3) initiate, encourage, and extend their children's literacy learning; and 4) relate well with school and work.

Migrant Program Services

The district has demonstrated we are not leaving children behind. The district has made significant student achievement gains. All six elementary schools have achieved Standards of Excellence in math and three elementary schools in reading. All schools presently have made AYP with the exception of Ark City High School in free/reduced disaggregated group in 10th grade math. The graduation rate has increased from 71% to 81% over the last three years.

- Middle School ESL services
- Paraprofessionals to assist teachers in the classroom
- Two liaisons/recruiters to recruit and assist families with their needs
- PAC to assist and provide direction to Migrant program
- Support staff development in the areas of Cooperative Learning
- One ESL tutor at the high school to improve home school connections and monitor progress of Migrant students