



**INSIDE:**

- ▶ EL DORADO PUBLIC SCHOOLS ENROLLMENT TREND ..... 2
- ▶ MIDDLE SCHOOL TEST SCORES UP ..... 3
- ▶ HIGH SCHOOL DROP-OUT RATE DECREASES, COLLEGE ENROLLMENT INCREASES ..... 4
- ▶ COLLEGE PREP & ENROLLMENT ..... 5
- ▶ COMMUNITY COLLEGE SEES GAINS ..... 6

○ JANUARY | ○ 2012



**EL DORADO PROMISE**

# Celebrating *five years*

GO TO SCHOOL • GRADUATE • GET A SCHOLARSHIP

*The Promise is a great thing; it helps all students rich or poor to have an opportunity to expand their knowledge. I am very thankful for the Promise because it helps me and others who thought they might have to struggle to pay for college.*

– Promise Recipient

## ABOUT THE EL DORADO PROMISE

In January 2007, El Dorado Public Schools (EPS) Superintendent Bob Watson announced the establishment of a scholarship program called the El Dorado Promise. This exceptional scholarship program reaches beyond the boundaries of economic need and academic ability to pay up to 100% of college tuition and mandatory fees for potentially every graduate of El Dorado High School. Since its inception, 997 students have received Promise scholarship funding.

Established and funded by Murphy Oil Corporation, the El Dorado Promise scholarship funds can be used at any accredited two-or-four year college or university in the U.S. The Promise is available to all students who graduate from El Dorado High School, reside in the district, and have been an El Dorado Public School student since at least the ninth grade.

The scholarship amount is determined by length of attendance in the El Dorado Public School District. For example, graduates who have attended all 13 years at EPS will receive 100% of the scholarship. Students who attend ninth through twelfth grades at EPS will receive 65% of the scholarship.

The maximum annual amount payable per student is based on the maximum level resident tuition payable at an Arkansas public university. In 2011-2012, the highest tuition rate in the state was \$7,180 per year.

The goals of the El Dorado Promise include greater educational attainment, a vibrant economy, and an improved quality of life. Understanding the strong correlation between overall academic achievement and a community's economic vitality and quality of life, the Promise is an investment in El Dorado's greatest resource: our children.

**EL DORADO PROMISE:**  
By The Numbers

**997**

Total Promise Scholarship Recipients

**90**

Percentage of Promise-eligible Class of 2011 Grads Enrolled in College

**62**

Percentage Increase in Students Scoring a 3, 4 or 5 on AP Exams

*2012 marks the fifth anniversary of the creation of the El Dorado Promise scholarship program. This report highlights the positive impact the Promise has had on El Dorado students and the community. Thanks to the **Office of Education Policy at the University of Arkansas** for compiling much of the information and analysis provided herein.*

To learn more about the El Dorado Promise or the community of El Dorado, visit [www.eldoradopromise.com](http://www.eldoradopromise.com). You can also find us on Facebook and Twitter.



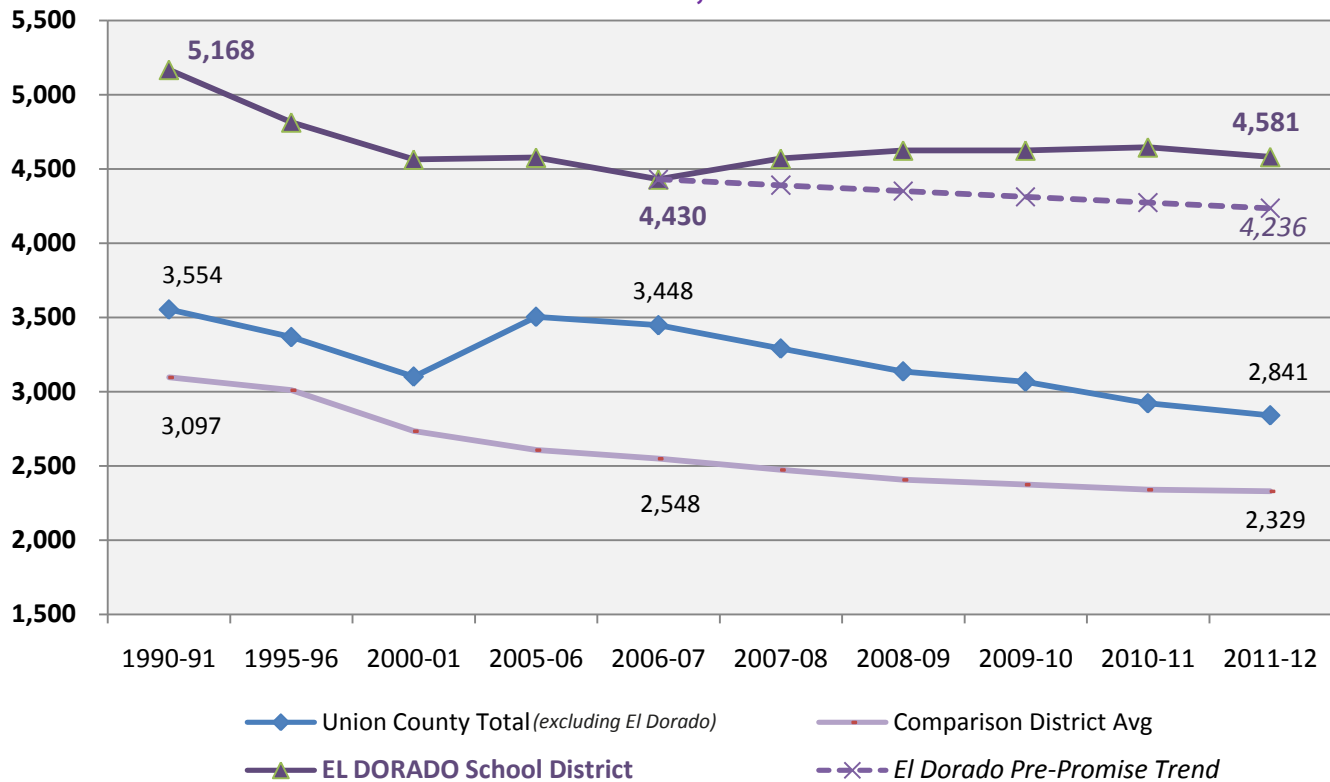
# Promise Halts Declining Enrollment

In 2007, El Dorado schools, like many districts in southern Arkansas suffered from population decline that resulted in declining school enrollment.

Despite a historically significant recession in the United States that dramatically impacted many in the south, the student enrollment in

El Dorado has not only remained steady, but also increased since the creation of the El Dorado Promise program. This is especially significant given the stable or declining enrollment of other Union County schools and comparable districts throughout the southern region of Arkansas.

**Enrollment Patterns in El Dorado, Similar Districts, and Surrounding Districts, 1990-2012**



## POSITIVE IMPACT: Setting a New Enrollment Trend

Since the 1990's, student enrollment in El Dorado and in similar districts in Southern Arkansas were declining consistently. However, after the Promise was announced in January 2007, the enrollment in El Dorado began to increase to its current level of 4,581 students. If the previous rate of decline were to have continued, El Dorado would likely have lost 200 more students as of this school year. Other similar districts and other Union County districts have experienced continued enrollment decline.

# Middle School Test Scores Improve

Although the El Dorado Promise directly benefits high school graduates, the program design provides incentives for younger students in El Dorado to begin to take school more seriously and work harder on their academics. In fact, there have been anecdotal reports that the entire school district, from

kindergarten up, has become more college focused. Consequently, test scores in elementary and middle school might be expected to increase. As can be observed below, test scores at these pre-high school levels have improved since the program was announced in January 2007.



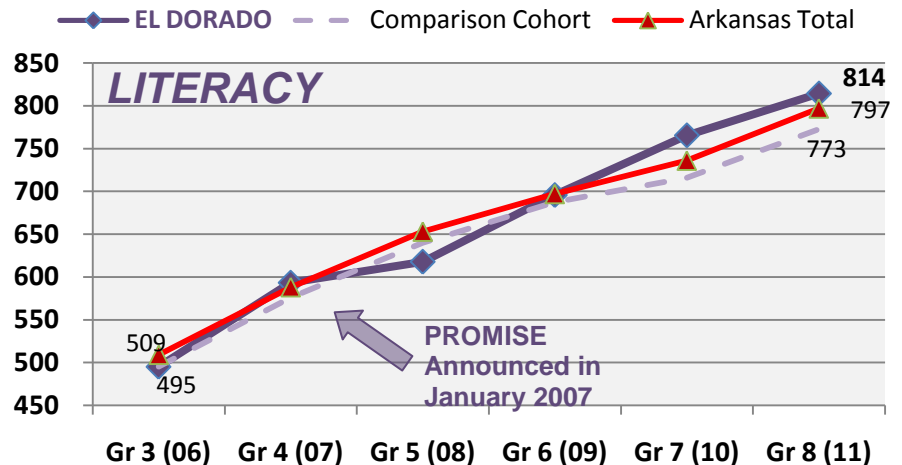
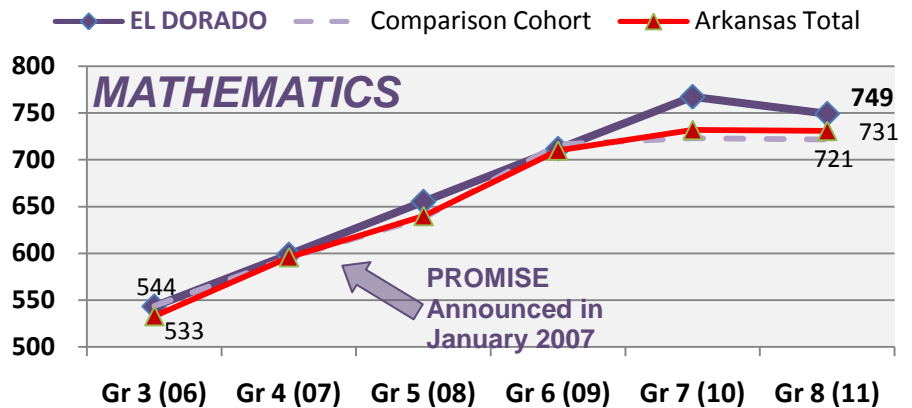
## POSITIVE IMPACT: Academic Preparation

Here, we follow the cohort of El Dorado 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students from 2005-06 (*before the Promise was announced*) to the 2010-11 year.

El Dorado students were matched with identical students (*based on test scores, income level, etc.*) from similar school districts in southern Arkansas.

As the graphs show, each group had similar test scores in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. After five years, El Dorado students scored significantly better than their matched peers (*and better than the Arkansas average*) in both math and literacy.

### Scale Scores on Arkansas Benchmark Tests, 2006-2011



# High School Drop-Out Rates Decrease



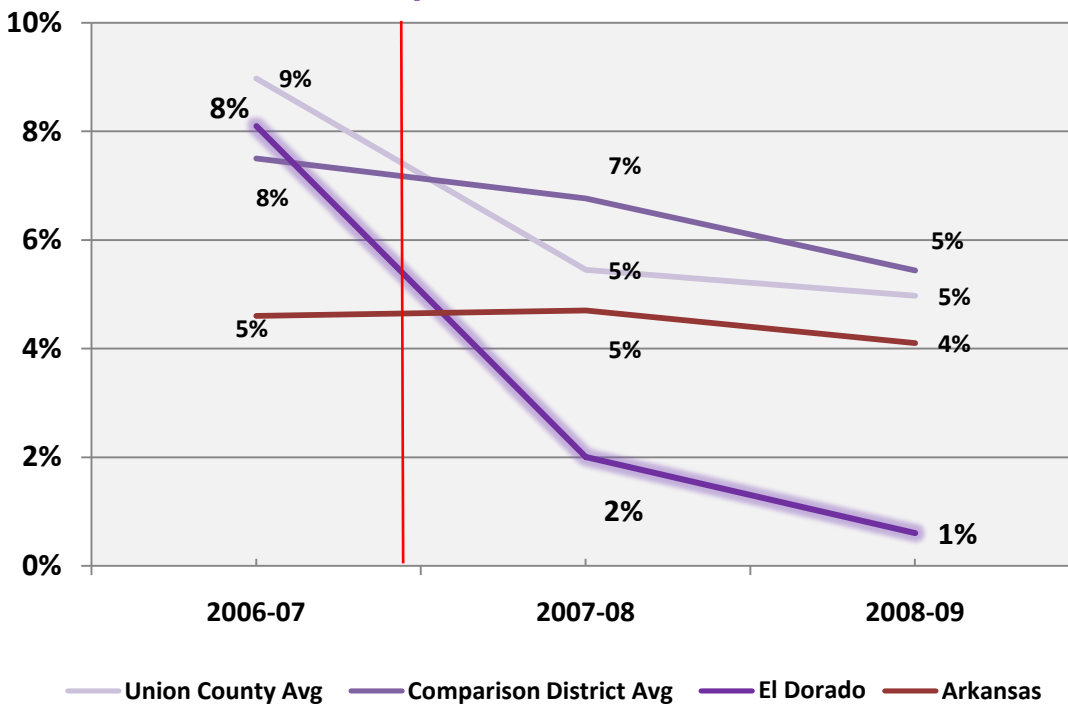
After the implementation of the Promise, El Dorado High School experienced major changes in the graduation rate and drop-out rate of its students. As can be observed in the graph on this page, the drop-out rate of El Dorado students drastically decreased. Additionally, the graduation rate increased.

## POSITIVE IMPACT: Retention and Graduation

After the El Dorado Promise was announced, the school district began to see a dramatic decrease in the district drop-out rate. While other comparison districts also saw a decrease in the number of students that dropped out, none decreased as dramatically as did El Dorado. In 2006-07, the district drop-out rate was higher than the state average. After the announcement of the El Dorado Promise program, that rate fell far below the state average.

Another positive impact was the increase of the graduation rate. Prior to the Promise, the El Dorado School District's graduation rate was lower than the average rate in Union County and lower than comparison districts in the Southern Arkansas. However, only two years after the implementation of the Promise Program, the graduation rate for El Dorado was as high as or higher than comparable

Drop-Out Rates, 2006-2009



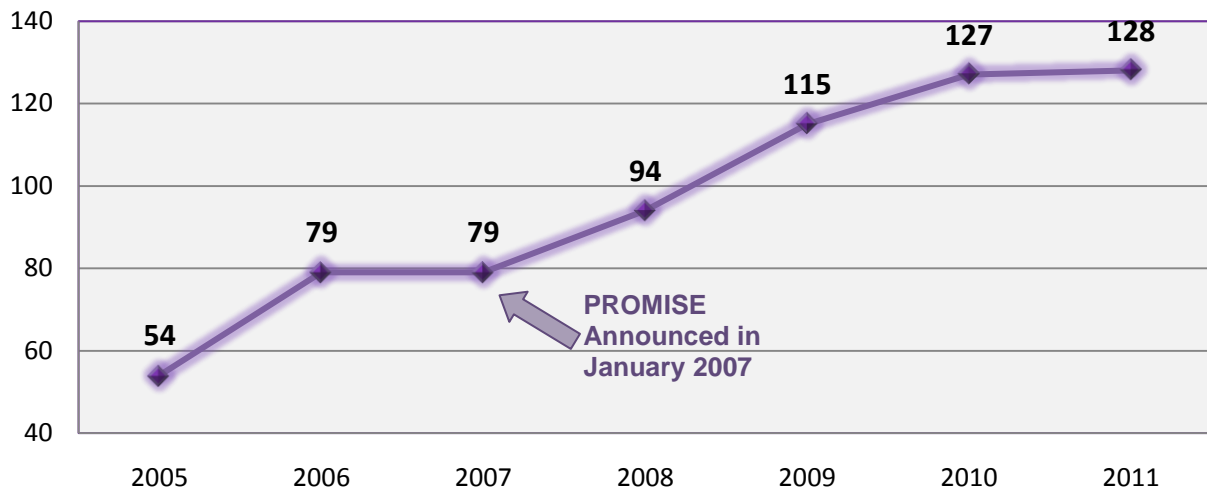
*I feel that it is a fantastic opportunity that we must get more students to utilize effectively. I do feel that the classes have had a better attendance and retention rate in college.*

– Promise Recipient

# Raising the Bar in College Preparation, Enrollment

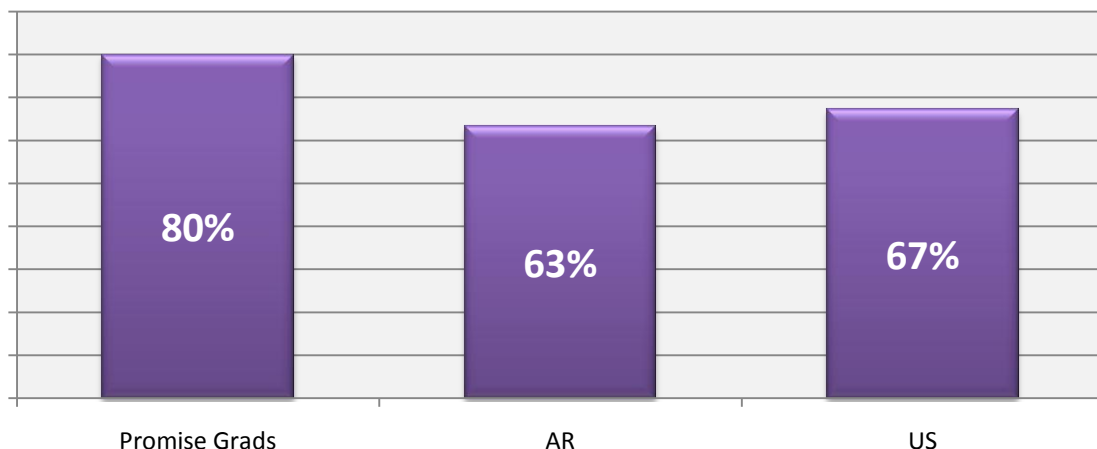
The El Dorado Promise has increased student preparation for college and also increased college enrollment. As can be seen below, El Dorado Public Schools has seen a steady increase in the number of students that score a three, four or five on Advanced Placement (AP) exams. This increase jumped significantly after the implementation of the Promise program.

### Students Scoring 3, 4 or 5 on AP Exams



Not surprisingly, these students are enrolling in college at a higher rate than the state or U.S. average. As can be observed on the chart below, over 80% of Promise-eligible students enroll in college, with this percentage increasing each year. Of those eligible for the Promise in the 2011 EHS graduating class, 90% actually went on to attend college the following fall.

### Promise-Eligible Graduates College Enrollment vs. State & National Rates

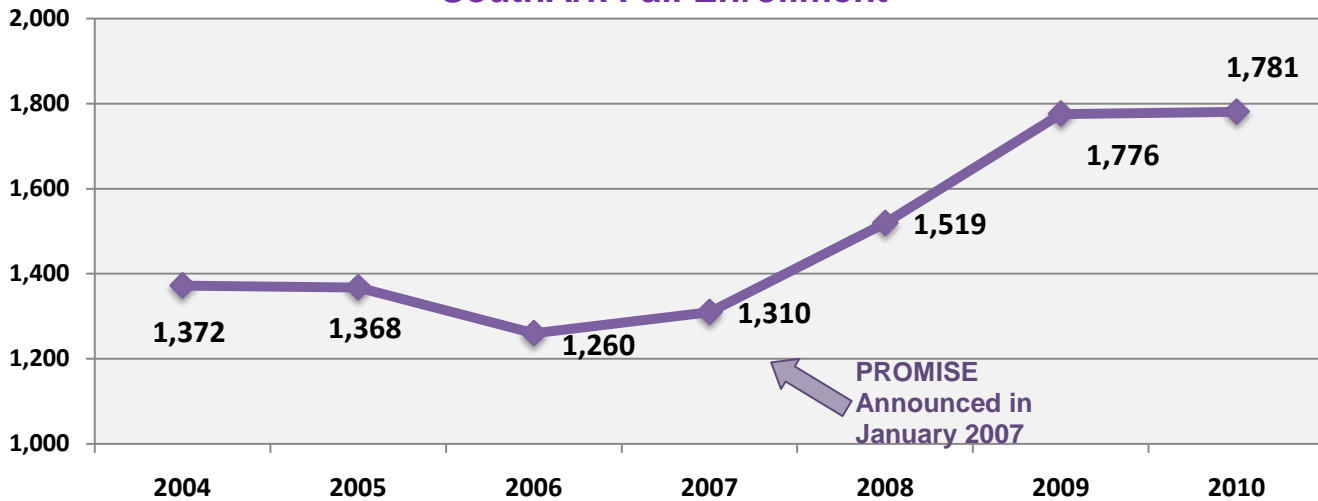


# Local Community College Sees Gains

Not only does the El Dorado Promise benefit the local K-12 public schools, it also provides substantial benefit to the local community college. Over 20% of El Dorado college-going students attend the SouthArk Community College in El Dorado. The illustrations below show that since the implementation of the Promise, both enrollment and degrees and certificates awarded have increased considerably.



### SouthArk Fall Enrollment



### SouthArk Degrees and Certificates Awarded

