

The Arkansas Governor's School:
Measuring Alumni Outcomes for Students and the State
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Key Facts/Findings

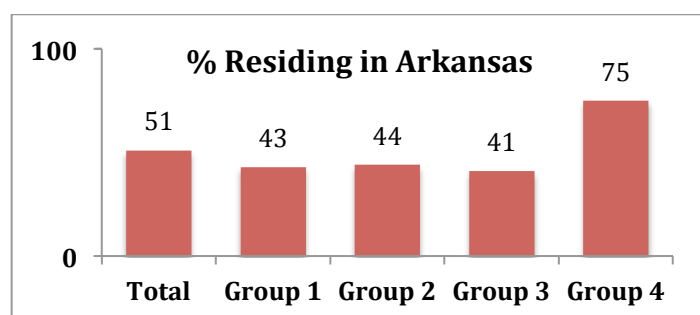
Two surveys were distributed in the fall of 2014 to alumni of the Arkansas Governor's School. The results below correspond with the Alumni Achievement Survey for which there were 1,114 total respondents. Every year from 1980-2013 was represented. Respondents were divided up into four groups according to alumni year.

Group	Alumni Year	Count (% of total)*
Group 1	1980-1989	161 (14.5%)
Group 2	1990-1999	263 (23.6%)
Group 3	2000-2009	386 (34.6%)
Group 4	2010-2013	300 (26.9%)

*Note: Four alumni could not recall the year they attended.

- More than **one in three** respondents attended high school in Pulaski County.
- About **one in ten** respondents attended Little Rock Central High School.

Location at time of survey



- **71.2%** of respondents had pursued some or all of their education in Arkansas post-high school.
- **81.4%** respondents thought AGS was either very important or essential in preparing them for higher learning.
- **98.7%** of respondents believed AGS to be a good use of state funds based on their experiences with the program.

Impact of AGS

“AGS opened my eyes to the wider world, the world beyond Arkansas. At the same time, it created a connection to my community here in Arkansas that helped me stay involved locally.”

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Introduction

This study was undertaken as my Capstone project at the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service (UACS) in fulfillment of my Masters in Public Service degree. It was done on behalf of the Arkansas Governor's School (AGS) at the request of the Director, Lyle Rupert. The purpose of the project was two-fold: 1.) To update alumni contact information for the school and 2.) To demonstrate the impact the program has had on the state and in the lives of AGS alumni. The preliminary findings from the study are contained in this report (as of May 2015).

A. Methodology

The project relied on two questionnaires to gather information from alumni. Both surveys were distributed during the fall of 2014. The first, the Alumni Update survey, requested current contact information that included email, phone, and address. The second, the Alumni Achievement survey, used an outcomes-based approach to gather information related to alumni education and employment, civic activities, perceptions of the program, social networks, and more. Other information such as the respondent's year in the program, special aptitude while at AGS, and high school attended was also collected.

B. Response Rate

Surveys were distributed online via the AGS SurveyMonkey account to every working email on file. Additionally, surveys were sent to alumni who requested them in response to a news release about the project. The Alumni Update survey was sent to approximately 3,585 unique alumni emails. There were a total of 1,446 surveys completed, which amounted to a 40.3% response rate. The Alumni Achievement survey was sent to approximately 3,635 unique alumni emails. There were a total of 1,114 surveys completed, which amounted to a 30.6% response rate.

In order to draw comparisons between more recent alumni and earlier alumni, some of the results from the Alumni Achievement survey have been divided up by year attended. Group 1 refers to alumni from the first ten years of the program, followed by Group 2 and Group 3. Group 4 captures college-age alumni over a four-year period. It is important to keep in mind that from 2010-2012 the AGS was reduced from six weeks down to four. Every year of the program from 1980-2013 was represented.

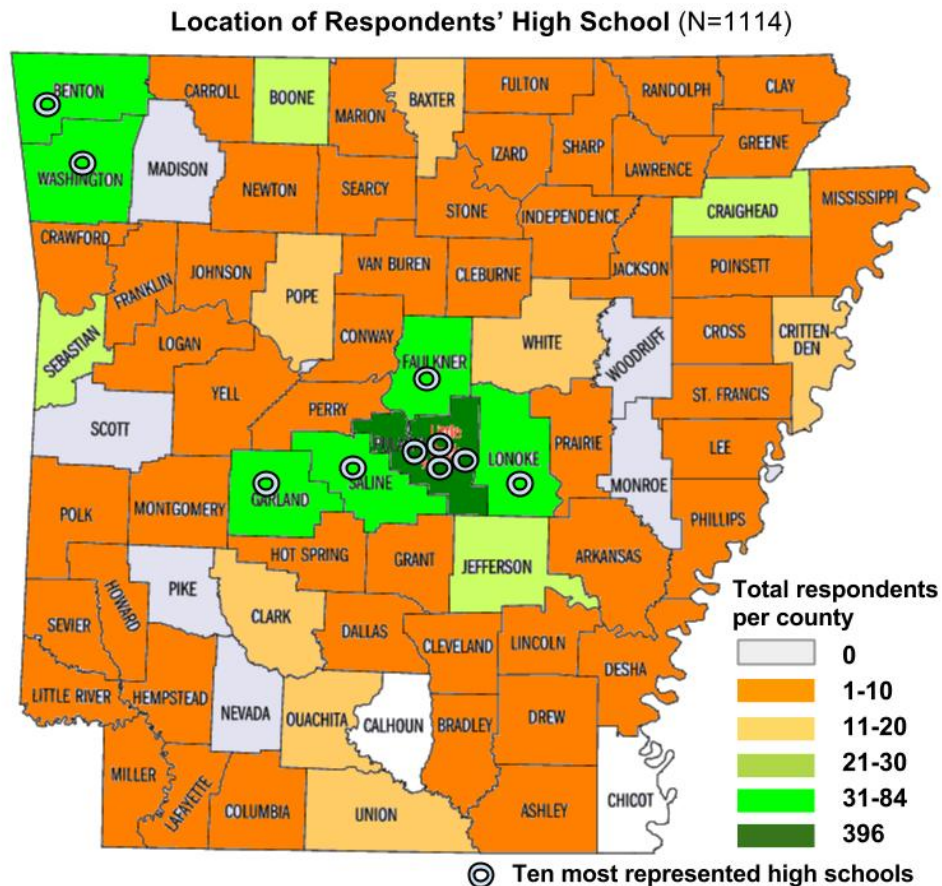
Group	Alumni Year	Count (% of total)*
Group 1	1980-1989	161 (14.5%)
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Group 3	2000-2009	386 (34.6%)
Group 4	2010-2013	300 (26.9%)

*Note: Four alumni were unable to recall the year they attended.

More than 13,000 Arkansas students have participated in the AGS since 1980. The results do not reflect all AGS alumni, but instead offer a snapshot of certain alumni at a moment in time.

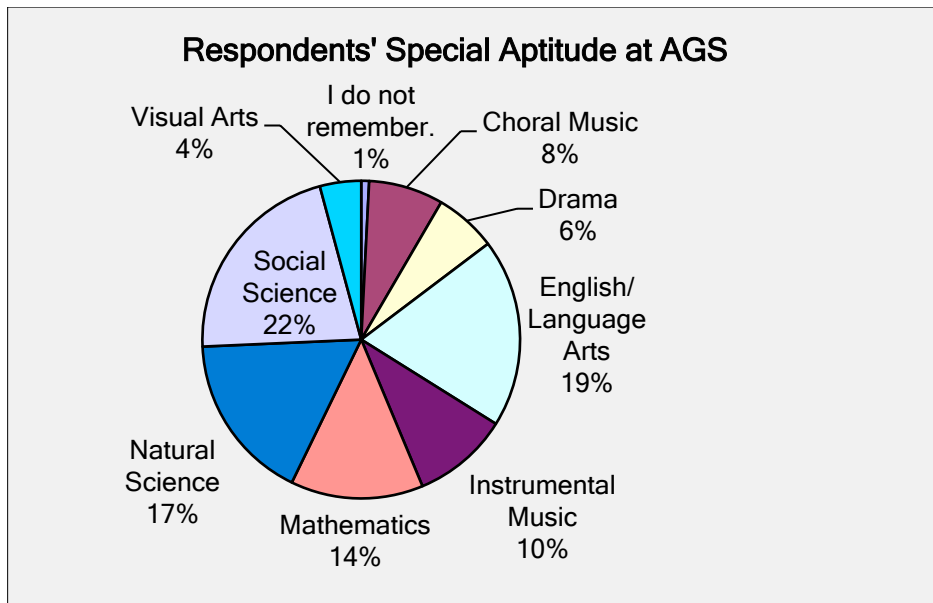
C. High School Attended (County Map)

Respondents were asked to identify the high school they had attended and the county in which it was located. The results showed that Little Rock Central High School had the most survey respondents of any school and that a little more than a third of all respondents went to high school in Pulaski County (See Appendix II). None of the respondents attended high school in eight of the counties.



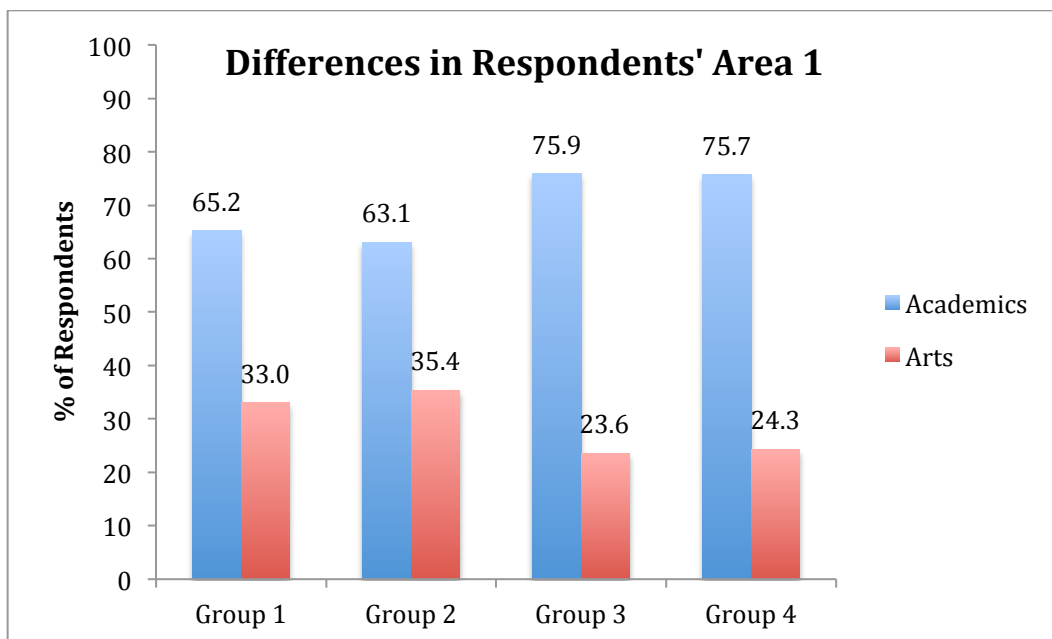
D. Special Aptitude

Since the first year of the program, AGS students have been admitted into an academic or artistic discipline, otherwise known as their “Area I” or special aptitude. Academic disciplines include social science, natural science, mathematics, and English/language arts. Artistic disciplines include choral music, instrumental music, visual arts, and drama. The chart below displays the distribution of special aptitudes for total respondents.



Differences Across Groups

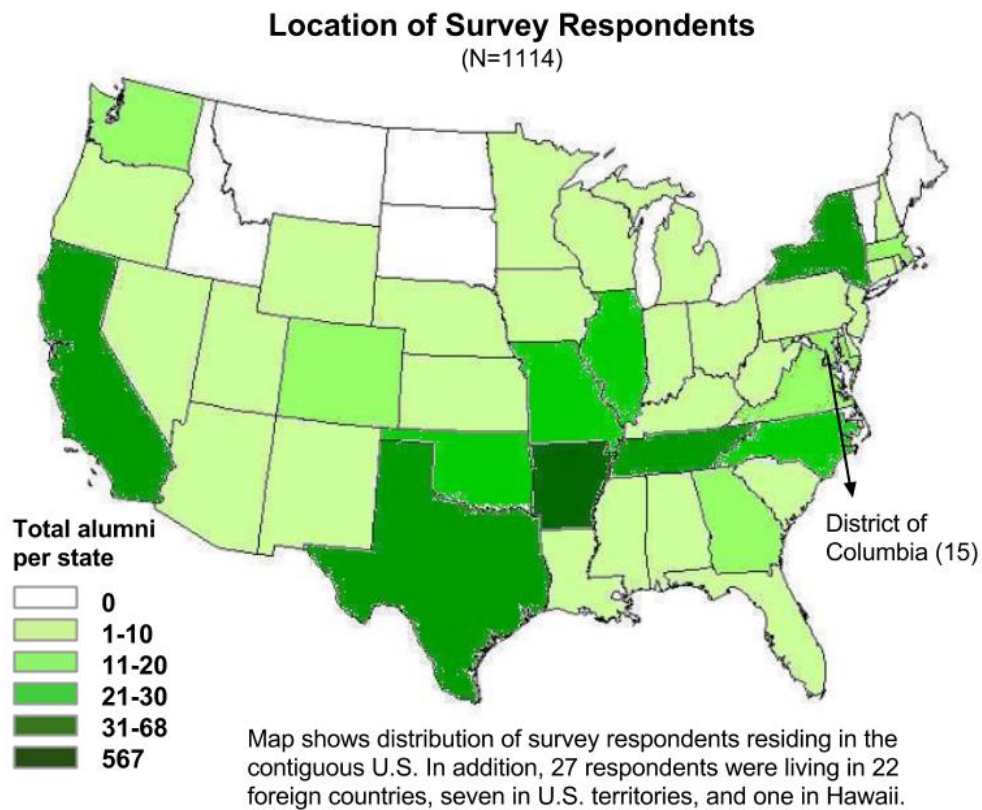
By analyzing results by group, and combining special aptitudes by academic or artistic discipline, differences over time can be seen. When comparing Group 1 and Group 2 with Group 3 and Group 4, there is about a ten-point drop in respondents who studied artistic pursuits at AGS. Put another way, the number of respondents studying the arts at AGS decreased from about 1 in 3 to 1 in 4 between the earlier and latter groups. This corresponds with an increase in the proportions of respondents whom were admitted into academic disciplines in later years of the program.



*Note: Nine alumni could not recall their special aptitude.

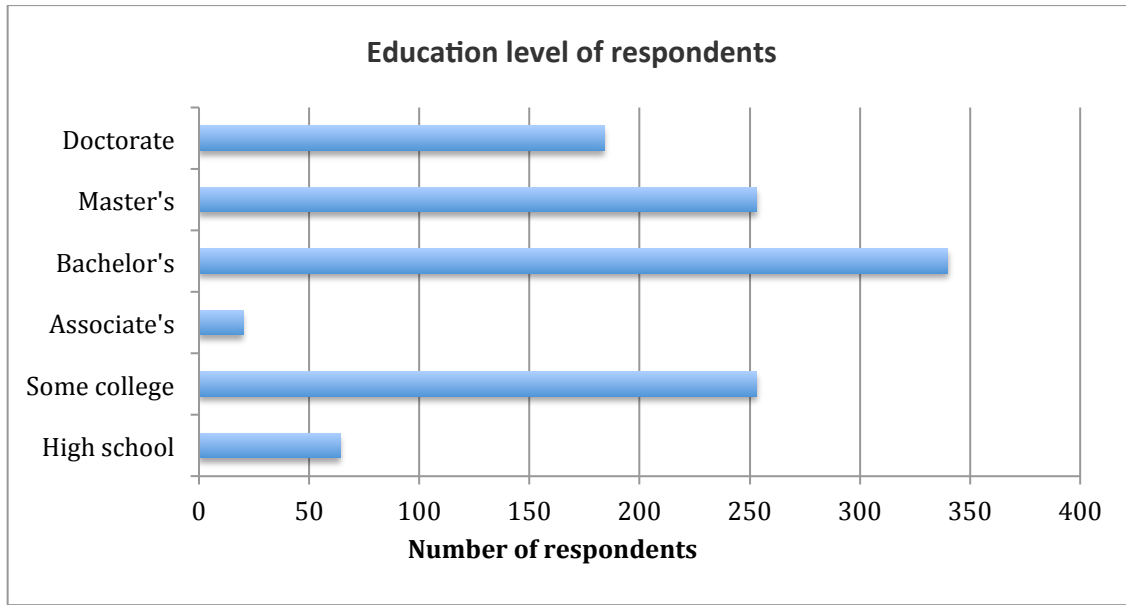
E. Where Alumni Were Residing (Country Map)

A slight majority (567) of total respondents was residing in Arkansas at the time of the survey (See Appendix I). Group 4 had the highest percentage of respondents residing in Arkansas with 74.7%. However, there was not much difference among the other three groups. The percentages of respondents residing in Arkansas tended to level off in the low-mid forties range after an initial out-migration following the time when many alumni would have finished college.



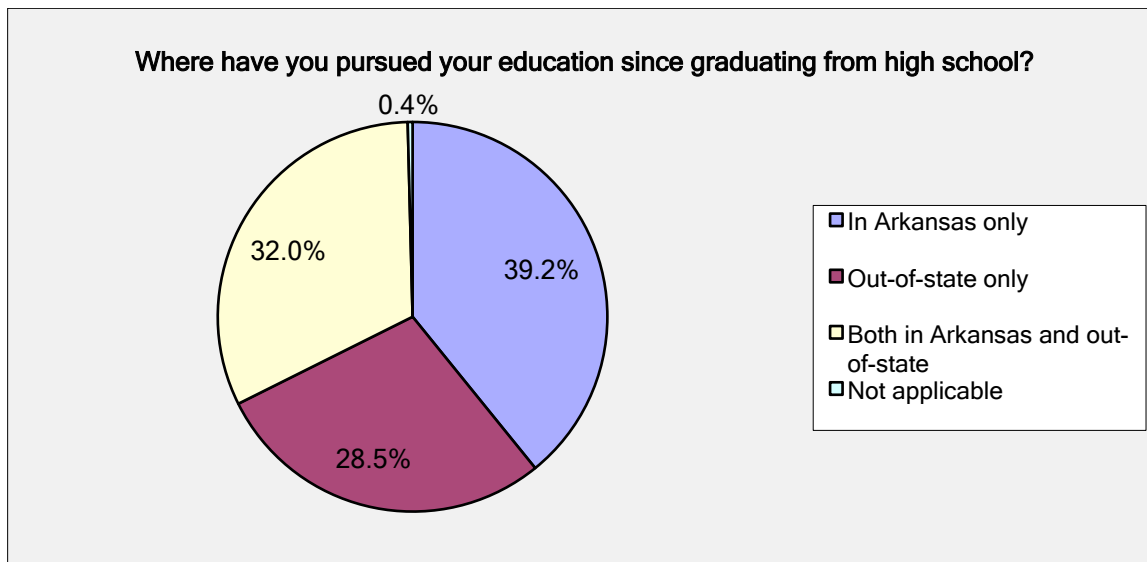
F. Educational Attainment

The chart below shows a distribution of the highest degree obtained by respondents at the time of the survey. At the end of the survey, many of the respondents commented that they would have liked more education related questions such as current enrollment status, what degrees they were planning to pursue, what they studied/majored in for college, academic fellowships, etc.



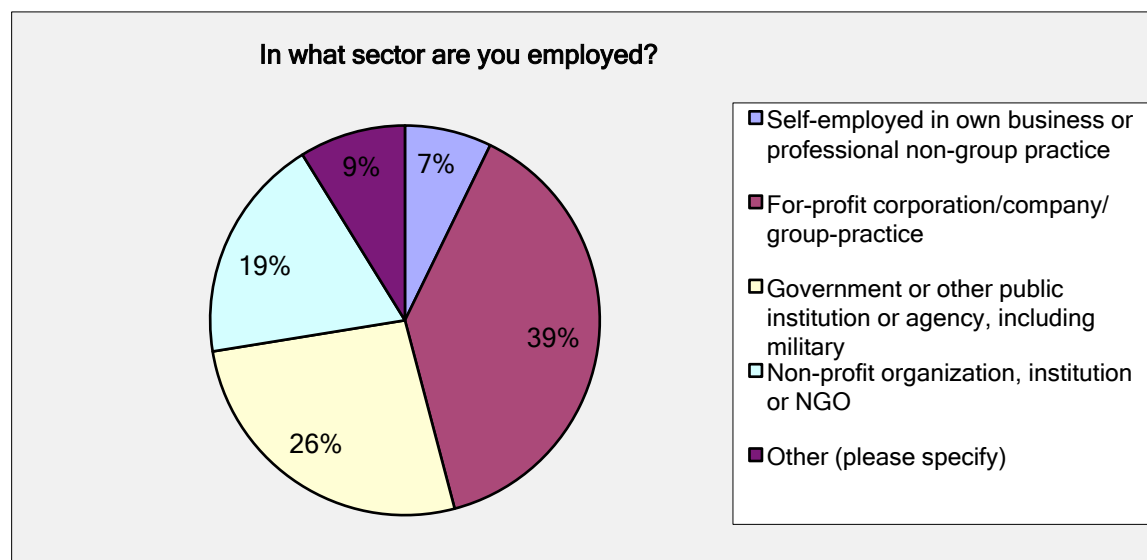
Location of Educational Pursuits

At the time of the survey, a majority of total respondents had spent at least part of their post-high school education in Arkansas.



G. Employment

Alumni were working in a variety of fields at the time of the survey. As shown in the chart below, more respondents were working in the for-profit sector than any other area of employment, followed by government or other public institution/agency, then non-profits, and self-employed.



Some of the respondents found the employment section limiting since it only asked about current employment. At the end of the survey, several respondents suggested asking questions about previous work they had done and other professional accomplishments.

H. Civic Activities

Alumni were asked to indicate which civic related activities they had done since their time at AGS. The results correspond to the respondents whom selected at least one activity from the list below. Only about half of total survey respondents were presented with the question.

Since your time at AGS, have you done any of these activities? (N=439)	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Served on a committee for a local club, organization, or place of worship	89.5%
Served on a local government board or commission	7.5%
Run for political office	2.3%
Worked on a political campaign (candidate or cause)	23.7%
Been a board member for a non-profit organization (local or national)	28.7%
Worked for a national service organization (e.g., Americorps, NCCC, etc.)	7.7%
Served in the military or protective services (local, state, or national)	4.8%

In addition to the choices provided, alumni were invited to share other forms of community involvement. Respondents reported being civically engaged in a number of different ways – as volunteers, advocates, and policymakers. They were involved with political issues and candidates, arts programming, education and health initiatives, and various other community needs. A list of sample responses can be found in Appendix III.

I. Importance of AGS

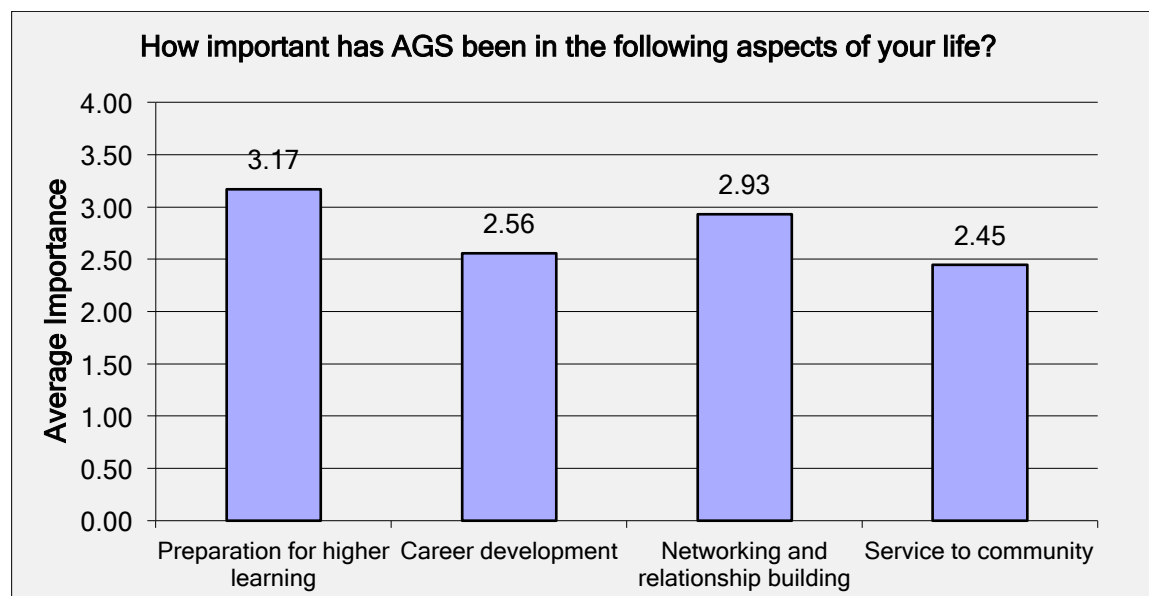
Alumni were asked to rate the importance of AGS in various aspects of their lives. The answer options used a four-point scale from (1) *Not important* to (4) *Essential*. A majority of respondents believed AGS was either very important or essential to their lives in three of the four categories.

How important has AGS been in the following aspects of your life?				
Answer Options	Not important (1)	Somewhat important (2)	Very important (3)	Essential (4)
Preparation for higher learning (N=1112)	1.2%	17.4%	44.2%	37.1%
Career development (N=1110)	11.3%	36.4%	33.9%	16.3%
Networking and relationship building (N=1113)	6.9%	24.4%	36.7%	31.3%
Service to community (N=1111)	16.4%	35.7%	29.0%	15.5%

Preparation for higher learning was the highest rated category, followed by networking and relationship building, career development, and service to community. While service to community received the lowest average rating overall, one respondent cautioned that the findings might be misleading. At the end of the survey, s/he observed,

As a part of the School of Public Service, I understand that the research is looking for a connection between AGS and public service, but it isn't an easy connection to make. Your results may show "service to community" as not important - when it may just be a first reaction to a bulleted question.

Still, many respondents thought AGS had played an important role in this regard.



Impact of AGS

It was evident from the open-ended responses that many alumni viewed the personal growth they experienced during AGS the most important part of the program (see Appendix III). As one respondent wrote,

AGS was about more than networking and career development. It was about giving high school students, many of whom lived in small towns, new ways to think and new cultural experiences. It encouraged unencumbered creativity, and gave students plenty of space to meet, share, think, and just be. In this way, it offered some of the most valuable skills one can acquire, and in a way that is almost impossible in the day to day world of high school, college, and one's professional life. (Group 2)

The effects of being part of a diverse and supportive environment while at AGS seemed to be even more pronounced for respondents hailing from small towns and high schools in the state. One respondent confided, "AGS was eye opening for me. I was a small town kid and really not sure that I belonged. The confidence I gained from interacting with my AGS classmates was invaluable in college and in my professional life (Group 1)." A second respondent remarked,

I came to AGS from a very small high school in rural Arkansas, and AGS was my first experience being around students from larger high schools. I was no longer a big fish in a small pond, and that experience really helped prepare me for college and, later, law school. I was challenged to do more intellectually, and I was introduced to diversity of people in a way I had not been before. (Group 2)

Several respondents commented on how the exposure they had to a diverse setting at AGS, as articulated above, led to increased learning, improved social skills, greater self-confidence, and intellectual stimulation.

Another theme to come out of this section had to do with respondents' relationship to Arkansas. Several respondents commented on how the program opened them up to new possibilities in life, including those that existed outside the state. One respondent reflected,

AGS opened up an entire world for me: the world of intellectual debate and critical thinking--the world of ideas. It showed me that talking, reading, and writing were all vital pursuits, and that there was an entire community of people (in Arkansas and around the world) who felt the same way. I cannot imagine having had the kind of career--and life--I have had without the AGS experience. (Group 1)

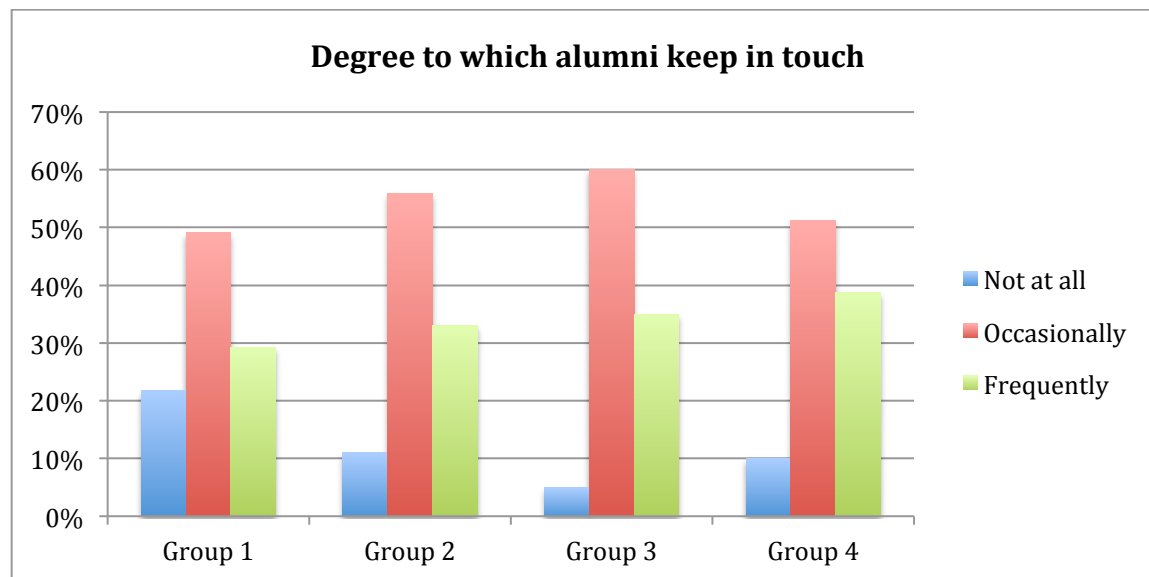
However, some respondents felt more connected to Arkansas and had a greater appreciation for the needs of the state after having been through the program. One respondent explained,

Before attending AGS, my dreams had been distant in a very literal geographic sense-- I wanted out of Arkansas as quickly as possible. AGS changed that-- the program taught me to be proud of my state and its citizens at a very pivotal time in my life. (Group 3)

In these ways, AGS appeared to serve a dual-purpose by expanding horizons, while instilling a fondness for the state in some of the respondents. See Appendix III for a list of sample responses.

J. Alumni Contact

Alumni were asked how often they were in touch with their AGS classmates. Group 4 had the highest percentage of respondents in frequent contact with other AGS alumni. However, Group 3 had the highest percentage of respondents in touch overall (frequently and occasionally). The earliest group, Group 1, had more respondents in frequent contact than “not at all.”



Exemplary quotes

“I very much enjoyed not only the classes and learning experience but also the social aspects of the program. I made life-long friends at AGS and learned personal and social skills that have set me up for success throughout life and my career.” (Group 1)

“The socialization aspect of AGS was an incredible experience - creating lifelong bonds with persons that brought immense pleasure and meaning to my life.” (Group 1)

“It connected me with the future leaders and ambassadors of our state. It helped assure the public education system in Arkansas did all it could to set me up for future success in Arkansas and beyond.” (Group 2)

“Many of the friends I made there are still very important in my life. Some of those friends went to my high school but we didn't connect on an intellectual level until AGS.” (Group 2)

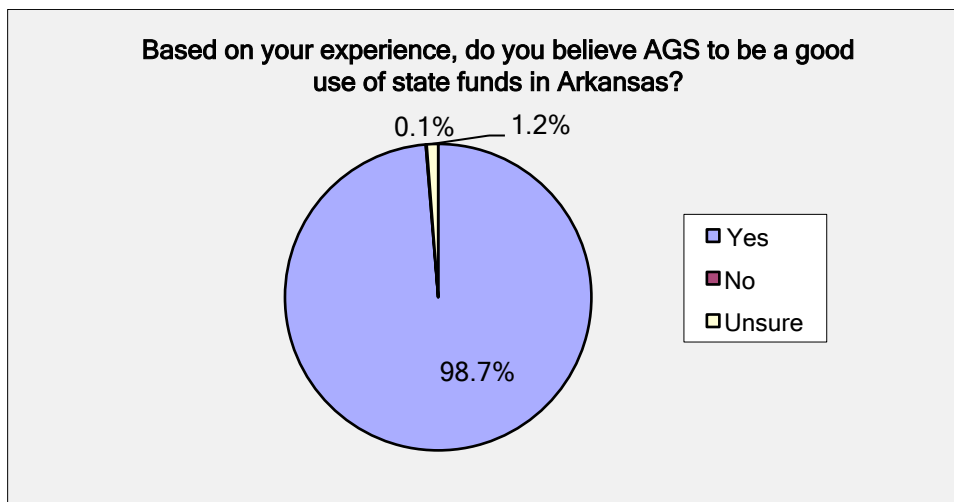
“I made many stronger, longer lasting friendships than any other area of school.” (Group 3)

“Because oh AGS, I was able to meet people from all different walks of life. I was able to meet people with different religious views and political views and I got to discuss those things with them and learn from the conversations. I also met some of the greatest friends.” (Group 4)

“[AGS] opened my mind to a whole new world. I was surrounded by people striving to make the most of themselves and it pushed me to do the very same. After ags, I felt sure of what I wanted tondo with my life and I had awesome people to help me get there along the way. I still talk to most everyone I met at ags.” (Group 4)

K. Use of State Funds

There was overwhelming support for state funding of AGS among respondents. Out of the 1114 respondents, 1100 answered yes, 13 were not sure, and only one chose “no.” However, it is likely that alumni who had positive feelings toward the AGS responded to the survey at higher rates than those whom did not, which could have had an effect on the results. Still, the results were an indication of the level of alumni support for the program.



L. Other Findings

Other findings to come out of the Alumni Achievement Survey were derived primarily from the responses collected at the end of the survey, where it asked for suggestions and/or additional questions to be included in future efforts aimed at alumni. Respondents used this space to comment on specific improvements to the survey itself, include more information about their achievements, and communicate a variety of other concerns and ideas they had about the school moving forward.

A number of alumni were interested in sharing knowledge they had about the program that could be used for program improvement purposes. One respondent noted,

I would ask which elements of our AGS experience we remember as most influential or important or formative. There is so much that was really valuable, and to get this feedback from alumni who are looking through the lens of 30 years of perspective would be good information to know.

A second respondent imparted, "It's great! Maybe more questions about memories of specific programs would be helpful as well. The off campus trips to see musicals really impacted me that year and helped shape my career path."

Several respondents voiced concerns about future funding for the AGS and were interested in ways they could help support the program. One respondent requested, "If AGS is in danger of losing funding, please keep us in the loop. I do not want to see this go the way of the AEGIS camp programs." Some respondents wanted to find out about alumni opportunities that existed, while others were simply trying to reconnect with their fellow AGS classmates from when they attended.

In general, respondents seemed to appreciate the opportunity they had to share their opinions with the school. One respondent conveyed, "I am just glad someone is doing the survey. The Arkansas governors school has a massive impact on the success of our state."

Appendix I. Location of Alumni Survey Respondents

	Total Alumni	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Arkansas	567	69	116	157	224
Texas	68	13	24	26	
California	46		12	23	
New York	39		12	15	
Tennessee	37	10	12	11	
Missouri	30			12	
Illinois	26			12	
North Carolina	24				
Oklahoma	22			13	
Georgia	16				
Virginia	16				
District of Columbia	15				
Colorado	14				
Washington	13				
Maryland	11				
Massachusetts	11				
Kansas	10				
Louisiana	10				
U.S. States with less than 10 total alumni	107	65	82	101	69
U.S. Territories	7	1	1	2	3
Total U.S.	114	66	83	103	72
Total Outside U.S.	25	3	4	14	4
Grand total	1114	161	263	386	300

Note: Four alumni were not included in a group.

Appendix II. Top Ten High Schools & Counties

Respondents were asked to identify the high school they attended and the county in which the high school was located. The two tables below show the ten high schools with the highest number of respondents in the survey and the ten most represented counties where respondents attended school. The tables correspond to the maps in the results section of the report. In each table, the column “Count” refers to the number of respondents and “% of total” refers to the percentage of total survey respondents.

Table 1. Ten high schools with most respondents

High School (H.S.)	Location (County)	Count	% of total
1. Little Rock Central H.S.	Pulaski	118	10.6
2. Fayetteville H.S. East	Washington	60	5.4
3. Parkview A&S Magnet H.S.	Pulaski	55	4.9
4. Cabot H.S.	Lonoke	51	4.6
4. Conway H.S.	Faulkner	51	4.6
6. N. Little Rock H.S.	Pulaski	41	3.7
7. Wilbur D. Mills H.S.	Pulaski	30	2.7
8. Benton H.S.	Saline	29	2.6
9. Rogers H.S.	Benton	24	2.2
10. Lakeside H.S.	Garland	21	1.9

Table 2. Top ten counties where respondents attended high school

County	Count	% of total
1. Pulaski	396	35.5
2. Washington	84	7.5
3. Benton	68	6.1
4. Faulkner	56	5.0
4. Garland	56	5.0
6. Lonoke	53	4.8
7. Saline	33	3.0
8. Craighead	27	2.4
8. Sebastian	27	2.4
10. Jefferson	25	2.2

Appendix III. Sample Open-Ended Responses

Below are responses to two of the open-ended questions in the survey (Questions 11 & 13). A selective sample was taken due to time constraints and practical considerations. Responses are grouped according to codes/themes. Some responses have been reduced in length.

Question 11. Civic Engagement Activities

Political involvement. I worked for Senator Mark Pryor as an intern in his Little Rock office and worked on his campaign in Jonesboro, where I go to college.

I have participated in voter outreach and campaign organization in all but the last two elections as well as campaigning for issue elections such as Employee Free Choice.

In addition to canvassing for ballot initiative signatures, participating as a volunteer to lobby legislators on specific issues, and holding positions in student organizations, I have been a part of multiple loose-knit social movements. I have also stayed educated about current events, written letters to multiple government figures, and signed countless petitions.

Worked on Governor Clinton re-election campaign while in high school. Also worked as a volunteer in both of his presidential campaigns.

Arts programming/ education. Current board member of Delta Fine Arts, Inc. which is a non-profit organization that provides performing arts programs to children.

As an on-air personality for KUAF 91.3 npr I am active in the community with promoting the arts and hosting events such as panel discussions at the Fayetteville Public Library.

I have played in numerous volunteer orchestras. I have founded two youth theater programs (one in Arkansas and one in Utah).

Board member, Austin Public Library Friends Foundation

Art Museum Docent/ Volunteer

Environmental conservation and preservation. I'm an active volunteer for a lot of organizations that help preserve and protect Arkansas's scenic beauty.

I participate in several beautification, litter prevention, and recycling efforts throughout Arkansas as well as and in conjuncture with serving on the Board for Keep North Little Rock Beautiful, an affiliate of Keep Arkansas Beautiful.

Health. Governor appointment on his medical advisory council, currently serving as chair of that council.

Protective services. Captain of Sparta-White Co. Volunteer Rescue Squad.

Social issues/ community needs. I volunteer my time frequently. Currently I volunteer with organizations which combat homelessness as well as organizations that teach urban children about gardening and animal husbandry.

Co-produced 2012 production of Vagina Monologues at UCA to benefit Faulkner County women's shelter.

I have been involved in public housing, federal homeless policy, HIV/AIDs, early childhood education and special education.

Extensively involved in homeless assistance programs in Little Rock.

Actively involved with my sorority's public service as well as countless community service with the mentally ill population.

Social movement. Participated in a protest after Trayvon Martin verdict.

Multiple. I was on the Parks Commission for Piggott for 10 years. I have volunteered with optometrists in Costa Rica and Mexico providing Eye care and Eye wear with Lion's Club International. I was a scoutmaster for 12 years.

Question 13. Impact of AGS

College prep/application. I can't articulate how helpful AGS was to me as a junior in high school. It gave me the boost I needed to get through my senior year and it prepared me more for college than my high school did overall. (Group 4)

I attended AGS for English/Language Arts and I am now studying Journalism at the top-ranked journalism school in America; I still use some of the practices I learned from my area I teachers in my writing. (Group 4)

AGS made me a better reader and writer, preparing me for college at Berkeley and graduate school at Duke. I continue to draw from these gifts as a scholar of American literature and culture, and I still think of my teachers at AGS as models for the work I do in my classrooms at Yale. (Group 2)

Career prep/application. The class on epistemology and the ability to argue through reason is something, I believe, I've carried to my legal practice. (Group 3)

As a teacher, it has impacted the way that I introduce concepts and emphasize thinking skills. (Group 3)

It gave me more confidence generally and with writing specifically. In addition to the above job, I am a senior contributor to the online magazine The Federalist. (Group 2)

Life skills. It set me up to be a critical thinker, much more than primary education did. (Group 2)

AGS helped me by giving me the skills to work with people of diverse backgrounds and opinions. Critical thinking is generally not well supported in the public school curriculum. By providing an environment where it is OK to challenge one another's beliefs respectfully, AGS is preparing students to be leaders. (Group 1)

Love of learning/intellectual curiosity/expanded academic interests. Before AGS I was very specifically interested in natural science and mathematics. It expanded my interests and gave me a greater appreciation for studies outside my immediate interests and career path. (Group 4)

AGS had a large impact on my education as it gave me a strong foundation for critical thinking, artistic expression, and a strong interest in philosophy, psychology, and politics. (Group 2)

Opened my mind to avant-garde art (which has been my mainstay); taught me to trust my instincts, no matter how outrageous; etc. (Group 1)

STEM. AGS gave me the love for neuroscience and pushed me to want to pursue research. (Group 4)

Inspired me to pursue a career in Mathematics, which directly led to my employment in optimization consulting. (Group 3)

AGS was my first introduction to computers. I then majored in computer science in college, and have been employed in the industry ever since. (Group 1)

ARTS. The drama program at AGS played a significant role in my decision to major in theatre at the U of A. (Group 2)

I was inspired to go into Music Education and then into Educational Leadership. (Group 2)

Being from a very rural and conservative area, I was very fortunate to have had the opportunity to grow and expand my awareness at AGS. I was finally able to practice a dramatic craft (no drama classes at my school). I learned that I'm more suited to "behind the scenes" work which helped me focus my attention all through college. (Group 1)

It has helped me realize that I could successfully make a career from music, which I have successfully done for 15 years. (Group 1)

New ways of thinking/engaging with the world/feeling challenged. For me, the impact of AGS was less about immediate career development or preparation for college, and more about providing an opportunity to explore intellectual curiosities that had been limited or precluded in

high school. For example, those aspects that led me to do worse in high school were the things that probably have led me to be relatively successful in life and academia -- creativity, risk-taking, skepticism, etc. AGS was a window into a more interesting way of approaching knowledge and learning. (Group 2)

AGS taught so many things here are a few I can point specifically to: 1) interdisciplinary inquiry: theatre is naturally interdisciplinary but I've been able to navigate through many roles and institutions because I can "connect the dots" between ideas that might seem divergent or unrelated; creative problem solving 2) Create your own reality: our slogan from 1997 that has shaped every choice I have made; I have the ability to have an idea/vision and then work towards bringing that into existence in the material world. 3) open mind: being mixed with so many different disciplines, backgrounds, cultures, thoughts, ideologies, etc demanded that I be open to at least hear someone else. This has given me tools to really hear what is happening around me and not just gravitate towards others who share a similar belief. (Group 2)

for me, AGS may have been the first time I consciously considered that many "truths" I held might be the result of my experience and culture. That others held different views just as strongly based on their experience of the world. Being aware of this helped me move beyond "I'm right you're wrong"/here are the facts, why can't you see that?" thinking and arguing. (Group 1)

AGS opened up an entire world for me: the world of intellectual debate and critical thinking--the world of ideas. It showed me that talking, reading, and writing were all vital pursuits, and that there was an entire community of people (in Arkansas and around the world) who felt the same way. I cannot imagine having had the kind of career--and life--I have had without the AGS experience. (Group 1)

Personal growth/confidence. AGS gave me a time for some of the strongest personal growth. At governor school I gained a huge confidence I had not been aware of before. I felt comfortable. (Group 4)

Helped me develop into well-round individual and exposed me to art, literature, and history that I wouldn't have otherwise learned. (Group 2)

AGS was an eye opening experience that gave me confidence in my ability to succeed in various different aspects of my life. It also gave me something very interesting to talk about when I met my future wife who also attended AGS. (Group 2)

AGS was my first time to spend a significant time away from home, and in an educational atmosphere that challenged my beliefs/notions. I came back a changed person in terms of being more open-minded, more inquisitive, and more confident. (Group 1)

AGS was a pivotal turning point in my life. More than anything, the confidence I gained in my own abilities was reinforced throughout the summer. What I learned there opened up my understanding of the possibilities in the area of social sciences. Before attending, I had a

tendency to discount my inherent abilities when it came to understanding people and data. Afterward, I had a real sense of my gifts and a responsibility to grow them. (Group 1)

AGS was eye opening for me. I was a small town kid and really not sure that I belonged. The confidence I gained from interacting with my AGS classmates was invaluable in college and in my professional life. (Group 1)

Also, it helped me realize the importance of social interaction that helped a shy kid like me blossom. (Group 1)

Academic/career path. Now as a freshman in college, I can really see what AGS has done for me. It gave me a taste of college life and introduced me to my love of political science that I plan to pursue further as an area of study. (Group 4)

It definitely heightened my interest in the social sciences, which has set me on the path to human rights work. (Group 4)

AGS was a great experience that allowed me to get a feel of the college experience. I made some great friends and had a lot of fun. I ended up not pursuing a career in my AGS specialty, but it was still a useful experience. (Group 3)

AGS exposed me to anthropology. At that point, I changed focus entirely, resulting in a masters from University of Chicago. I would have never explored anthropology without AGS. (Group 3)

My experience at AGS was a defining one in my life. I learned so much about myself and others in those six weeks. I reference my time there frequently, and the Area 1 classes became my major in college. It's where I learned where my real interests lay. (Group 2)

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My Area I focus of English/Language Arts at AGS influenced my choice of English as my major in college, which in turn influenced my career choices. I have worked in advertising, technical writing, public relations, and the nonprofit sector, and my educational background proved useful in each situation. (Group 2)

Unique/supportive learning environment. AGS was an amazing experience. It was a very involved learning environment and there weren't any 'secret' objectives like testing in grade school. Being around people that were there to learn and willing do so without any 'perks' like getting an A. (Group 4)

AGS was about more than networking and career development. It was about giving high school students, many of whom lived in small towns, new ways to think and new cultural experiences. It encouraged unencumbered creativity, and gave students plenty of space to meet, share, think, and just be. In this way, it offered some of the most valuable skills one can acquire, and in a way

that is almost impossible in the day to day world of high school, college, and one's professional life. (Group 2)

Specific aspects of AGS (ability to recall). The lectures and panels have stuck with me such as the Rwanda Genocide survivor, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict panel, and the movie Koyaanisqatsi. (Group 4)

The afternoon guest speakers were eye openers too, some proved to be incredibly interesting. (Group 4)

I LOVED the program and still recall the poetry lessons I sat through, still benefit from the movies and lectures and experiences. (Group 3)

Those six weeks changed my life, and although my time there was almost 20 years ago, I still remember the people I met, the movies we watched, and the conversations exchanged, in the classroom and outside the classroom. (Group 2)

Social acceptance/belonging. AGS was the first time I was really able to meet people my age who were interested in learning. It definitely helped me to feel that it was OK to LIKE learning, and that is something that has stayed with me since. (Group 3)

AGS was especially beneficial for someone like me who came from a small town high school where I never fit in. At AGS I interacted with diverse students and made deep connections with other similarly minded people (Group 3).

It was the first time I felt like I was being taken seriously as a learner, the first time that I was encouraged to be a creative problem solver, and the first time that I lived and worked with other people who took ideas as seriously as I did. (Group 1)

It opened my eyes to different ideas and let me know that there were more of "me" out there -- people who thought more broadly, people who had a desire to excel or make a difference, and people with whom "being smart" was celebrated. (Group 1)

Most importantly, I felt validation to be part of a like minded group of peers; in my visual arts group and as a whole. I've always been a seeker of education, and it was life changing to be with students and teachers that encouraged finding the answers and welcomed different opinions (Group 1)

Escape. The summer of 2000 was the first time I had ever been away from home for an extended amount of time, and was a respite from the turmoil of home life. It was the first time that I ever felt like there was truly a way out of the circumstances I had been raised in. (Group 3)

Exposure to diverse people/ideas. Because of AGS, I was able to meet people from all different walks of life. I was able to meet people with different religious views and political views and I got to discuss those things with them and learn from the conversations. I also met some of the greatest friends (Group 4).

AGS was my first real chance to get to know other people from around the state. I grew up in Little Rock and had an entirely central Arkansas-centric upbringing where the rest of the state practically didn't exist for me. I'd never gotten to know anyone from Fayetteville or Fort Smith before AGS. (Group 3)

AGS was my first independent experience of a world outside my small town. I was exposed to new books, music, art, and drama -- all of which fed into my ongoing need to learn. It's an excellent way to broaden horizons. (Group 2)

My experience at AGS was most impacting on my social life. It was very great to meet such a large and diverse group of intelligent and interesting kids from all around the state. It was very eye opening and rewarding to me as someone who attended small Catholic schools from kindergarten through high school. (Group 2)

I came to AGS from a very small high school in rural Arkansas, and AGS was my first experience being around students from larger high schools. I was no longer a big fish in a small pond, and that experience really helped prepare me for college and, later, law school. I was challenged to do more intellectually, and I was introduced to diversity of people in a way I had not been before. (Group 2)

life changing at the time, coming from very small town. meeting so many people with different experiences, families, skin colors, religions, goals. all very mind blowing helped me feel more confident in myself and my abilities. (Group 1)

Social life (relationships and personal networks). I made many stronger, longer lasting friendships than any other area of school. (Group 3)

It connected me with the future leaders and ambassadors of our state. It helped assure the public education system in Arkansas did all it could to set me up for future success in Arkansas and beyond. (Group 2)

Many of the friends I made there are still very important in my life. Some of those friends went to my high school but we didn't connect on an intellectual level until AGS. (Group 2)

I very much enjoyed not only the classes and learning experience but also the social aspects of the program. I made life-long friends at AGS and learned personal and social skills that have set me up for success throughout life and my career. (Group 1)

The socialization aspect of AGS was an incredible experience - creating lifelong bonds with persons that brought immense pleasure and meaning to my life. (Group 1)

Just as important as the formal instruction, though, was the chance to spend time with smart kids from around the state, who showed me new ways of making community and carrying myself in the world. (Group 2)

Broadening of horizons. ags opened my mind to a whole new world. I was surrounded by people striving to make the most of themselves and it pushed me to do the very same. After ags, I felt sure of what I wanted to do with my life and I had awesome people to help me get there along the way. I still talk to most everyone I met at ags. (Group 4)

Before attending AGS, my dreams had been distant in a very literal geographic sense-- I wanted out of Arkansas as quickly as possible. AGS changed that-- the program taught me to be proud of my state and its citizens at a very pivotal time in my life. When I was in high school, we used to hear quite a bit about brain drain as it applied to Arkansas, as our best and brightest were consistently choosing to leave the state and explore futures elsewhere. At the time, I would have loved nothing more than to join their ranks, but AGS changed my mind. (Group 3)

AGS showed a new world outside of our high school. The programs and events (movies and discussions) gave a sense of a bigger world that without AGS my view would be much different than they are today. (Group 3)

AGS had an impact on my life by opening my mind to possibilities: colleges outside of the state, careers, politics, religion, and ways to give back to the local/state/national community. It allowed me to learn to consider all sides of questions, to learn a better way to think. It allowed me to open my innocent preconceptions to a very large and complex world. It allowed me to socialize with other students who were also making the same big transition in thinking. (Group 2)

AGS opened my eyes to the wider world, the world beyond Arkansas. At the same time, it created a connection to my community here in Arkansas that helped me stay involved locally. (Group 2)

Motivation. AGS made me excited for my college experience, and inspired me to pursue a degree in Political Science and International Studies at American University in Washington, DC. My time at AGS made me feel like this achievement was feasible and pushed me to be more ambitious with my goals for college. (Group 3)

Appendix IV. Survey Instrument

The questionnaire below was used in the Alumni Achievement Survey.

Alumni Achievement Survey

1. Alumni Status

What year did you attend AGS?

2. Name

First Name

Last Name

Preferred

Previous Name (if changed)

3. High School

What high school did you attend?

Name of H.S.

County

Other (please enter high school name if not a part of list)

4. What was your Area 1 or “special aptitude while at AGS?

5. In which state or foreign country do you currently reside?

Location

If “International,” please specify which country

6. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

Education level

7. Where have you pursued your education since graduating from high school?

In Arkansas only

Out-of-state only

Both in Arkansas and out-of-state

Not applicable

If currently employed, please answer Questions 8 & 9. If not please skip to Question 10.

8. Please list your employer and job position.

Employer or name of organization

Job title or position

9. In what sector are you employed? Please mark the best answer.

Self-employed in own business or professional non-group practice

For-profit corporation/company/group practice

Government or other public institution or agency, including military
 Non-profit organization, institution or NGO
 Other (please specify)

10. Since your time at AGS, have you done any of these activities? Please mark all that apply.

- Served on a committee for a local club, organization, or place of worship
- Served on a local government board or commission
- Run for political office
- Worked on a political campaign (candidate or cause)
- Been a board member for a non-profit organization (local or national)
- Worked for a national service organization (e.g., Americorps, NCCC, etc.)
- Served in the military or protective services (local, state, or national)

11. Please tell us about any other civic or service related activities in which you have been involved.

(open-ended response)

12. How important has AGS been in the following aspects of your life?

	Not important (1)	Somewhat important (2)	Very important (3)	Essential (4)	Unsure or not applicable
Preparation for higher learning					
Career development					
Networking and relationship building					
Service to community					

13. How has AGS had an impact on your life or career? Please be as specific as you can.
 (open-ended response)

14. Do you still keep in touch with AGS classmates from when you attended?

- Not at all
- Occasionally
- Frequently

15. Based on your experience, do you believe AGS to be a good use of state funds in Arkansas?

- Yes
- No

Unsure

16. May we provide your email address to the AGS Alumni Association? It will be used for communication purposes only.

Yes

No

17. What survey questions would you like to see added for future reference?
(open-ended response)