ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

Arkansas Department of Education

Organization Information

Organization Name

Arkansas Outdoor Academy

Email

chorton@arkansasoutdooracademy.org

Telephone

5014252850

Fax

Address

2513 McCain Boulevard Num 154

Unit/Suite

Zip Code

72116

City

North little rock

State

Arkansas

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**

Arkansas Department of Education

1. Applicant Profile Information

Q1.

Name of applicant

Arkansas Outdoor Academy

Q2.

Contact person

1. Full Name
2. Title/Relationship to Charter
3. Mailing Address
4. Primary Phone
5. Primary Contact Email

1. Christopher Horton

2. Director/Co-Founder

3. 53 Oakbrooke Drive, Sherwood, Arkansas 72120

4. 501-425-2850

5. Chorton@Arkansasoutdooracademy.org

Q3.

Please list the names and roles of all persons in the applicant group, i.e., anyone with a role in drafting the substantive content of this application and is expected to have a significant role with the school, including any consultants or employees of an education service provider or management organization.

Include the following information for each person listed:

1. Full Name
2. Current Role with Proposed School
3. Future Role with Proposed School

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**

Arkansas Department of Education

1. Hallee Hughes (Co-Founder) (Principal)

2. Teal Lovelady (Co-Founder) (Guidance Counselor)

3. Sharon Bennett (Chairperson Advisory)

4. Roundtable Funding (Monty and Noah Hardy) (Advisor/Funding)

Q4.

Projected Date of School Opening (Month/Year)

August 4th, 2026

Q5.

Type of Charter

- ◉ Open Enrollment

- ○ Open Enrollment - CMO

Q6.

Educational Model If your Educational Model is not listed, please use the comment section to write in your response and provide a brief explanation of the model and why you selected that model.

- ☐ Classical

- ☑ Traditional

- ☐ Virtual

- ☑ Career/CTE

- ☐ Hybrid Learning

- ☐ Performing Arts

- ☐ Special Populations

- ☑ Other. Please explain in the comment section:

Applicant Comments :

College Preparatory

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

2. Executive Summary

Q7. A.1 Vision and Mission State the charter school's mission and vision for the proposed school. Provide a clear, focused, and compelling purpose for the school that is measurable and focused on educational outcomes. The mission and vision narrative should address how the school will help to provide high-quality education to Arkansas students.

Mission and Vision

Mission

The mission of the Arkansas Outdoor Academy is to cultivate resilient, empowered, and academically prepared students through immersive, place-based education that integrates rigorous academics with outdoor leadership, environmental stewardship, and real-world problem-solving. We are committed to nurturing curiosity, character, and critical thinking in every student by equipping them with the skills and mindset needed to thrive in postsecondary education, meaningful careers, and civic life.

Vision

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy envisions a statewide model of innovative public education where Arkansas students from all backgrounds develop a deep connection to the natural world, a strong sense of personal and collective responsibility, and the leadership capacities needed to guide their communities into a sustainable and inclusive future. Our vision is a public school where the outdoors is not only a classroom but a catalyst for academic excellence, social-emotional growth, and community engagement.

Q8. A.2 Vision and Mission Arkansas intends to be a national leader in education. To that end, provide an overview of the proposed school's education program, including major instructional methods. Explain why this school model will impact student outcomes for the targeted population.

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) is a premier educational initiative designed to inspire and empower individuals through immersive, hands-on outdoor learning experiences. Rooted in Arkansas's rich natural landscapes, AOA leverages the state's abundant outdoor resources to foster environmental stewardship, leadership skills, and personal resilience.

Grade 6: Introduction to Outdoor Leadership and Environmental Awareness

Core Subjects:

- **English Language Arts:** Emphasizes reading comprehension, narrative writing, and research. Students explore texts on nature, environmental issues, and leadership, connecting them to outdoor experiences.
- **Mathematics:** Applied math through outdoor activities—measuring distances on hikes, calculating area/volume in projects, and using statistics for ecological data.
- **Science:** Introduces environmental science, ecosystems, and sustainability. Includes fieldwork like water sampling and biodiversity surveys.
- **Social Studies:** Covers local history, indigenous cultures, and human impacts on the environment, highlighting community and cultural ties to nature.

Outdoor Leadership:

- **Team-Building:** Activities that foster collaboration and trust, such as rope courses and group challenges.
- **Survival Skills:** Basics like map reading, shelter building, fire starting, and wilderness safety.
- **Self-Management & Growth:** Mindfulness practices, stress management, and reflective journaling support emotional regulation and personal development.

Grade 7: Developing Leadership and Environmental Stewardship

Core Subjects:

- **English Language Arts:** Focus on persuasive writing and public speaking. Students research local environmental issues and propose solutions through reports and presentations.
- **Mathematics:** Introduces algebra and geometry through environmental data graphing and calculating resource use.
- **Science:** Examines biodiversity, environmental systems, and climate change. Students conduct experiments on topics like soil health or energy use.
- **Social Studies:** Explores Arkansas history, geography, and the role of natural resources and conservation in the state's development.

Outdoor Leadership:

- **Conservation & Exploration:** Activities include park clean-ups, habitat restoration, and environmental advocacy.
- **Leadership Roles:** Students begin leading service projects and outdoor activities.

- **Empathy & Communication:** Activities promote active listening, teamwork, and conflict resolution to strengthen interpersonal skills and emotional awareness.

Grade 8: Advanced Leadership Skills and Community Engagement

Core Subjects:

- **English Language Arts:** Students develop research papers, literary analysis, and creative writing. They examine leadership and advocacy models from diverse sources.
- **Mathematics:** Focus on algebra, data analysis, and geometry. Students use models to predict environmental changes and present findings.
- **Science:** Covers ecosystems, sustainability, and policy. Includes independent research on issues like renewable energy or waste reduction.
- **Social Studies:** Investigates global environmental movements and sustainability policies, exploring leadership's role in social and ecological justice.

Outdoor Leadership:

- **Advanced Skills:** Training in camping, navigation, and wilderness first aid. Students plan and lead multi-day wilderness trips.
- **Community Projects:** Students lead environmental initiatives like tree planting or waste reduction campaigns.
- **Collaboration & Leadership:** Students engage in peer mentorship, lead initiatives, and build confidence through team-based service projects.

Grade 9: College and Career Readiness Through Outdoor Leadership

Our instruction will align with Arkansas Academic Standards and Career & Technical Education (CTE) frameworks, especially in the Grade 9 capstone.

Core Subjects:

- **English Language Arts:** Focus on argumentative writing, literary criticism, and public speaking. Students develop and present research-backed arguments on environmental and social topics.
- **Mathematics:** Advanced study of algebra, statistics, and sustainability-related problem-solving. Students analyze environmental data trends and devise solutions.
- **Science:** In-depth exploration of climate change, green tech, and ecosystem management. Students complete a capstone project integrating multiple disciplines.
- **Social Studies:** Global view of environmental issues and the role of policy and government. Students compare international sustainability efforts and policies.

Outdoor Leadership:

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

- **Leadership Project:** A comprehensive, real-world environmental leadership initiative that includes research, planning, and community engagement.
- **Adventure Challenge:** Students plan and lead expeditions requiring leadership, critical thinking, and outdoor survival skills.

Leadership Reflection: Focus on emotional intelligence, personal growth, and the impact of leadership on both self and community.

Through this innovative model, AOA prepares students not just to graduate, but to thrive in post-secondary education, outdoor-related careers, and civic leadership. This unique approach directly supports Arkansas's vision of becoming a national leader in education

Pathway 1: Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) and Wilderness First Responder (WFR)

Cluster: Health Sciences (primary), STEM (supporting) Pathway Focus: Prepares students for emergency response careers in urban and wilderness environments. Aligned with Arkansas Department of Health EMR licensure requirements.

Grade-Level Sequence and IRCs:

-

Grade 9: First Aid & CPR (American Red Cross or AHA) – Age 14+

-

Grade 10: Leave No Trace Trainer – Age 14+; Environmental Ethics

-

Grade 11: Wilderness First Responder (WFR – NOLS, SOLO, WMA) – Age 16+

-

Grade 12: EMR (NREMT/Arkansas Fire Training Academy) – Age 16+; Capstone Project & Internship

Workforce Outcomes:

-

EMR licensure eligibility

-

Entry-level outdoor guiding, safety & SAR team roles

-

Strong foundation for EMT/paramedic licensure post-graduation

Pathway 2: Outdoor Conservation Sciences

Cluster: Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (primary); Energy & Natural Resources (alternate) Pathway Focus: Provides students with ecological and environmental skills in trail management, habitat restoration, conservation science, and GIS mapping.

Grade-Level Sequence and IRCs:

- Grade 9: First Aid & CPR; Leave No Trace Trainer – Age 14+

- Grade 10: Certified Environmental Steward (NAI); Trail Building Certification (PTBA) – Age 15–16+

- Grade 11: Certified Interpretive Guide (NAI); GIS Certificate (Esri) – Age 16+

- Grade 12: Internship & Capstone Portfolio – Age 17+

Workforce Outcomes:

- Trail crew, conservation field tech, or state agency roles

- Strong foundation for environmental science, forestry, or wildlife biology programs

Pathway 3: Outdoor Tourism, Parks & Recreation Management

Cluster: Hospitality & Tourism (primary); Marketing, Sales & Service (supporting) Pathway Focus: Trains students for customer-facing outdoor tourism roles, including guiding, park services, interpretation, and hospitality leadership.

Grade-Level Sequence and IRCs:

- Grade 9: First Aid & CPR; Arkansas Tourism 101 Certificate – Age 14+

- Grade 10: Leave No Trace Trainer; Certified Interpretive Guide (NAI) – Age 15–16+

- Grade 11: Certified Hospitality and Tourism Management Professional (CHTMP – AHLEI) – Age 16+

-

Grade 12: Internship with park, tourism office, or guide service; Capstone Project – Age 17+

Workforce Outcomes:

- Tour guide, visitor services, park operations, or event assistant

- Entry-level tourism and recreation jobs; foundational skills for hospitality, business, or environmental interpretation degrees

Each pathway includes:

- Aligned course progression (foundation to capstone)

- Validated IRCs at age-appropriate levels

- Partnerships with employers and industry bodies

- Meets Arkansas' CTE design requirements for Perkins V funding, capstone, and WBL

Applicant Evidence :

[PDF]

Outdoor CTE Pathways....

Uploaded on **8/7/2025** by
Christopher Horton

Q9. **B.1 Evidence of Need, Support, and Involvement Describe the anticipated student population the school intends to serve. Provide a rationale for seeking to serve this population.**

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy is designed to serve students from schools with significant economic and demographic needs—specifically those from Joe T. Robinson Middle and High Schools, eStem Junior High, and North Little Rock Middle and High Schools. These schools represent a diverse cross-section of Arkansas's student population and collectively embody the Academy's mission to provide equitable, transformative outdoor learning experiences.

Economically Disadvantaged Students

Across these schools, a high percentage of students qualify as low-income:

- North Little Rock Middle School: 75%

- North Little Rock High School: 70%

- Joe T. Robinson Middle School: 60%

- Joe T. Robinson High School: 47%

- eStem Junior High: 29%

Students from low-income households often lack access to outdoor education, travel opportunities, and enrichment programs that promote resilience, leadership, and wellness. The Academy seeks to fill this gap by offering hands-on, nature-based learning that supports academic achievement while fostering mental and physical health.

Racial and Cultural Representation

These schools also serve a racially diverse student population, many of whom are underrepresented in traditional outdoor and environmental programs:

Black/African American students represent 71% at NLR Middle, 59% at NLR High, 37% at Estem, 29% at Robinson High, and 19% at Robinson Middle.

Hispanic/Latino, multiracial, and Asian students also make up meaningful portions of each campus, further reflecting the need for inclusive, culturally responsive programming.

By intentionally engaging students of color in outdoor education, the Academy aims to dismantle historic access barriers and cultivate a sense of belonging in natural spaces.

Special Populations

These schools also serve students who require specialized support:

- English Learners make up 6–10% of these schools.
- Students in Special Education programs range from 12% to 16%.

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy will design programming that is inclusive and adaptive, ensuring all students, regardless of ability or language status, can fully participate and benefit.

Many of these schools are located in urban or densely populated areas where students have fewer opportunities for meaningful outdoor experiences. While some of these communities are suburban rather than urban in the traditional sense, many students still lack safe, consistent access to nature-based programs due to infrastructure, resource gaps, or family circumstances. The Academy will create space for immersive, place-based learning in nature, helping students unplug, connect, and thrive outside traditional classroom walls.

Why Serve This Population?

Serving this population aligns directly with the Academy's vision to build resilient, confident, and engaged learners through outdoor leadership and environmental stewardship. These students deserve access to high-quality, experiential learning that:

- Promotes mental health and reduces stress through time in nature.
- Strengthens science and STEM skills through hands-on exploration.
- Develops soft skills such as teamwork, self-regulation, and perseverance.
- Fosters agency and identity by placing underrepresented youth at the center of learning.

By prioritizing equity and holistic education, the Arkansas Outdoor Academy will not only uplift individual students, it will serve as a statewide model for how outdoor education can bridge opportunity gaps and build stronger, more inclusive communities.

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

Applicant Evidence :

PDF	PDF	PDF	PDF
Demographic Comparis...	Demographic Need Gra...	Arkansas-SCORP-2025-...	Nature Gap_ Why Outd...
Uploaded on **6/4/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **6/5/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**
PDF	PDF	PDF	PDF
Forest schools_ how cli...	Workforce-Report Outd...	Outdoor Rec Ed Shows ...	Outdoor Ed and Curric...
Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**
PDF	PDF	PDF	
Office of Outdoor Recr...	2024_OutdoorFoundati...	2023_Outdoor_Particip...	
Uploaded on **8/7/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/7/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/7/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	

Q10. **B.2 Evidence of Need, Support, and Involvement Describe the current educational options available to your target population. Include the overall academic performance of schools located near the proposed school and geographic area.**

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy intends to serve students in Pulaski County, with a focus on providing alternative, experiential education to communities characterized by high need and untapped potential. To understand the current educational landscape for these students, we review academic performance and demographic data from four area schools: North Little Rock Middle and High Schools, Joe T. Robinson Middle and High Schools, and eStem Junior High Charter School.

Note: *Unless otherwise noted, subgroup scores are compared to state averages for all students.*

North Little Rock Middle School (Grades 7–8)

- Enrollment: 1,115
- School Rating: D
- ESSA Index Score: 55.9 (State avg: 66.74)
- Notable Data:
  - Consistently below state averages in ELA and Math across all subgroups
  - Particularly low performance among African-American students (ELA: 51.05%, state avg: 58.86%)
  - Economically disadvantaged students scored 55.92% in math (state avg: 63.38%)

North Little Rock High School (Grades 9–12)

- Enrollment: 1,949
- School Rating: D
- ESSA Index Score: 58.49 (State avg: 64.14)
- Notable Data:
  - The student population aligns closely with AOA's target demographic, including a high percentage of African-American and economically disadvantaged students.
  - African-American students underperform in math (52.16% vs. state avg: 55.27%) and in literacy as well.
  - White students outperform significantly in math (74.09%)—a 22-point difference from African-American students—revealing deep internal equity gaps.
  - Economically disadvantaged students also perform below the state average (58.68% vs. 61.24%).

Joe T. Robinson Middle School (Grades 6–8)

- Enrollment: 544
- School Rating: B
- ESSA Index Score: 73.06 (State avg: 66.74)
- Notable Data:
  - Above state averages in most categories
  - Low-income students performed well in math (73.07% vs. state avg: 63.38%)

Joe T. Robinson High School (Grades 9–12)

- Enrollment: 783

- School Rating: C
- ESSA Index Score: 65.7 (State avg: 64.14)
- Notable Data:
- Performance is average, with disparities among subgroups (e.g., lower ELA scores for African-American students: 55.27%)
- Economically disadvantaged students show below-average performance in both ELA and Math

eStem Junior High Charter School (Grades 7–9)

- Enrollment: 406
- School Rating: C
- ESSA Index Score: 67.93 (State avg: 66.74)
- Notable Data:
- Demographics align closely with Arkansas Outdoor Academy's target population
- African-American students underperform in math (61.91% vs. state avg: 70.27%)
- White students greatly outperform in math (89.62%) indicating internal equity gaps

The schools currently serving the Arkansas Outdoor Academy's target region display wide variation in both performance and demographics. North Little Rock Middle School and North Little Rock High School serve a high-need population but struggle to deliver strong academic outcomes, especially for students of color and those from low-income backgrounds. While performance is stronger here at Joe T. Robinson Middle School, the school population is more affluent and less racially diverse compared to other schools in the target area. At Joe T. Robinson High School academic performance is moderate and near the state average, but outcomes for minority and low-income students remain a concern. At eStem JH, they provide a valuable comparison for a charter model serving a majority underserved and economically disadvantaged student population. Still, academic equity remains a challenge, reinforcing the need for alternative strategies like experiential education and resilience training. Given the academic underperformance and socio-economic challenges in many local schools, Arkansas Outdoor Academy is well-positioned to serve as a transformative alternative. Its focus on outdoor, experiential learning and holistic development addresses gaps in traditional education systems, especially for students who may not thrive in conventional classroom settings. This approach can not only improve academic performance but also foster resilience, leadership, and a greater connection to learning for underserved youth. AOA will take advantage of the 67 different parks (local, state, national) all located in the central Arkansas region. The school will use the partnerships with local and state parks to bring students to all areas of the outdoors.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

Applicant Evidence :

PDF	PDF	PDF	PDF
NLRHS ESSA 22-23.PDF	NLRM ESSA 22-23.PDF	JTRHS ESSA 22-23.PDF	EStem JH ESSA 22-23.PDF
Uploaded on **6/4/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **6/4/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **6/4/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **6/4/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**
PDF	PDF	PDF	PDF
JTRM ESSA Report 22-2...	AOA Support Letter - M...	Letter of Support AOA -...	Letter of Support for A...
Uploaded on **6/4/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by **Christopher Horton**
PDF	PDF	🖼️	PDF
Parks in Central Arkans...	AOA Letter ADE - charle...	AOA Partnerships.png	AOALetterOfSupport - j...
Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/8/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/7/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **8/7/2025** by **Christopher Horton**
PDF	PDF	PDF	PDF
Letter of Support-S.R.-...	AOA Testimony- Vincen...	AOA - Gabrielle Poole.pdf	AOA testimonial - Mia ...
Uploaded on **8/8/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **8/8/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/8/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/8/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

Q11. B.3 Evidence of Need, Support, and Involvement Based on your outreach, research, and understanding of the community and the students you seek to serve, what are the main challenges to the student's success in the community you seek to serve? What does your proposed school intend to do to address these challenges?

Identified Challenges

Low Academic Performance Across Core Subjects

Students in schools such as North Little Rock Middle and High School, which serve a large portion of Arkansas Outdoor Academy's target population, consistently score below state averages in both English Language Arts and Math.

- NLR Middle: ELA score for African-American students is 51.05% (state avg: 58.86%); low-income students score 55.92% in math (state avg: 63.38%).
- NLR High: African-American students score 52.16% in math (state avg: 55.27%) and show broader underperformance in literacy.

Economic Disadvantage as a Barrier

Most students served by these schools face economic hardship.

- 74.8% of students at NLR Middle and 70.3% at NLR High are economically disadvantaged.
- These students often lack access to enriching, real-world learning experiences that extend and deepen traditional classroom instruction.

Racial and Equity Gaps in Outcomes

Achievement disparities between racial subgroups are pronounced.

- At eStem Junior High, white students score 89.62% in math, while African-American students score only 61.91%.
- At NLR High, the math performance gap between white and Black students is over 20 percentage points.

Limited Access to Experiential and Holistic Education

Traditional academic models in the region rarely integrate outdoor, project-based, or resilience-building approaches proven to improve engagement and achievement among underserved students. There is minimal integration of outdoor, project-based, or resilience building approaches proven to improve motivation and success among underserved populations.

Arkansas Outdoor Academy's Strategy for Change

Experiential, Outdoor-Based Learning

AOA will integrate place-based and project-based learning into all subjects, providing students with:

- Real-world applications in science, math, and literacy
- Weekly outdoor learning in natural environments and partner sites
- Environmental stewardship and field-based exploration to promote relevance and engagement

Resilience and Whole-Child Development

AOA will embed leadership development, resilience building, and trauma-informed practices into daily instruction:

- Students will maintain personalized Student Success Plans (SSPs) to guide academic and emotional growth
- Emphasis on empathy, goal-setting, reflection, and team collaboration

Equity-Focused Curriculum and Culture

To close opportunity gaps, AOA will:

- Implement culturally responsive teaching and curriculum design
- Recruit and train a diverse staff who reflect and represent the student body
- Foster a school culture where every student sees themselves as a valued learner and leader

Support Structures for Academic Growth

AOA will establish a robust Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), including:

- Targeted academic interventions and one-on-one support
- Regular progress monitoring and personalized learning
- Peer mentorship and structured advisory periods

Accessibility and Wraparound Support

Recognizing the daily challenges many families face, AOA will partner with local agencies to provide:

- Daily transportation
- Meals, snacks, and hydration support
- On-site counseling, wellness checks, and mental health services

Community Engagement and Demonstrated Demand

The vision for AOA will be shaped directly through community collaboration:

- Family surveys that indicate interest in outdoor learning, mental wellness, and college/career readiness as top priorities for students.
- The school will receive letters of support from local educators, nonprofit leaders, public officials, and workforce development partners.
- AOA maintains a strong and active advisory committee, which includes parents, teachers, and civic leaders from across Pulaski County.
- Outreach efforts have been focused on ensuring the proposed school reflects genuine community voice and interest.

End Goal

The systemic challenges facing students in Pulaski County, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged or historically underserved, require a bold and inclusive solution.

Arkansas Outdoor Academy will respond to this need with a holistic, equity-driven model that re-engages learners through rigorous academics, outdoor experiences, resilience-building, and whole-child support. In doing so, AOA will not only close academic gaps, but also cultivate confident, capable, and community-minded students who are equipped to lead in the classroom and beyond.

Q12. B.4 Evidence of Need, Support, and Involvement Explain the process for setting, monitoring, and revising performance expectations. In your response, include how the school will use data and how you would define success for the students and school.

Arkansas Outdoor Academy: Setting, Monitoring, and Revising Performance Expectations

Arkansas Outdoor Academy is committed to fostering student growth by implementing a comprehensive system for setting, monitoring, and revising performance expectations. This system incorporates academic, behavioral, and career readiness components using multiple data sources, including NWEA MAP, ATLAS, Student Success Plans, CTE pathway progress, and a behavioral data tracking platform.

Setting Performance Expectations

Academic Benchmarks

- Initial academic expectations are established using baseline data from NWEA MAP Growth and ATLAS assessments, setting personalized growth goals aligned to state standards.
- Teachers develop unit-level expectations that are both academically rigorous and tied to real-world applications, especially through project-based learning within CTE tracks.

Student Success Plans (SSPs)

- Every student has an individualized Student Success Plan, developed with the school counselor, which includes academic, social-emotional, and career goals. We will utilize data from students' prior tests results at their previous LEAs to ensure we are identifying needs early and with sufficient support to grow.
- These plans serve as a roadmap for each student's path through middle and high school and guide them toward a successful post-secondary future.

CTE Pathway Alignment

- Students select a CTE pathway as early as 8th grade. Expectations are defined for technical skills, workplace readiness, and career exploration milestones.
- Performance benchmarks include successful project completions, skill demonstrations, and work-based learning reflections.

Behavior and SEL Expectations

- The Academy will implement a behavioral data platform (such as *Educator's Handbook*, *Kickboard*, or *PBIS Rewards*) to track student behavior trends, SEL goals, and intervention efficacy.
- Behavioral expectations are taught, reinforced, and linked to leadership, teamwork, and resilience-building outcomes, which are central to the Academy's outdoor learning model.

Monitoring Progress

Academic and Career Monitoring

- Teachers and counselors review NWEA and ATLAS data quarterly to identify growth trends and inform instructional decisions.

- CTE progress is monitored via skill rubrics, project completion rates, and, where applicable, industry credential attainment.

Behavior and SEL Monitoring

- The behavioral data platform provides real-time tracking of:
  ○ Positive behavior reinforcement (e.g., leadership, collaboration)
  ○ Office discipline referrals and patterns
  ○ Tiered interventions and follow-up outcomes
- Counselors use this data to monitor trends across subgroups, tailor SEL interventions, and contribute data to SSP reviews.

Direct Counseling Services

- The counselor documents student check-ins, crisis interventions, group counseling sessions, and parent communications within the SSP framework.
- Academic and emotional interventions are aligned with behavior and assessment data to provide wraparound support.

Professional Collaboration

- Teachers meet regularly in PLCs to analyze both academic and behavioral data to adjust expectations and support for students needing interventions or enrichment.

Revising Expectations

Data-Driven Adjustments

- Expectations are revisited during mid-year and end-of-year data reviews and SSP conferences. Growth rates, skill mastery, behavioral incidents, and SEL progress all contribute to revisions.
- A drop in NWEA growth paired with an uptick in behavioral incidents, for instance, would trigger a more comprehensive intervention involving academic and emotional support.

Stakeholder Input

- Students revise their Student Success Plans with input from teachers, counselors, and families during student-led conferences or biannual reviews.
- The behavioral platform includes features for teacher comments and guardian communication, encouraging collaborative support.

Defining Success

For Students:

- Meeting or exceeding NWEA growth targets and state standards via ATLAS testing.
- Demonstrating mastery of CTE pathway skills and completion of a capstone or certification.

- Maintaining positive behavioral records, showing progress in resilience, collaboration, and emotional regulation.
- Actively using and revising their Student Success Plan as a tool for goal-setting and reflection.

For the School:

- Schoolwide growth in academic and behavioral metrics across subgroups.
- A decrease in behavioral referrals and an increase in positive behavior indicators.
- 100% of students engaged in CTE pathways and SSP development.
- Strong evidence of equity in access to academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports.
- Percentage of student population growth in a defined area of need for each fiscal year.

By combining academic data, behavioral analysis, career readiness, and personalized counseling, Arkansas Outdoor Academy ensures that every student receives the support they need to grow into capable, confident, and resilient learners, both in the classroom and beyond.

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**

Arkansas Department of Education

3. Academic Plan

Q13. A.1 Academic focus Describe and outline the proposed school's academic focus. Include specific academic benchmarks, educational philosophy, instructional methods, and innovations.

Arkansas Outdoor Academy will center its academic program around three career-aligned pathways:

1. **Outdoor Conservation Sciences**
2. **Outdoor Tourism and Recreation**
3. **Outdoor First Responders**

The school's academic philosophy is rooted in experiential, place-based learning, emphasizing resilience, leadership, and applied problem-solving. Instruction will be delivered through a dynamic structure where students spend 50% to 70% of their learning time outdoors. This includes outdoor science labs, expedition-based math applications, literacy tied to environmental themes, and interdisciplinary CTE experiences in natural settings.

Outdoor learning will be embedded into daily instruction, with students engaging in field-based applications of core subjects:

- Math may involve trail mapping, calculating slope and elevation, or analyzing statistical data from local ecosystems.
- ELA assignments include reflective journaling, persuasive writing on conservation issues, and oral storytelling around campfires.
- Science is conducted as ecological fieldwork, wildlife observation, and citizen science projects.
- Social studies is taught through exploration of indigenous lands, conservation policy simulations, and community history projects in nature.

Benefits include of outdoor learning:

- **Improved focus and attention**, particularly for students with ADHD or those who struggle in traditional classroom settings.
- **Increased academic performance** through real-world context that enhances comprehension and retention, especially in science and math.
- **Enhanced leadership development**, which supports self-regulation, communication, and collaborative learning, all essential for success in post-secondary life and careers.
- **Greater equity in engagement**, as many underserved students thrive in nontraditional, hands-on environments that emphasize teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving.

By prioritizing outdoor instruction 50–70% of the time, Arkansas Outdoor Academy not only supports state academic standards but also increases relevance, motivation, and real-world application, ensuring all students have access to rigorous, meaningful learning experiences that prepare them for careers and civic life.

Academic Benchmarks

To ensure academic rigor and track student growth, Arkansas Outdoor Academy will use:

- **NWEA MAP Growth**: Formative benchmark assessment for reading, math, and science

- **ATLAS Testing**: Standards-based performance monitoring
- **Capstone Projects**: Annual interdisciplinary assessments integrating academic and pathway-specific learning
- **Career Pathway Competencies**: CTE-aligned performance measures in technical skills, communication, and workplace readiness

Instructional Innovations

Arkansas Outdoor Academy's innovations include:

- **Field-based STEM instruction** across grades 6–12
- **Wilderness education and leadership expeditions** as a core component of instruction
- **Interdisciplinary CTE curriculum** tied directly to environmental, conservation, tourism, and emergency response careers

By integrating outdoor learning, CTE pathways, and academic rigor, the Arkansas Outdoor Academy model will transform traditional education into a purpose-driven, student-centered experience that prepares learners for the challenges of tomorrow.

Q14. **A.2 Academic focus Describe the school-wide, evidence-based plan that will drive academic improvement for all students and help close achievement gaps. Please provide any relevant research and evidence you used in developing the plan.**

Arkansas Outdoor Academy will implement a school-wide, multi-tiered academic improvement strategy that leverages outdoor learning, personalized support, and data-driven instruction to meet the diverse needs of all students. This model is intentionally designed to address opportunity and achievement gaps in a way that reflects both research and regional economic opportunity.

Tiered Instructional Support

- Using NWEA MAP Growth and ATLAS assessments, each student's progress is monitored and used to assign appropriate Tier 1, 2, or 3 interventions.
- Students below proficiency receive intensive support including targeted instruction, mentoring, and parent engagement.
- Students meeting or exceeding standards engage in pathway-specific enrichment such as project-based learning in environmental science, tourism economics, or emergency response scenarios.

Embedded Resilience and Leadership Building

- Daily leadership-building activities are embedded into advisory periods, outdoor teamwork activities, and wilderness challenges.
- Counselors help students set emotional and academic goals through Student Success Plans (SSPs), monitored in direct services.

Outdoor, Experiential Learning Environment (50–70%)

- Students learn in outdoor settings the majority of the time, allowing real-world application of academic skills.
- Outdoor learning supports engagement, mental health, and achievement, particularly for students from high-poverty backgrounds or with trauma histories.

Academic and Cognitive Gains

-

A 2015 national review of outdoor and experiential programs found statistically significant improvements in academic achievement, particularly in math, language arts, and science. In one California study of over 12,750 students, 42% of academic measures showed substantial gains.

-

Additionally:

o

92.5% of math assessments reported equal or improved outcomes

o

95% of language assessments showed similar gains

These results highlight the strong link between outdoor learning and academic growth, especially for students from high-poverty or trauma-affected backgrounds.

Specifically, one California study involving 12,750 students over five years showed significantly improved academic outcomes in 42% of academic measures and improvements across nearly all assessments.

- **Place-Based and Environmental Education Findings**

Studies in Washington, California, Alaska, and Louisiana consistently reported improved standardized test results in math and science when outdoor education was incorporated

- **Behavioral Gains**

CASEL-supported research combined with outdoor learning outcomes shows substantial gains in critical thinking, self-esteem, impulse control, and leadership, all linked to increased academic success

Economic and Career Relevance

- Arkansas' outdoor recreation sector contributes $7.3 billion annually to state GDP, supports over 68,000 jobs, and is growing across conservation, tourism, and emergency service industries.
- Arkansas Outdoor Academy will implement a school-wide academic strategy anchored in three career-aligned learning pathways: **Outdoor Conservation Sciences**, **Outdoor First Responders**, and **Outdoor Tourism and Recreation**. These pathways will shape enrichment experiences, capstone projects, and skill development for all students. The school's three pathways, are directly tied to this economic growth, ensuring students graduate with relevant skills and postsecondary opportunities.

This integrated approach is designed to directly address the gaps seen in local data, where schools serving Arkansas Outdoor Academy's target population, especially African-American and low-income students, show underperformance in math and literacy.

Why it works:

- **Outdoor, project-based learning** increases achievement for underperforming students by making content meaningful and applicable.
- **Data-driven MTSS systems** ensure timely academic interventions and prevent students from falling through the cracks.

Career-aligned pathways build intrinsic motivation, especially for students who struggle to see relevance in traditional academics.

Applicant Evidence :

MTSS Cente on Multi-ti...	Heartland Forward-GO...	CASEL-SEL-Framework-...	Empirical-Evidence-Sup...
Uploaded on **6/9/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **6/9/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **6/9/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **6/9/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

Q15. **A.3 Academic focus Describe the school's curriculum and discuss how it will prepare students to meet or exceed Arkansas standards.**
a. If the curriculum is fully developed, summarize curricular choices, and explain the rationale for selection. If the curriculum still needs to be fully developed, describe any curriculum decisions made to date, share any proposed curricular decisions that are pending, and explain the process for completion.
b. Provide evidence or documentation that the literacy curriculum chosen is based on the science of reading. Describe your strategy for students reading at or above grade level or higher and your strategy for students reading below grade level.

Arkansas Outdoor Academy's curriculum is grounded in Arkansas Academic Standards, enriched through outdoor, interdisciplinary, and experiential learning, and strategically aligned with three career and technical education (CTE) pathways:

1. **Outdoor Conservation Sciences**
2. **Outdoor Tourism and Recreation**
3. **Outdoor First Responders**

These pathways are integrated into the core curriculum across grades 6–12 and serve as a foundation for personalized learning, post-secondary preparation, and economic relevance.

CTE Integration:

Each student will choose a pathway by the end of 8th grade. These pathways are not separate from core instruction, but embedded across content areas and grade levels (6–9), ensuring students develop both academic mastery and workforce-ready skills. with electives and integrated projects that include but not limited to:

- **Outdoor Conservation Sciences**: Field botany, climate research, GIS mapping
- **Outdoor Tourism & Recreation**: Ecotourism planning, guest services, cultural geography
- **Outdoor First Responders**: Wilderness First Aid, basic EMS, emergency preparedness

These pathways are aligned with Arkansas' CTE frameworks and enhanced through partnerships with colleges such as:

- **University of Arkansas Monticello**
- **Arkansas Tech University**
- **Pulaski Tech**
- **Hendrix College**
- **National Park College**
- **Northwest Arkansas Community College**

Core Academic Instruction and Curriculum Design

All core content areas are fully aligned with Arkansas State Standards and structured to promote inquiry, problem-solving, collaboration, and application. Students will spend between 50% and 70% of instructional time outdoors, applying content knowledge in real-world and natural settings.

English Language Arts (ELA)

ELA instruction is grounded in the Science of Reading (SoR) and incorporates evidence-based practices across all grade levels. Students receive explicit, systematic instruction in:

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics

- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

Curricular tools under consideration include Fundations, Savvas, and Arkansas's RISE initiative (Reading Initiative for Student Excellence) for foundational literacy. For middle and upper grades, students will analyze environmental texts, write persuasive essays on conservation policy, maintain reflective journals, and publish outdoor-themed narratives.

Mathematics

Mathematics instruction balances conceptual understanding with real-world application. Students will:

- Calculate slope, area, and elevation in natural settings
- Graph ecological data from field studies
- Use statistical reasoning to analyze resource use and conservation efforts

Curriculum materials may include McGraw-Hill Math and technology-based supports such as Khan Academy and ALEKS to provide adaptive reinforcement and challenge.

Science

AOA's science program emphasizes hands-on, field-based learning in environmental and life sciences. Students will engage in:

- Water quality testing
- Longitudinal biodiversity and ecosystem tracking
- Simulations of conservation and climate challenges

Curriculum materials under consideration are Twig or Open SciEd. Units culminate in capstone field projects that integrate scientific research, data analysis, and public presentation.

Social Studies

Social studies at AOA explore how humans interact with the environment, history, and policy. Students will engage in:

- Place-based investigations of indigenous land use
- Policy simulations on natural resource management
- Outdoor civic projects aligned with Arkansas history and economics standards

Curriculum materials may include Traverse for an enhanced learning through high quality learning materials. Other platforms are being considered.

Curriculum Development Status

Developed:

- Grades 6–9: Complete Arkansas standards-aligned scope and sequence in all core subjects
- CTE Pathway Units: Embedded labs, outdoor field experiences, and project-based performance tasks

In Progress:

- Project-based learning modules and interdisciplinary capstone experiences for grades 10–12
- Finalizing dual credit alignment and college articulation agreements

Completion Process:

- Curriculum development is a collaborative effort between:

  ○ Licensed Arkansas teachers
  ○ College faculty from partner institutions (e.g., UA Monticello, Arkansas Tech, Pulaski Tech, Hendrix College, National Park College)
  ○ Outdoor and experiential learning specialists

- Teacher Summer Institutes will pilot interdisciplinary units and finalize curriculum frameworks prior to launch.

Supports for Struggling Students

AOA will implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) that is integrated into the school's schedule and staffing structure:

- **Daily Intervention Blocks:** Dedicated time for targeted support without removing students from core content
- **Structured Literacy Interventions:** Programs like REWARDS, Read 180, and Corrective Reading will support students below grade level
- **Small Group Math Recovery:** Hands-on tools, tech-based practice, and real-world applications will be used in small group settings
- **Outdoor Coaching:** Resilience building will be integrated for students needing sensory, behavioral, or engagement support in nature-based settings

All interventions will be tracked through a collaborative case management model involving instructional staff, specialists, and counselors.

Science of Reading and Literacy Strategy

AOA's literacy approach is fully aligned with the Science of Reading. Instruction is sequenced developmentally and reinforced through:

For Students Reading Below Grade Level:

- Phonics and decoding instruction using SoR-based tools

- Literacy specialists assigned to Tier II and Tier III students
- Integration of high-interest, culturally relevant, outdoor texts to increase motivation and persistence
- Close monitoring through reading screeners and small group adjustments

For Students Reading At or Above Grade Level:

- Advanced text analysis using environmental literature and scientific nonfiction
- Enrichment through publishing, public presentation, and student-led reading groups
- Participation in dual credit and college-level outdoor policy projects

Academic Monitoring and Assessment Strategy

AOA will implement a comprehensive, multi-layered assessment system to ensure student growth and instructional alignment:

- **NWEA MAP Growth (Fall, Winter, Spring):** Benchmarks for reading, math, and science
- **ATLAS Interim Assessments:** Aligned to Arkansas standards, administered quarterly
- **Curriculum-Based Assessments :** Administered every 3–4 weeks to track unit mastery
- **Capstone Rubrics:** Used in grades 8–12 to assess interdisciplinary performance tasks
- **Fluency Monitoring Tools**: Tools like Acadience will identify reading gaps early
- **Weekly Exit Tickets and Journaling:** Field reflections used to assess engagement and content retention

Assessment data will be reviewed monthly by grade-level PLCs to inform re-teaching, flexible grouping, and instructional refinement.

Time Allocations and Instructional Balance

- 100-minute blocks allow for deep engagement with content and integrated project time
- 50–70% outdoor instruction offers physical movement, nature-based inquiry, and application
- Daily Seminar (45 minutes): Academic advising, Resiliency lessons, and leadership development
- Weekly Flex Time: For intervention, enrichment, career pathway exposure, and student-led project.

Arkansas Outdoor Academy offers a comprehensive, rigorous, and responsive academic model that prioritizes Arkansas standards, student engagement, and equitable outcomes. Through its unique integration of outdoor education, Science of Reading practices, personalized interventions, and career-aligned pathways, AOA is designed to meet students where they are and elevate them to where they aspire to be. The attached curriculum documentation provides further detail on scope, sequence, and alignment, and AOA is well-positioned to launch a high-performing school that reimagines what success can look like for every student.

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

Applicant Evidence :

📄 PDF	📄 PDF	📄 PDF	📄 PDF
6th-9th Sample Curricu...	6th-9th Sample Curricu...	6th-9th Sample Curricu...	6th-9th Sample Curricu...

Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**   Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**   Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**   Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

📄 PDF	📄 PDF	📄 PDF	📄 PDF
AOA Updated Year Lon...	AOA Updated Year Lon...	AOA Updated Year Lon...	AOA Updated Year Lon...

Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**   Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**   Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**   Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

📄 PDF	📄 PDF	📄 PDF	📄 PDF
Copy of Advanced_8th_...	Copy of Advanced_8th_...	Copy of Advanced_8th_...	Sample Core Subject Le...

Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**   Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**   Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**   Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

📄 PDF	📄 PDF
Sample Core Subject Le...	Sample Core Subject Le...

Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**   Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

Q16. **A.4 Academic focus Describe the professional learning opportunities and support provided to educators to implement the described academic plan.**

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy is committed to providing robust, ongoing professional learning opportunities that empower educators to implement the school's innovative academic plan with excellence and confidence. Professional development is intentionally aligned with the Academy's instructional priorities: outdoor education, interdisciplinary learning, career readiness, and student well-being.

Professional Learning Focus Areas

1. **Outdoor and Experiential Education Strategies**

Teachers will receive specialized training in designing and delivering high-quality experiential learning experiences. This includes:

- Outdoor classroom management
- Field-based instruction techniques
- Safety and logistics for expeditions
- Integrating academic content into nature-based settings

2. **Data-Driven Instruction Using NWEA and ATLAS**

Educators will be trained to use NWEA MAP Growth assessments and the ATLAS data system to:

- Monitor student growth and achievement
- Identify students in need of intervention or acceleration
- Adjust instructional practices based on real-time data

3. **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Alignment and Certification**

Teachers involved in the CTE pathways will receive targeted professional development to:

- Align instruction with Arkansas's CTE frameworks and industry standards
- Prepare for and maintain required CTE teaching certifications
- Integrate technical skills into interdisciplinary and project-based learning

4. **Resilience and Leadership Integration**

Educators will be trained to embed resilience-building strategies into daily instruction and advisory periods. This includes:

- Trauma-informed teaching practices
- Conflict resolution and restorative practices
- Support for student goal-setting and self-regulation

Ongoing Support Structures

- **Bi-weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**

Every other week, teachers will engage in PLCs focused on continuous improvement. PLCs will:

- Analyze student data and growth metrics
- Share and refine instructional strategies
- Collaboratively plan interdisciplinary units and field-based experiences

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

- ○ Review outcomes from expeditionary learning and adjust upcoming plans

- **Instructional Coaching and Mentorship**

Teachers will receive coaching from post-secondary faculty and industry professionals connected to the school's three career pathways:
- ○ **Outdoor Conservation Sciences**
- ○ **Outdoor Tourism & Recreation**
- ○ **Outdoor First Responders**

This coaching model ensures that teachers stay connected to evolving best practices in both education and workforce sectors.

Q17. **A.5 Academic focus Explain the proposed master schedule. Describe why this schedule will be optimal for student learning. Summarize how the school will plan time for teacher development, tiered interventions, enrichment, tutoring, acceleration, and other academic activities.**

The master schedule is designed around extended learning blocks, alternating indoor academic classes with dedicated outdoor instructional periods.

Key Features:

- **Double blocks** for science and math to allow for field work and lab investigations.
- **Advisory periods**: Used for SSP check-ins, SEL lessons, and academic reflection.
- **CTE rotations** beginning in 6th grade, leading to pathway specialization in 8th grade.
- **Embedded intervention/enrichment periods** to deliver MTSS-aligned academic and behavioral supports.
- **Dedicated PLC and professional learning time**

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy's proposed master schedule is designed to optimize student learning by combining extended academic blocks, daily outdoor education, and targeted support systems, all within a four-day instructional week (Tuesday–Friday). This innovative structure balances academic excellence with experiential learning, staff collaboration, and student wellness.

Why This Schedule is Optimal for Student Learning

1. Extended Learning Blocks for Core Subjects

Double blocks for science and math provide the necessary time for deep inquiry, hands-on labs, and outdoor field investigations. These extended periods reduce transition loss and enable students to meaningfully connect academic content with real-world application.

2. Integrated Outdoor Learning

By alternating indoor academics with outdoor instructional time, the schedule maintains high student engagement and supports physical and mental well-being. Outdoor learning reinforces academic content through practical exploration and supports the school's focus on environmental leadership and stewardship.

3. Advisory for Resilience and Reflection

Daily advisory periods allow for:

- Student Success Planning (SSP) check-ins
- Resilience and leadership development
- Academic goal-setting and reflection

These sessions foster strong student-teacher relationships and support holistic development.

4. Early and Progressive CTE Exposure

Beginning in 6th grade, students rotate through Career and Technical Education (CTE) experiences before selecting a pathway in 8th grade. This early exposure helps students explore interests and builds toward meaningful specialization aligned with outdoor careers and Arkansas workforce needs.

5. Embedded MTSS Supports

The schedule includes dedicated intervention/enrichment blocks to deliver academic and behavioral support using a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). These blocks ensure that all students—whether needing remediation, enrichment, or acceleration—receive the attention they need without missing core instruction.

Sample Weekly Structure:

- Tuesday-Friday: Academic core, outdoor learning block, pathway-specific project time

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

Arkansas Department of Education

- Monday: Teacher PD, enrichment or intervention, expedition prep

Applicant Evidence :
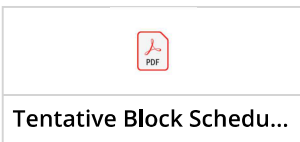
PDF	PDF	PDF
Tentative Block Schedu...	6th-9th Grade Weekly S...	Example of Teacher ind...
Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by **Christopher Horton**
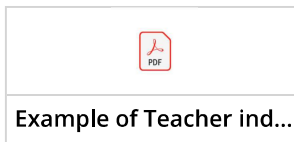
Q18. A.6 Academic focus Upload a copy of the proposed annual academic calendar and proposed master schedule.

☑ Upload Required   **File Type:** pdf, excel, word   **Max File Size:** 30   **Total Files Count:** 10

Applicant Evidence :

PDF	PDF
AOA Academic Calenda...	AOA Academic Calenda...
Uploaded on **6/9/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **6/9/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

Q19. B.1 Academic Performance Explain the process for setting, monitoring, and revising academic performance Include in your response how the proposed school will use data to improve instruction, inform professional development, and evaluate curriculum.

Setting Academic Goals

Academic performance goals are established through a combination of diagnostic assessments, standards alignment, and personalized planning:

- **Baseline Assessments:** Students begin each year with NWEA MAP Growth and ATLAS assessments (interim and summative) to establish academic baselines in core content areas.
- **Personalized Growth Targets:** Using these baselines, students receive individualized growth targets that are reviewed and refined throughout the year. These goals become central to each student's Student Success Plan (SSP).
- **Standards-Based Instructional Planning:** Instructional goals and curriculum pacing are explicitly aligned with Arkansas Academic Standards and ATLAS benchmarks, ensuring statewide consistency and rigor.

Monitoring Academic Progress

AOA uses a multi-tiered, collaborative approach to track academic and behavioral progress:

- **Monthly Data Team Meetings:** Teachers, counselors, and administrators convene in monthly data teams to analyze:
  - NWEA MAP and ATLAS data trends
  - Behavioral and attendance patterns
  - Progress on SSPs
- **Semester SSP Reviews:** Students engage in student-led conferences each semester to update their SSPs, reflect on progress, and set revised academic and leadership goals.
- **Formative Assessment Cycles:** Frequent classroom-based assessments help teachers monitor understanding and make in-the-moment instructional adjustments.

Revising Academic and Instructional Plans

Based on ongoing data analysis, the academy actively adjusts curriculum, instruction, and support strategies:

- **Quarterly Curriculum Adjustments:** Core content curriculum is reviewed and adjusted every quarter based on classroom data, NWEA MAP/ATLAS results, and feedback from PLCs.
- **Quarterly Intervention Revisions:** Academic and behavioral interventions are reviewed and modified every 9 weeks to respond to student progress or lack thereof, ensuring that MTSS supports are responsive and targeted.
- **Flexible Grouping:** Formative data is used by PLCs to regroup students as needed for reteaching, enrichment, or accelerated instruction.

Using Data to Improve Instruction and Professional Development

AOA ensures that instructional quality and educator growth are aligned with student needs:

- **Instructional Refinement:** Data collected from NWEA MAP, ATLAS, and classroom assessments are used by PLCs to adjust lesson plans, scaffold instruction, and differentiate teaching strategies.

- **PD Aligned to Data Trends:** Professional development topics are strategically chosen based on academic trends and student performance. For example, if data indicates low performance in reading comprehension, targeted literacy training is offered.
- **Instructional Coaching:** Coaches and mentors use student data to provide personalized support and feedback to teachers, especially in the CTE pathways and outdoor experiential learning settings.

Curriculum Evaluation and Post-Secondary Relevance

To ensure long-term student success, AOA reviews and refines its curriculum annually:

- **Annual Curriculum Review:** A structured annual process evaluates:
  - Standards alignment
  - Instructional effectiveness
  - Integration of outdoor and experiential components

Industry and College Partner Feedback: Feedback from post-secondary and industry partners in the school's CTE pathways is used to assess the relevance of curriculum content and make adjustments that enhance real-world and workforce readiness.

Q20. B.2 Academic Performance Describe the grade-level promotion/retention policies for students.

Promotion

Students are promoted to the next grade level based on a comprehensive evaluation of progress, not just test scores. Key factors include:

- **Mastery of Grade-Level Standards**

Students must demonstrate proficiency in core subjects, as measured by:

  ○ NWEA MAP Growth and ATLAS assessment results
  ○ Course grades and classroom performance
  ○ Evidence of applied learning in outdoor and interdisciplinary projects
- **Completion of Student Success Plan (SSP) Milestones**

Each student is expected to make consistent progress toward academic, leadership, and resilience goals outlined in their SSP, reviewed biannually during student-led conferences.

- **Demonstrated Growth**

Promotion also considers measurable growth, particularly in areas of:

  ○ Academic achievement
  ○ Resilience indicators
  ○ Leadership development
  ○ Development of soft skills
  ○ Completed grade level milestones in outdoor performance

Retention

Retention is viewed as a last-resort option and is only considered after a thorough, collaborative process:

- **Documented Interventions**

Students must have received targeted academic and behavioral interventions through the school's MTSS framework before retention is considered.

- **Family Involvement**

Parents/guardians are actively engaged throughout the process. Regular communication, planning meetings, and progress reviews ensure shared decision-making.

- **Formal RTI/MTSS Review**

The RTI/MTSS team conducts a formal, case-by-case review that considers:

  ○ Academic achievement data
  ○ Behavioral and attendance records
  ○ Resilience and leadership milestone indicators
  ○ Readiness for grade level responsibilities and independence
  ○ Skill level for grade level milestones

Support for Students at Risk of Retention

To prevent retention and accelerate progress, Arkansas Outdoor Academy offers comprehensive support for struggling students:

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

- **Extended Learning Opportunities**

Students may be enrolled in:

○ Summer learning programs focused on core subject recovery
○ After-school tutoring
○ Weekend academic intensives when appropriate

- **Counseling and Mentoring Services**

Specialists and school counselors provide individualized support to address underlying barriers to learning such as trauma, anxiety, or disengagement.

Custom Learning Recovery Plans

At-risk students receive personalized learning recovery plans aligned with their SSP. These plans outline specific academic goals, timelines, interventions, and supports tailored to their needs and skill levels.

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

4. Student Services and Special Populations

Q21.

**A.1 Explain the proposed charter school's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) or similar
intervention service models. Please include a description of the model, data, and components that
will help ensure students receive high-quality instruction.**

MTSS Framework Overview

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy's MTSS model combines data-driven instruction, targeted interventions, and outdoor experiential learning to support all students. With tiered services and continuous monitoring, AOA ensures personalized support across academic, behavioral, and emotional domains, empowering every learner to grow as a resilient, confident, and capable leader.

Tier 1: Universal Supports

All students receive high-quality instruction grounded in Arkansas standards and enriched through outdoor, inquiry-based learning. Supports at this level include:

- **Rigorous Core Instruction:** Delivered through experiential education, interdisciplinary units, and project-based learning outdoors.
- **Differentiation:** Teachers adapt content, process, and products to meet diverse learning needs and styles.
- **Clear Behavioral Expectations:** Modeled and reinforced through the school's outdoor adventure and leadership programs.
- **Data Collection:** Ongoing formative assessments, observational data, and performance tasks (including outdoor projects) guide instruction.

Tier 2: Targeted Supports

Students identified through data review as needing additional support receive focused interventions:

- **Small Group Instruction:** Targeted reading, math, or behavioral interventions conducted indoors and outdoors.
- **Outdoor Resilience and Leadership Activities:** Team-building, nature walks, and cooperative outdoor games to build social-emotional competencies.
- **Periodic Monitoring:** Student progress is reviewed, and interventions are adjusted based on outcomes.

Tier 3: Intensive Supports

Students who continue to struggle receive highly personalized services:

- **One-on-One Support:** Individualized tutoring, counseling, and academic coaching.
- **IEPs and 504 Plans:** Students with disabilities receive tailored supports aligned to legal requirements and learning profiles.
- **Frequent Monitoring:** Frequent data checks ensure interventions are responsive and effective.

Data Collection and Monitoring

The effectiveness of MTSS at AOA relies on comprehensive, continuous data monitoring across multiple domains:

- **Academic Data:** NWEA MAP scores, ATLAS benchmarks, course performance, project outcomes.

- **Behavioral Data:** Attendance records, behavior logs, restorative justice outcomes, classroom observations.
- **Social-Emotional Data:** SEL assessments, student self-reflections, peer feedback, SSP progress reviews.

Data is reviewed:

- Monthly by data teams (educators, counselors, and administrators)
- Frequently for intervention updates
- Annually for curriculum and schoolwide planning

High-Quality Instructional Components

To ensure equity and excellence for all learners, AOA's MTSS model includes several core instructional elements:

- **Outdoor and Experiential Learning:** Students engage in real-world applications of academic concepts, e.g., measuring water quality in science, calculating trail distances in math, or writing persuasive letters to local officials in ELA.
- **Teacher Collaboration and PLCs:** Educators meet bi-weekly in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to:
  o Review data
  o Plan interdisciplinary units
  o Adjust instruction
Share best practices and intervention strategies
- **Ongoing Professional Development:** Training is aligned to data trends and includes:
  o MTSS implementation
  o Outdoor instruction strategies
  o Data analysis using NWEA and ATLAS
  o SEL and trauma-informed practices

Family and Community Engagement

Key partnerships:

- **Family Involvement:** Parents are engaged through regular updates, student-led conferences, and participation in SSP planning and revision.
- **Community Partnerships:** Local organizations support outdoor programming and help deliver mentorship, enrichment, and real-world learning extensions.

Ensuring Student Success

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy's MTSS model ensures that:

- Every student has access to timely, appropriate supports
- Instruction is personalized and data-informed
- Outdoor learning enhances engagement, motivation, and resilience
- Teachers are supported through ongoing coaching, collaboration, and PD

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

Q22.

A.2 Describe how the charter school intends to identify, evaluate, and appropriately place exceptional students with disabilities in the most appropriate educational setting.

Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) is committed to identifying, evaluating, and appropriately placing students with disabilities in the most inclusive and effective learning environments. The school will ensure that all special education (SPED) services are delivered in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Arkansas Department of Education guidelines. AOA's educational model integrates inclusive practices into both indoor and outdoor learning spaces, ensuring that students with exceptional needs have full access to meaningful instruction and support.

Staffing and Oversight

Year 1 Student Service Team Overview

- A full-time Special Education Coordinator to oversee evaluations, IEP development, compliance, and service delivery
- SPED teachers for push-in and pull-out instruction and co-teaching
- An ELL/ESL Specialist to support English learners with WIDA-aligned strategies
- A Gifted & Talented Liaison to help implement differentiated instruction and ILPs
- Paraprofessionals to support mobility, behavior, and Tier 2/3 interventions
- Mental health and counseling staff to deliver trauma-informed care

Identification and Evaluation

AOA will use a proactive Child Find process to locate and identify students with disabilities through:

- Universal screening at enrollment and throughout the year
- A formal referral system that allows teachers, parents, or staff to initiate evaluations
- Collaboration with early childhood agencies to support smooth transitions
- Clear, multilingual family communication to ensure accessibility

Evaluations will follow Arkansas timelines:

- **10 days** to develop an evaluation plan after referral
- **60 days** to complete the evaluation
- **30 days** to convene the IEP team if the student qualifies

IEP Development and Placement

IEPs will be developed for eligible students with supports tailored to both academic and outdoor learning environments. These may include:

- Outdoor-specific accommodations (mobility tools, sensory supports)
- Instructional modifications (visual aids, chunking)
- Related services (speech, OT/PT, counseling) adapted to natural settings

AOA will educate students in the least restrictive environment (LRE), using general education with accommodations, push-in support, pull-out services when necessary, and specialized outdoor instruction when required.

MTSS and Referrals

AOA's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) will never delay or replace the special education referral process. Staff will be trained to recognize when formal evaluation is warranted, regardless of intervention tier.

Delivery of Related Services

Related services will be delivered through licensed staff and local partnerships, including:

- Speech and language therapy
- Occupational and physical therapy
- Mental health counseling

All services will be tracked using a SPED management system, with consistent documentation of minutes, goals, and progress.

Support for Complex Needs

Students with intensive needs will receive:

- 1:1 or 2:1 staffing when needed
- Individualized safety or behavior plans
- Access to ADA-compliant and sensory-sensitive outdoor spaces
- Daily SEL check-ins and coaching

Family Engagement and Compliance

AOA will include families at every stage and provide procedural safeguards in the family's preferred language. The SPED Coordinator will lead compliance monitoring, conduct internal audits, and provide updates to the governing board.

Note: Full details, including timelines, staffing, services, and compliance procedures, are outlined in the attached document. File-(Student Services Q22_Full Response)

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

Applicant Evidence :

PDF	PDF
ar-child-find-resource-g...	Student Services Q22_ ...
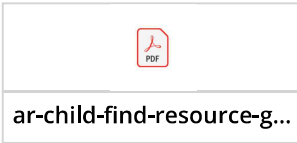
Uploaded on **6/10/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**
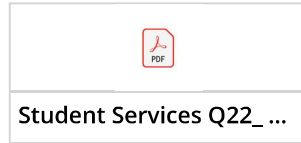
Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**

Q23.

A.3 Describe how the school will meet the needs of English Language Learners (ELL). Include the procedures that will be utilized for identifying students, ensuring that they have equitable access to the school's programming, and engaging with their families.

Identification of ELL Students

AOA will follow a comprehensive, state-aligned process for identifying students who need English language support:

- **Home Language Survey (HLS):** Completed at enrollment to identify students who speak a language other than English at home.
- **Language Proficiency Screening:** Students flagged through the HLS will complete a state-approved assessment.
- **ELL Team Review:** An ELL coordinator and teachers will determine service eligibility and communicate results and next steps with families.

Access to Programming

Once identified, ELL students will have full access to all academic, outdoor, and enrichment activities through:

- **Sheltered Instruction:** Teachers will use visuals, modeling, and hands-on demonstrations to support language and content understanding during both indoor and outdoor instruction.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** Lessons will be scaffolded for various English proficiency levels, including small-group discussions and nature-based storytelling.
- **Outdoor Language Development:** Students will practice language skills through descriptive writing, group projects, and observation journals in natural settings.
- **ELD Services:** Students will receive explicit English Language Development (ELD) instruction, tailored to their proficiency level and aligned with outdoor curriculum themes.
- **Push-in/Pull-out Support:** ESL specialists will provide targeted services as needed.
- **Bilingual Resources:** Materials in students' native languages will supplement instruction when appropriate.

Family Engagement

AOA will actively involve families of ELL students through:

- **Translation and Interpretation:** Key documents will be translated, and interpreters will be available for meetings and conferences.
- **Family Liaison:** A designated staff member will assist families in navigating school systems and accessing resources.
- **Parent Workshops:** Sessions on language development, academic support, and outdoor learning will help families support their children.
- **Community Events:** Outdoor days, cultural celebrations, and school gatherings will foster school-home connections.
- **Regular Communication:** Teachers will provide updates on academic and language progress and welcome feedback through conferences, surveys, and family meetings.

Professional Development

Teachers will receive training in:

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

___

- Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Sheltered Instruction and Differentiation for ELLs
- Adapting Outdoor Learning for Language Acquisition

Monitoring and Support

- **Language Progress:** Regular assessments will track English proficiency growth.
- **Academic Monitoring:** Instruction will be adjusted based on ongoing academic performance data.

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) is committed to ensuring English Language Learners (ELLs) have equitable access to a high-quality education through its outdoor, experiential learning model. AOA values the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds ELL students bring and aims to create a supportive, inclusive environment that fosters academic and leadership growth.

Q24.

A.4 Describe how the school will meet the needs of gifted and talented students. Include the procedures that will be utilized for identifying students, ensuring that they have equitable access to the school's programming, and engaging with their families.

Meeting the Needs of Gifted and Talented Students

At the Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA), we are committed to identifying and supporting gifted and talented (GT) students through a comprehensive, inclusive, and nature-integrated approach. Our outdoor learning model provides rich opportunities for challenge, leadership, creativity, and advanced academic engagement tailored to individual strengths.

Identification of Gifted and Talented Students

AOA uses a multi-faceted identification process that includes:

- **Universal Screening:** All students are screened annually using state-approved tools measuring academic achievement, creativity, and problem-solving skills, with a focus on cultural and linguistic fairness.
- **Teacher Recommendations:** Staff are trained to identify giftedness, especially as demonstrated through outdoor projects, leadership in group activities, and innovative thinking.
- **Parent and Peer Input:** Families may nominate students, and peer insights may inform identification, especially in collaborative outdoor tasks.
- **Performance and Observation Data:** Teachers observe students during outdoor inquiry, writing, or project-based tasks to identify advanced thinking or leadership.
- **Multiple Measures and Equity:** A variety of tools—including creativity tests and performance tasks—ensure a broad, inclusive understanding of giftedness, with proactive efforts to include underrepresented groups.

Equitable Access to Programming

AOA ensures gifted students access enriched experiences through:

- **Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs):** Each student has a plan with academic and personal goals, created in collaboration with families and teachers.
- **Tiered Curriculum:** Curriculum is designed at varying levels of complexity, allowing gifted students to lead projects, conduct research, or present findings within outdoor studies.
- **Acceleration and Enrichment:** Gifted students may explore advanced content, complete independent studies, or lead outdoor-based initiatives (e.g., ecology projects or wilderness survival).
- **Flexible Grouping:** Students engage in both mixed-ability and peer-alike groups through outdoor challenges and academic collaboration.
- **Outdoor Integration:** Gifted learners may be mentored by staff or community experts in environmental research, creative writing, or conservation. Opportunities include inquiry-based investigations, leadership in outdoor expeditions, and artistic expression through nature-based projects.

Family Engagement

AOA views families as essential partners in gifted education:

- **Progress Communication:** Families receive regular updates, ILP reviews, and meet twice a year to discuss growth.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER

SCHOOL APPLICATION

Arkansas Department of Education

- **Parent Workshops:** Workshops will offer strategies for supporting creativity and resilience at home, and understanding gifted education in outdoor contexts.
- **Collaborative Goal Setting:** Families will help shape long-term learning goals, including project ideas and outdoor leadership roles.
- **Community Building:** Parent support groups will share resources, collaborate on enrichment events, and celebrate student achievements through showcases and community presentations.

Professional Development

AOA educators will receive training in:

- Gifted Instructional Strategies
- Outdoor Enrichment for Gifted Learners
- Emotional literacy and development needs of Gifted Students

Q25.

A.5 Describe how the school will meet the needs of students at risk of academic failure. Include the procedures that will be utilized for identifying students, ensuring that they have equitable access to the school's programming, and engaging with their families.

Identification of At-Risk Students

AOA will identify at-risk students through a continuous, multi-source process:

- **Academic Screening:** All students will complete diagnostic assessments in core subjects to establish baseline performance.
- **Behavioral and Engagement Indicators:** Attendance, disciplinary data, and disengagement from outdoor or group activities will be monitored.
- **Teacher Observation:** Educators will observe student performance and participation in both classroom and outdoor settings.
- **Parent Input:** Families may share relevant insights into external factors impacting learning.

Equitable Access to Support and Programming

Students identified as at risk will have full access to both academic and enrichment programming, including outdoor learning.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

- **Tier 1 – Universal Supports:**
High-quality, standards-aligned instruction, SEL integration, culturally responsive teaching, and daily outdoor learning for all students.
- **Tier 2 – Targeted Interventions:**
Small-group instruction, outdoor-based interventions, behavior plans, and staff/community mentorships.
- **Tier 3 – Intensive Individualized Support:**
One-on-one tutoring, trauma-informed counseling, custom learning projects, and individualized success plans created in collaboration with families and specialists.

Inclusive Practices

Instruction will be culturally and linguistically responsive. Materials will be available in multiple languages, and outdoor activities will support students with varied learning needs, offering opportunities to excel in non-traditional environments.

Family Engagement and Support

AOA will actively involve families of at-risk students through:

- **Early, Consistent Communication:** Staff will promptly notify families when students are identified as at risk and collaborate on next steps.
- **Multilingual Outreach:** Communication will be accessible and culturally sensitive.
- **Family Meetings:** Individualized sessions will include collaborative planning, goal-setting, and follow-up.
- **Workshops and Resources:** Sessions on homework strategies, student wellness, and school navigation will be offered.

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

- **Outdoor Family Events:** Activities such as hikes, garden days, and nature projects will encourage connection and shared learning.
- **Community Partnerships:** AOA will coordinate with organizations offering mental health services, tutoring, and basic needs support.

Monitoring Academic and SEL Progress

- **Academic Tracking:** Benchmark data, classroom performance, and outdoor project outcomes will be reviewed every 6–8 weeks.
- **Behavior and SEL Tracking:** SEL screeners and behavioral logs will guide support plans.
- **Data Teams:** A dedicated MTSS/Data Team will review student progress and adjust interventions.

Leveraging Outdoor Learning for At-Risk Students

AOA will use outdoor education to re-engage students through:

- Nature-based hands-on learning to improve focus and motivation.
- Team-building and leadership tasks to foster collaboration and self-regulation.
- Therapeutic outdoor activities like mindfulness and journaling.
- Student-driven projects that promote voice, choice, and ownership.

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) is committed to supporting students at risk of academic failure through a comprehensive, data-informed approach that integrates personalized interventions with the school's outdoor and experiential learning model. The goal is to re-engage students, build confidence, and promote success across academic, behavioral, and social-emotional domains.

Q26.

A.6 As required by Ark. Code Ann. §6-41-603, all charter schools are required to screen every student in kindergarten through grade 3 (K-3) and those in grades 3-12 who experience difficulty with fluency using a high-quality, evidence-based screener approved by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. Screeners should use the Arkansas Literacy screening assessment in their evaluation. In addition to the screening requirements, describe how the school will provide literacy intervention and dyslexia services for identified students.

Literacy Screening for Grades 6–12

While universal screening is required in K–3, AOA will screen students in grades 6–12 who show signs of reading difficulty using state-approved tools such as AIMSweb Plus, Acadience Reading, or Reading Inventory.

- **Initial Screening:** All incoming students will be screened at the start of the year to establish a fluency baseline.
- **Ongoing Monitoring:** Teachers will refer students demonstrating reading struggles for further screening throughout the year.
- Screenings will be administered by trained staff under the guidance of the literacy intervention coordinator.

Dyslexia Screening and Identification

Students flagged through fluency screeners will be evaluated using the Arkansas Dyslexia Screening Protocol.

- If risk factors for dyslexia are identified, families will be notified, and students will receive interventions aligned with the Arkansas Dyslexia Resource Guide.
- Documentation and communication will meet all state compliance requirements.

Tiered Literacy and Dyslexia Interventions

AOA will implement a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for literacy intervention:

Tier 1 – Core Instruction (All Students):

- Literacy strategies integrated across content areas (e.g., vocabulary, comprehension, writing).
- Use of authentic, outdoor-themed texts and writing tasks tied to environmental learning.
- Daily journaling, nature writing, and reading in outdoor settings to improve fluency and engagement.

Tier 2 – Targeted Support (Small Groups):

- Evidence-based programs such as Read 180 or Rewards.
- Outdoor collaborative literacy projects to reinforce reading comprehension and language skills.
- Focused support on fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Tier 3 – Intensive Interventions (Individualized):

- Structured, multisensory programs like Wilson, Orton-Gillingham, or Barton, delivered by trained interventionists.
- Frequent progress monitoring (every 2–3 weeks).
- Pull-out or embedded sessions tailored to student needs and strengths.

Literacy in Outdoor Learning

AOA will integrate reading and writing in natural settings:

- **Nature-Based Writing:** Students write narratives, reports, and reflections on outdoor experiences.

- **Environmental Literacy Projects:** Reading and research tasks tied to sustainability, ecology, and conservation.
- **Outdoor Reading Circles:** Group discussions to reduce anxiety and build fluency.

Family Engagement

- Parents will be promptly informed of screening results and plans.
- Workshops will offer tools to support reading and dyslexia accommodations at home.
- Family literacy events in outdoor settings will showcase student progress.

Staff Development and Monitoring

- Teachers will be trained in the Science of Reading, dyslexia identification, and outdoor-integrated literacy strategies.
- All screening results, interventions, and progress will be documented and shared regularly with families.

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) will fully comply with Ark. Code Ann. §6-41-603 by implementing a high-quality, evidence-based screening process and targeted literacy interventions for students in grades 6–12 experiencing difficulty with fluency. Through its outdoor, experiential learning model, AOA will create engaging, personalized pathways to build reading skills and confidence, especially for students with dyslexia or other reading challenges.

Applicant Evidence :

PDF
DRG-App-I-TOC_202109...

Uploaded on **6/10/2025**
by **Teal Lovelady**

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

5. School Climate

Q27. **A.1 Describe the intended school climate/environment. Explain how that climate will promote a positive academic environment and reinforce student intellectual and social development.**
a. Include in your explanation how the climate for students, teachers, administrators, and parents will be established.
b. Include in your explanation how the school climate will be supportive of students with a variety of needs, including students receiving special education services, English language learners, gifted and talented students, and students who are at risk of academic failure.

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) is designed to cultivate a positive, inclusive, and growth-oriented school climate where students, educators, administrators, and families thrive together. Rooted in experiential, outdoor education, the school will provide a physically and emotionally safe environment that promotes academic achievement, social development, personal growth, and strong community connections.

Promoting a Positive Academic Environment

Safe, Inclusive Physical Environment:

AOA's learning spaces, both indoor and outdoor, will be thoughtfully designed to promote creativity, exploration, and collaboration. Classrooms will feature flexible seating, learning stations, and natural light, while outdoor areas will include gardens, trails, and shelters designed for instruction, reflection, and play. All facilities will be ADA-compliant and intentionally inclusive to ensure accessibility for students with physical and cognitive differences.

Emotional and Cultural Safety:

AOA will prioritize emotional well-being through a culture of respect, inclusivity, and psychological safety. Social-emotional learning (SEL) will be embedded in all aspects of school life, helping students build empathy, resilience, and a growth mindset. Restorative practices will be used to resolve conflicts, build relationships, and reinforce a strong sense of belonging among students and staff.

Academic Rigor with Personalized Support:

AOA will maintain high expectations for all students, providing personalized learning paths that support varied interests, abilities, and needs. Teachers will use differentiated instruction, formative assessments, and outdoor, hands-on learning to ensure students are both challenged and supported in meaningful ways.

Reinforcing Student Intellectual and Social Development

Integrated, Relevant Curriculum:

AOA's curriculum will combine academic standards with real-world, interdisciplinary outdoor learning. Students will explore core subjects through applied experiences, such as studying ecosystems in science, writing reflections in nature journals, or using measurement during fieldwork in math, helping students see relevance in their learning.

Character Education and SEL:

AOA will reinforce intellectual development through problem-solving, inquiry, and collaboration, while also nurturing students' social skills. SEL will be delivered through daily routines, outdoor team-building, and group projects. These experiences will foster communication, conflict resolution, and emotional awareness.

Restorative Practices:

The school will emphasize personal accountability and empathy through restorative circles, peer mediation, and community-building exercises, ensuring discipline is constructive, not punitive.

Building a Supportive Climate for All Stakeholders

Students – Empowerment and Belonging:

Students will play an active role in shaping school culture through student-led conferences, advisory councils, and collaborative project choices. Inclusive practices will ensure equitable access for students with disabilities, English learners, gifted students, and those at risk of academic failure. Accommodations and modifications will be embedded into both classroom and outdoor settings, ensuring all students are meaningfully engaged.

Teachers – Collaboration and Development:

Educators at AOA will participate in weekly professional learning communities (PLCs) to share best practices, co-develop lessons, and analyze student progress. Ongoing professional development will focus on trauma-informed instruction, outdoor integration, inclusion, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Teachers will be supported with mentorship, planning time, and access to wellness resources to maintain a positive, sustainable work environment.

Administrators – Visionary, Inclusive Leadership:

Administrators will model transparency, empathy, and shared leadership. Regular feedback loops (e.g., surveys, listening sessions) will help identify areas for growth and ensure alignment with AOA's mission. Administrators will support staff through data-informed coaching, recognition of achievements, and equitable resource allocation.

Families – Engagement and Partnership:

AOA will build strong partnerships with families through regular communication, multilingual materials, and inclusive engagement opportunities. Family events, such as outdoor workdays, student exhibitions, and storytelling nights, will invite families into the school culture. Parents will be welcomed as partners in developing student success plans and celebrating student growth.

Supporting a Variety of Student Needs

Students with Special Education Needs:

AOA will follow IDEA and 504 requirements, ensuring students with disabilities receive individualized services. IEP and 504 teams will work collaboratively with educators to create accessible instruction and outdoor learning adaptations. Examples may include mobility-friendly trails, visual supports, sensory breaks in natural settings, and co-teaching models.

English Language Learners (ELLs):

ELLs will receive language development services using evidence-based instruction, scaffolded lessons, and language-rich outdoor experiences. Instruction will be culturally responsive, and communication with families will be accessible and inclusive. Nature-based activities like storytelling, journaling, and collaborative outdoor inquiry will support vocabulary acquisition and speaking skills.

Gifted and Talented Students:

Gifted learners will benefit from independent study, inquiry-based outdoor research, leadership opportunities, and peer mentoring. They may design their own environmental projects, present at community events, or take accelerated paths through content. Their ILPs (Individualized Learning Plans) will guide deeper engagement in areas of strength.

Students at Risk of Academic Failure:

AOA's MTSS framework will identify and support students who need academic, behavioral, or emotional intervention. Early identification through screening, combined with targeted tutoring, SEL support, and outdoor mentorship, will help re-engage struggling students. Outdoor experiences—such as leadership in conservation projects or reflective journaling—will serve as powerful tools to boost self-efficacy and connection.

Leveraging Outdoor Learning for Climate and Culture

AOA's outdoor education model will foster strong relationships, build resilience, and promote mindfulness. Nature-based learning will allow students to explore, reflect, and collaborate in ways that are often less accessible in traditional classroom settings. By providing frequent opportunities for movement, fresh air, and real-world relevance, outdoor education will naturally support attention, well-being, and motivation.

Students will work in multi-age teams on environmental challenges, participate in guided hikes and field studies, and contribute to service-learning projects that connect them to their community. This deep engagement with nature and one another will build a sense of purpose, responsibility, and belonging.

In summary, Arkansas Outdoor Academy will foster a school climate that is inclusive, rigorous, joyful, and connected to the natural world. Through shared values of respect, inquiry, and collaboration, the school will promote academic success and whole-child development for every learner. Whether through a science hike, a team-building challenge, a writing circle under the trees, or a restorative conversation between peers, the climate at AOA will reflect a community where every student and every voice is seen, heard, and supported.

Q28. **A.2 Describe the school's approach to discipline, behavior intervention, and classroom management. Highlight key policies, systems, and related structures and address how they will support the climate described in question 1 and will comply with Arkansas laws.**

Foundational Philosophy

AOA views behavior as a form of communication and an opportunity for growth. The school emphasizes teaching behavior just as intentionally as academic content, recognizing that self-awareness, empathy, and community responsibility are critical to both student success and school climate.

Note that school climate will be assessed through annual surveys of students, staff, and families, as well as behavior referral trends and attendance data to ensure the environment remains safe, inclusive, and engaging.

Our discipline philosophy is based on the following principles:

- **Relationship-Centered:** Trusting relationships between students and staff are central to effective behavior management.
- **Preventive and Proactive:** Behavior expectations will be taught, modeled, and reinforced throughout the school day.
- **Restorative, Not Punitive:** Students will be guided to reflect on their actions, repair harm, and restore relationships.
- **Inclusive and Equitable:** Behavior policies will be trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and intentionally designed to reduce disparities in disciplinary outcomes.
- **Aligned with Outdoor Learning:** Outdoor environments will be used as spaces for positive behavior modeling, teamwork, and student agency.

Core Systems and Policies

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

AOA will implement a school-wide PBIS framework to:

- Teach and reinforce clear behavior expectations in all settings, including outdoor learning spaces.
- Use a common language (e.g., "Respect Self, Others, and Environment") to promote consistency.
- Reward positive behavior with praise, leadership roles, and community recognition.
- Model expectations daily and use visual cues and rubrics to guide behavior.

Outdoor-specific adaptations of PBIS will include safety protocols for field experiences, shared tool use, and stewardship of natural environments.

Classroom Management Strategies

Each classroom will establish community agreements co-created by students. Teachers will use:

- **Responsive Classroom** methods to foster inclusivity and engagement.
- **Movement and choice** to support focus in flexible outdoor and indoor learning spaces.
- **Cooperative learning models** that reflect real-world teamwork and shared responsibility.

Teachers will receive regular professional development in SEL, de-escalation strategies, and integrating behavior supports into outdoor instruction.

Behavior Intervention Framework

AOA will adopt a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) aligned with state and federal guidelines:

- **Tier 1 – Universal Supports:** School-wide behavior education, consistent expectations, and SEL integration.
- **Tier 2 – Targeted Interventions:** For students needing additional support, small group interventions such as:
  - Check-in/check-out systems
  - Social skills development
  - Peer conflict resolution groups
- **Tier 3 – Intensive Interventions:** For students with persistent behavioral challenges:
  - Individualized Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)
  - Mentoring and wraparound services
  - Regular meetings with families and intervention teams

Restorative Practices and Accountability

AOA will use restorative practices as a core element of student accountability, including:

- **Restorative Conversations:** Guided reflection on the impact of behavior, with planning for repairing harm.
- **Restorative Circles:** Community-building tools for both proactive relationship-building and reactive conflict resolution.
Peer Mediation: Training students to support resolution of minor conflicts respectfully.
- **Community Service:** Students may repair harm through service, such as campus gardening or trail maintenance.
These practices promote empathy, responsibility, and re-engagement with the learning community.

Legal Compliance and Due Process

AOA's discipline policies will fully comply with Arkansas state laws and federal regulations, including:

- **Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-502:** Requires schools to adopt written student discipline policies outlining expectations and consequences. AOA's Student Code of Conduct will meet this requirement and be made accessible to families.
- **Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-513:** Governs the use of restraint and seclusion. These practices will only be used when a student poses an immediate, serious threat, and in accordance with procedural safeguards and documentation requirements.
- **Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-222:** Ensures due process prior to suspension or expulsion. AOA will follow all requirements regarding parent notification, student hearings, and appeal procedures.
- **IDEA & Section 504:** Students with disabilities will be disciplined in accordance with federal protections. When appropriate, AOA will conduct Manifestation Determination Reviews (MDRs) to determine whether behaviors are linked to a student's disability. Disciplinary practices will not deny access to FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education).

Responsive Support for All Learning Profiles

Students with Disabilities

- Behavior interventions will align with IEPs and 504 Plans.
- Teachers will collaborate with special educators to provide trauma-sensitive, sensory-informed, and individualized strategies.

English Language Learners (ELLs)

- Expectations and discipline processes will be clearly explained in the student's home language when possible.
- Staff will use culturally responsive practices to avoid misinterpretation of behavior due to cultural norms or communication barriers.

Gifted and Talented Students

- Teachers will address behavior related to boredom, frustration, or perfectionism.
- Enrichment, leadership, and autonomy will be used proactively to promote engagement.

Students at Risk of Academic Failure

- Behavior issues will be evaluated for underlying academic or emotional causes.
- Students will receive coordinated support including academic tutoring, mentorship, and SEL coaching as part of their personalized success plans.

Family Engagement and Communication

Families will be active partners in maintaining a positive behavior culture. AOA will:

- Provide clear communication about expectations, interventions, and student rights in multiple languages.
- Invite parents to restorative conferences and problem-solving meetings.
- Host family workshops on behavior support strategies, parenting skills, and outdoor safety.

AOA believes that when families and educators work together, students are more likely to meet expectations and grow from behavioral challenges.

At the Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA), our approach to discipline, behavior intervention, and classroom management is deeply rooted in the belief that all students can learn to self-regulate, act responsibly, and contribute positively to their community when supported in a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment. The values outlined above will promote a restorative and proactive climate, adapted to the unique context of outdoor, experiential learning and grounded in Arkansas state law and federal guidelines. The Arkansas Outdoor Academy's approach to discipline and classroom management supports a safe, respectful, and engaging school climate. AOA will ensure every student has the opportunity to grow as a thoughtful, self-regulated learner and valued member of the school community.

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**

Arkansas Department of Education

Q29. **A.3 Briefly explain the general plan to engage parents in school life and communicate with them regularly about school matters.**

At the Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA), we believe that consistent and meaningful family engagement is essential to student success. Rooted in our outdoor, experiential learning model, our family engagement strategy focuses on transparency, accessibility, and collaboration. We aim to build strong, two-way partnerships between families and school staff to support student growth both academically and socially.

Regular Communication with Families

AOA will maintain open and consistent communication with families through multiple accessible platforms to ensure they stay informed and involved:

- Weekly Digital Newsletters will share updates on upcoming events, curriculum highlights, outdoor learning experiences, and student achievements.
- A School App and Parent Portal will allow families real-time access to grades, attendance, assignments, and behavior notes in a secure and user-friendly format.
- Text and Email Alerts will be used for timely updates such as weather changes, school reminders, and emergency notifications.
- Biweekly Teacher Check-ins via phone, email, or video conferencing will provide individualized updates on student progress and behavior.
- All communication will be available in families' preferred languages to ensure equitable access to information and school engagement.

Parent Involvement in School Life

AOA will create diverse opportunities for families to participate in school life and build connections with the broader learning community:

- Family Field Days and Outdoor Events will invite families to participate in school hikes, environmental service projects, and student exhibitions, offering shared learning experiences in natural settings.
- Seasonal Student Showcases will allow students to present outdoor learning projects and academic work to their families, promoting student ownership and pride.
- A Parent Volunteer Program will allow families to contribute to the school through gardening, trail maintenance, classroom assistance, or enrichment activities based on their skills and interests.
- A Parent Advisory Council (PAC) will be formed to give families a voice in school planning, decision-making, and engagement efforts.

Engagement in Student Support

AOA views families as key partners in student learning and development. We will ensure families are directly involved in supporting student success:

- Parent-Teacher Conferences will be held at least twice a year to discuss academic progress and learning goals.
- Student-Led Conferences will provide students the opportunity to present their progress and reflect on their learning, fostering ownership and active engagement from families.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER

SCHOOL APPLICATION

Arkansas Department of Education

- IEP/504/ELL Meetings will be scheduled collaboratively with families to ensure accommodations and services align with student needs.
- Parent Workshops will offer guidance on topics such as outdoor learning safety, SEL strategies at home, academic support, and navigating special education services.

Q30. A.4 Will the school offer any extra and/or co-curricular activities? If so, please describe.

Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) will offer a variety of extra and co-curricular activities that reflect our mission to connect students with nature, develop leadership skills, and promote physical and emotional well-being through outdoor learning.

Year One Offerings:
In our inaugural year, AOA will launch with two signature activities:

- **Indoor Climbing:** Students will learn the fundamentals of climbing in a safe, structured environment, promoting physical fitness, problem-solving, and resilience. Instruction will focus on safety procedures, technique, and confidence-building.
- **Archery:** Students will participate in a state-standard archery program, learning precision, focus, and discipline. This activity supports hand-eye coordination and mindfulness, aligning with our emphasis on self-regulation and outdoor skills.

Potential Additional Year One Offerings (as resources allow):

- **Cross Country and Track:** These endurance-based sports will allow students to build stamina and mental toughness while exploring local trails and outdoor tracks. These activities will foster a strong connection between physical health and the outdoor environment.
- **Kayaking/Canoeing:** If feasible, students will be offered opportunities to develop water safety, paddling techniques, and teamwork skills through exploration of Arkansas's rivers and lakes. This program will also include environmental education components related to aquatic ecosystems and conservation.

Future Expansion:
As the school grows and resources expand, AOA will continue to add new outdoor-oriented activities that enhance the overall student experience. Our long-term goal is to build a comprehensive roster of extracurricular and co-curricular options like nature photography, fishing, mountain biking, outdoor leadership training, conservation clubs, and wilderness first aid certification.

All activities will be designed to:

- Promote physical activity, healthy lifestyles and quality of life
- Reinforce leadership, collaboration, and character development
- Build outdoor competency and environmental stewardship
- Provide inclusive and accessible opportunities for all students

Participation in these programs will be voluntary and open to all students. Staff advisors and qualified community partners will lead each activity, ensuring safety, engagement, and alignment with the school's values and curriculum.

Through a growing list of outdoor-based co-curricular offerings, Arkansas Outdoor Academy will give students

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

the opportunity to discover new interests, develop lifelong skills, and deepen their connection with the natural world. These activities will not only enrich the educational experience but also cultivate personal growth, wellness, and community spirit.

Q31.

A.5 Briefly explain and describe the school's policy concerning how the school will address grievances and complaints. Include what role the governing board may have in complaints. Upload a copy of the current handbook (if possible) describing those policies and procedures.

Guiding Principles

AOA's grievance policy is built on key values:

- **Confidentiality:** All complaints will be handled discreetly.
- **Fairness:** Each party will be given the opportunity to present their perspective.
- **Timeliness:** Complaints will generally be resolved within 10 business days.
- **Non-Retaliation:** No one will be penalized for filing a complaint or grievance in good faith.

Grievance Process Overview

Step 1: Informal Resolution

Whenever possible, concerns should be addressed through direct communication with the individual involved (e.g., teacher or staff member). A mediator, such as a counselor or administrator, may assist if needed.

Step 2: Formal Complaint Submission

If informal resolution is not successful, a formal written complaint may be submitted to the administration using a standardized grievance form (available on the school's website or in the main office). The form must outline the nature of the grievance, steps taken to resolve the issue, and the desired outcome.

Step 3: Investigation and Administrative Response

School leadership will investigate the complaint fairly and thoroughly. A written response, including findings and actions taken (if any), will typically be provided within 10 business days.

Step 4: Escalation to Governing Board

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome, the complaint may be escalated to the Governing Board. The Board will review the complaint, conduct a hearing if needed, and issue a final decision within 15 business days.

Step 5: Final Resolution

Once the Governing Board issues a decision, the matter is considered closed unless significant new information emerges.

Special Considerations

- **Student Discipline:** Parents disputing disciplinary decisions may use the grievance process. Additional protections are afforded for students with IEPs, 504 Plans, or English language learner (ELL) status.
- **Harassment and Discrimination:** Complaints of discrimination, bullying, or harassment will be handled with heightened sensitivity and adherence to civil rights protections. Retaliation is strictly prohibited.

Governing Board Role

The AOA Governing Board provides final oversight and impartial review of escalated complaints. It ensures that grievance procedures are followed properly and evaluates patterns or concerns that may require policy updates.

Communication and Accessibility

- Handbook: The full grievance policy will be published in the AOA Family Handbook.
- Website: All forms and procedural documents will be posted online.
- Language Access: Materials will be translated into families' preferred languages as needed.

Applicant Evidence :

Aoa Family Handbook v...

Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by
Christopher Horton

---

6. Organizational Plan

Q32. **A.1 Governance and Leadership Board of Directors– Provide a list of proposed board members, if identified. Please include the actual or preferred roles of each member, a brief description of major responsibilities, their expertise area (i.e., academics, finances, legal, management, and operations, parents, community leaders, educator, operations, or community relations).**

Advisory and Community Support Team

Arkansas Outdoor Academy is guided by a network of expert advisors whose diverse backgrounds in environmental education, outdoor recreation, and academic leadership support the school's mission of experiential, place-based learning. These individuals will advise leadership, collaborate on programming, and help strengthen community partnerships.

Advisors and Their Contributions

- **Joe Jacobs**, editor of ArkansasOutside.com, supports public outreach, student storytelling, and media coverage while connecting the school with statewide outdoor networks. Trails are a passion for Joe Jacobs, who has served on boards and councils to advise on trails and cycling. He was instrumental in the design and creation of mountain bike trails at Pinnacle Mountain State Park, Woolly Hollow State Park and Boyle Park in Little Rock. Jacobs previously served as the manager of Marketing and Revenue for the Arkansas State Parks.

- **Dennis Nelms**, owner of Climbing Solutions and co-owner of Adventure Subaru, offers expertise in climbing safety, infrastructure, and partnerships. Dennis served many years as a NOLS instructor, and rock guide. He serves on the Board of Directors for the Arkansas Parks and Recreation Foundation, and works with the Nelms Foundation/Nelms Dyslexia Center.

- **Dr. James Dow**, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Hendrix College, contributes expertise in environmental ethics and critical thinking, enriching interdisciplinary learning and encouraging student reflection on nature and sustainability.

- **Mitchell Allen** of the Arkansas Parks and Recreation Foundation provides insight into public-private partnerships, trail development, and grant funding. He helps bridge the school's outdoor programming with regional outdoor assets and funding opportunities.

- **Sharon Bennett**, Outdoor Recreation Advocate, Ambassador for Arkansas Climbers Coalition, and State Director of the American Scholastic Climbing League, will guide safe and inclusive climbing programs. Her experience supports both extracurricular and curricular offerings that develop physical, social, and emotional skills. She works with local/state officials to establish recreational opportunities and will also assist in partnership development.

- **Chuck Argo**, Vice President of Academic Affairs at National Park College, advises on dual-credit programming, academic alignment, and career pathways in outdoor fields, ensuring a strong bridge to postsecondary education.

- **Michael Blazier**, with the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, contributes curriculum development insight for careers in forestry and outdoor leadership, supporting economic sustainability and relevance.

- **Dr. Jay Post**, professor of tourism at Arkansas Tech, brings academic and applied expertise in sustainable tourism, outdoor recreation, and program evaluation. His input supports electives, fieldwork, and student internships in outdoor career fields.

- **Marshall Dickey**, assistant program manager at Camp Aldersgate, has a diverse work experience in various organizations, showcasing strong leadership and program management skills. He will help with SPED programming and development of modifications for students with disabilities.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER

SCHOOL APPLICATION

Arkansas Department of Education

- **Michael Simmons**, outdoor recreation coordinator for Little Rock Parks and Recreation, has over 30 years of experience in the outdoor recreation and experiential education field. He will help create programs for the school and help bring awareness to the city of Little Rock.

Engagement Structure

Advisors will participate through:

- Strategic planning meetings
- Curriculum consultations
- Guest lectures and student events
- Community engagement campaigns

Q33. A.2 Governance and Leadership Explain the selection process of the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors for Arkansas Outdoor Academy will be composed of individuals whose expertise aligns with the school's mission of outdoor education, environmental stewardship, and experiential learning. Board members will be selected primarily from two sources:

1. **Higher Education Institutions:**
Candidates will include faculty or administrators from Arkansas-based colleges and universities offering programs in outdoor recreation, tourism, and sciences. These individuals bring academic insight and valuable institutional connections to support curriculum design and student enrichment.

2. **Outdoor Industry Experts:**
Professionals with experience in outdoor leadership, conservation, or recreation—such as those affiliated with Arkansas State Parks, the Nature Conservancy, or the National Park Service—will provide practical expertise and help establish partnerships that ground the school in real-world relevance.

All board members will be nominated from the school's existing Advisory Board, ensuring candidates are already engaged with the school's vision and values.

Selection Criteria:

Candidates will be evaluated based on:

- Alignment with the school's mission and goals
- Expertise in outdoor-related fields
- Leadership and governance experience
- Commitment to equity and student-centered outcomes

Nomination & Appointment:

Nominations will be made by the Advisory Board and reviewed by a selection committee of founding members. Selected individuals will confirm service in writing.

Terms:

Board members will serve four-year staggered terms to maintain leadership continuity. Regular performance reviews will ensure ongoing alignment with the school's evolving needs and priorities.

Q34. **A.3 Governance and Leadership Identify the processes and structures that the proposed board will have in place to ensure the following:**
a. Effective and efficient operation of school governance,
b. Establishment and monitoring of school improvement goals,
c. Procedural oversight and monitoring of personnel decisions, if applicable,
d. Fiscal responsibility and sustainability of the school,
e. Compliance with all applicable laws and rules concerning ethics, and

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

f. **Community Engagement.**

Governance Structure and Oversight

The governance model for Arkansas Outdoor Academy is designed to ensure transparent, accountable, and mission-driven leadership. The Board of Directors will operate under clear bylaws and charter governance policies and will be composed of members with expertise in education, law, finance, outdoor programming, nonprofit governance, and community engagement.

A. Effective and Efficient School Governance

The board will meet at least quarterly, complying with Arkansas FOIA requirements for transparency. Standing committees will meet as needed and include:

- Finance & Audit Committee
- Academic Performance & School Improvement Committee
- Governance & Ethics Committee
- Personnel Oversight Committee

These committees will guide decision-making, ensure fiduciary responsibility, and support school leadership without overreach. Bylaws and policies will define roles, delegation processes, and meeting protocols.

B. Monitoring of School Improvement Goals

The Academic Performance Committee will oversee the development of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and set annual student performance goals related to proficiency growth, attendance, graduation, and the outdoor education model. The board will review:

- Quarterly academic reports aligned with Arkansas academic standards
- DESE frameworks and school-specific benchmarks
- Disaggregated data by subgroups (ELL, SPED, G/T)

This ensures accountability to both state expectations and the school's unique educational vision.

C. Oversight of Personnel Decisions

The Personnel Oversight Committee, in collaboration with the school's executive leader, will ensure that all hiring practices are fair, legal, and consistent with school policies. Responsibilities include:

- Approving the hiring of senior leadership roles
- Conducting an annual evaluation of the school director using measurable goals
- Monitoring compliance with labor laws and charter accountability standards

The board will support, but not manage, daily personnel matters, respecting the autonomy of school leadership.

D. Fiscal Responsibility and Sustainability

The Finance & Audit Committee will manage oversight of the school's financial health. Responsibilities include:

- Approving and monitoring the annual operating budget
- Reviewing monthly financial statements (revenues, expenditures, and cash flow)
- Ensuring adequate reserves and adherence to fund balance targets
- Overseeing annual independent audits and following up on findings

The board will adopt clear fiscal policies, including purchasing authority limits and conflict-of-interest safeguards.

E. Legal and Ethical Compliance

All board members will annually complete:

- Conflict of Interest disclosures
- Ethics and Confidentiality agreements

The Governance & Ethics Committee will ensure adherence to:

- Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-202
- DESE's ethics regulations for charter boards
- All applicable laws regarding nondiscrimination and public transparency

Mandatory board training will include FOIA compliance, public records access, and ethical leadership practices.

F. Community Engagement

The board will maintain strong community ties through:

- Public board meetings with open comment
- A Parent Advisory Council (PAC) reporting directly to the board
- Parent or local stakeholder representation on the board
- Regular community surveys and feedback loops

Updates will be shared via the school website and newsletter.

Note: Key governance documents, including meeting agendas, minutes, and financial summaries, will be published on the school website.

This governance framework will ensure Arkansas Outdoor Academy operates with integrity, accountability, and alignment to its mission. Through structured oversight and stakeholder input, the board will support high-quality instruction, student success, and responsible leadership.

Applicant Comments :
working documents attached.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

Applicant Evidence :

PDF

Aoa Bylaws Draft.docx....

Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by
Christopher Horton

Q35. **B.1 School Administration** _Superintendent Position_ **– If a superintendent has been appointed, please indicate the selection criteria and a rationale for the choice, including leadership qualities and capacity that uniquely qualify the selected individual to lead this charter. If a superintendent has not been selected, please include a job description and indicate the leadership qualities and capacity desired for this position. How will this leader be supported and developed?**

Selection Criteria and Rationale for Leadership at Arkansas Outdoor Academy

The success of the Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) depends on visionary leadership that reflects its mission, academic excellence through outdoor, experiential education and whole-child development. The ideal leader must blend experience, strategic thinking, and a passion for nature-based learning.

Selection Criteria

1. Leadership and Educational Experience
The leader should have a strong background in outdoor or experiential education, including familiarity with project-based and environmental learning. Communication skills are essential to inspire and engage students, families, staff, and community stakeholders. A demonstrated commitment to inclusion is critical—particularly in supporting students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and gifted populations.

2. Holistic Student Development Vision
AOA's leader must articulate a clear plan for using outdoor education to enhance academic growth and resilience. They should champion character-building experiences that foster teamwork, perseverance, and emotional intelligence.

3. Operational Competence
Effective management of finances, staff, and facilities is essential, as is the ability to create and monitor data-driven plans for improvement. The leader must support a culture of assessment and continuous reflection to ensure students thrive academically and personally.

4. Cultural Competency and Community Partnership
The school will serve a diverse population. Therefore, the leader must value culturally responsive teaching and be skilled at building strong, respectful relationships with families and community organizations.

Leadership Qualities
The successful candidate will be:

- **Visionary and Inspirational**: Committed to realizing AOA's mission by integrating academic rigor with immersive outdoor learning.
- **Empathetic and Supportive**: Builds trust through compassion and strong interpersonal relationships.
- **Adaptable and Resilient**: Able to navigate uncertainty and foster a culture of flexibility and growth.
- **Collaborative**: Embraces shared leadership and empowers staff to lead and innovate.

Leadership Support and Development Plan

1. Professional Development
AOA will offer a mentorship program, connecting the leader with seasoned educational professionals. The leader will attend conferences and workshops focused on charter leadership, outdoor education, and student-centered learning. Collaborative learning networks will provide further exposure to best practices and innovation.

2. Feedback and Reflection
Annual evaluations by the Governing Board and input from the school community will guide growth. Peer

reviews with other charter school leaders will foster reflective leadership and continuous improvement.

3. Strategic Planning

The leader will co-develop measurable goals with the Governing Board and key staff. These goals will be revisited regularly to adapt to changing needs while staying aligned with the school's vision.

4. Wellness and Emotional Support

Executive coaching will support the leader's professional growth and emotional resilience. AOA will also promote well-being through wellness programs and encourage work-life balance.

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy seeks a leader who not only has the skills to manage and grow a charter school but who also embodies the school's vision of nature-based learning, equity, and holistic development. With a robust support system in place, this leader will guide the school to long-term success and meaningful impact.

Q36. B.2 School Administration _Principal Position_ – If a principal has been appointed, please indicate the selection criteria and a rationale for the choice, including leadership qualities and capacity that uniquely qualify the selected individual to lead this charter. If a principal has not been selected, please include a job description and indicate the leadership qualities and capacity desired for this position. How will this leader be supported and developed?

Selection Criteria and Rationale for Leadership at Arkansas Outdoor Academy

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) seeks a dynamic, visionary leader to guide the school's mission of blending academic excellence with outdoor, experiential learning. This leader will embody the values of equity, environmental stewardship, and holistic student development. Their role is essential in shaping an inclusive school culture and driving student success through innovative and nature-based education.

Selection Criteria

1. Leadership and Educational Experience
The ideal candidate will have a proven leadership background in education, preferably in charter or alternative learning environments. Experience in outdoor or experiential learning is essential, as is strong operational expertise in budgeting, staffing, and daily school management. The leader must also have experience working with diverse student populations, including English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and at-risk youth.

2. Vision for Student-Centered Learning
This leader will champion an innovative educational model that integrates academic learning with outdoor experiences. A deep commitment to character development and social-emotional learning is critical, fostering resilience, teamwork, and leadership through real-world and nature-based activities.

3. Collaborative and Inclusive Leadership Style
The leader must be an effective communicator who empowers staff, students, and families to actively contribute to the school's culture. A collaborative approach to decision-making and respect for shared leadership are key traits.

4. Adaptability and Problem-Solving
Leading a charter school requires flexibility and creative thinking. The leader should excel in addressing challenges, integrating outdoor education with academic standards, and navigating evolving regulations and student needs.

Leadership Qualities

The leader must be:

- **Visionary**: Able to set a bold direction for outdoor, inquiry-based education while maintaining high academic standards.
- **Relational**: Emotionally intelligent and empathetic, able to build strong relationships with students, staff, and families.
- **Community-Oriented**: Dedicated to community engagement and building partnerships with local organizations.
- **Instructionally Skilled**: Strong in pedagogy and data use to drive academic achievement.
- **Resilient and Adaptive**: Calm under pressure, flexible in changing circumstances, and able to maintain focus on long-term goals.

Support and Development Plan

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

To ensure success, AOA will provide comprehensive support:

1. Professional Development

The leader will have access to executive coaching, strategic planning training, and regular participation in outdoor education conferences. They'll join professional learning networks to stay informed of best practices.

2. Mentorship and Peer Collaboration

AOA will pair the leader with a mentor experienced in outdoor or charter school leadership. Regular peer feedback sessions will support growth and offer fresh perspectives on school management.

3. Organizational Support

The Governing Board will ensure the leader has autonomy, resources, and guidance to carry out the school's mission. Community partnerships will enhance programming and build public support.

4. Reflection and Goal Setting

Annual leadership reviews and strategic goal-setting sessions with the Board will track progress and guide future planning.

Through this vision-aligned selection and development process, the Arkansas Outdoor Academy will secure a leader equipped to cultivate a thriving, inclusive, and academically rigorous outdoor learning environment.

Q37. C.1 Faculty and Staff Describe the school's proposed leadership structure. Upload a copy of the school's proposed organizational chart.

Leadership Structure of the Arkansas Outdoor Academy

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) is guided by a mission-aligned leadership model inspired by the structure of outdoor expedition teams. Designed to support academic excellence, nature-based learning, and student well-being, the leadership framework integrates strategic governance with collaborative, student-centered operations.

Governance and Oversight

AOA Board of Directors

The Board of Directors serves as the governing body, providing strategic direction and oversight. Responsibilities include:

- Evaluating school leadership and impact
- Ensuring financial stewardship and regulatory compliance
- Supporting the long-term sustainability of AOA's outdoor-focused mission

Executive Leadership Team

AOA's daily operations are led by a collaborative Executive Leadership Team composed of mission-driven roles with nature-themed titles:

Position	Title	Key Responsibilities
Superintendent	**Expedition Leader**	Leads schoolwide vision, strategic partnerships, and curriculum direction; works with the Board and Principal
Principal	**Base Camp Coordinator**	Oversees school operations, instructional leadership, and staff support
Assistant Principal	**Camp Director: Behavior & Culture**	Manages school climate, discipline systems, and student behavior supports
Assistant Principal	**Summit Guide: Curriculum & Counseling**	Leads academic programming, testing, and student support services

School Staff and Support Roles

Teachers are called Navigators, responsible for delivering project-based, outdoor-integrated instruction. Support staff include:

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER

SCHOOL APPLICATION

Arkansas Department of Education

- **Safety Scout** (Campus Safety and Security Officer)
- **Camp Counselors** (SEL and counseling support)
- **Welcome Rangers** (Front office and visitor coordination)
- **Base Camp Team** (Operations and logistics support)

Team Structure and Reporting

The leadership hierarchy supports smooth communication and focused oversight:

- **Expedition Leader** oversees the Principal, Base Camp Team, and external partnerships
- **Base Camp Coordinator (Principal)** supervises teachers and both Assistant Principals
- **Summit Guide** manages academic counselors and testing personnel
- **Camp Director** leads the safety and climate staff

Financial management is handled by support personnel under the direction of the Expedition Leader and Board, ensuring fiscal integrity and operational compliance.

Collaborative Structures

Advisory Committee

AOA's Advisory Committee outlined in the Advisory Guide connects local industry experts, educators, and community leaders to support:

- Outdoor career-aligned curriculum development
- Field-based learning and mentorships
- Partnerships with state and local organizations
- Student pathways for internships and certifications

Leadership Team Collaboration

The Expedition Leadership Team, consisting of the Expedition Leader, Base Camp Coordinator, and both Assistant Principals, meets biweekly to:

- Align strategic priorities and student support systems
- Monitor academic and behavioral trends
- Coordinate events, initiatives, and external partnerships

☑ Upload Required   File Type: **pdf, image, excel, word, text**   Max File Size: **30**   Total Files Count: **10**

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

Applicant Evidence :
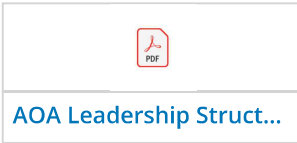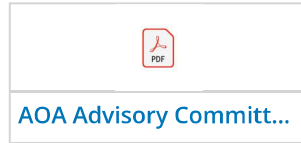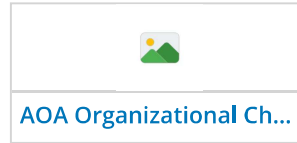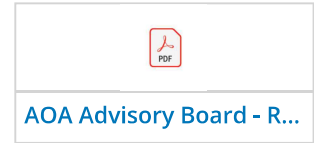
PDF	PDF	IMG	PDF
AOA Leadership Struct...	AOA Advisory Committ...	AOA Organizational Ch...	AOA Advisory Board - R...
Uploaded on **6/12/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **6/12/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **8/8/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

Q38. C.2 Faculty and Staff Describe the strategy, plans, and timeline for recruiting and hiring faculty and staff. Explain the school's proposed strategy for retaining high-performing faculty and staff.

Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention Plan for Arkansas Outdoor Academy

Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) is committed to assembling a dynamic, mission-driven team of educators and staff who share a passion for experiential, outdoor learning. Our goal is to recruit and retain highly qualified professionals who support academic excellence, leadership, and stewardship through immersive nature-based education.

Strategic Staffing Plan – Year 1 (2026–2027)

Leadership

- Superintendent (Expedition Leader)
- Director of Student Wellbeing
- CTE Program Director

Instructional Staff

- 6–9 Core and Elective Teachers (ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, PE/Outdoor Leadership, Environmental Studies)
- CTE Instructors in Outdoor Conservation, Emergency Response, and Tourism & Recreation

Support Staff

- 1 Licensed School Nurse
- 1 School Counselor
- 1 Administrative Assistant
- 1 Maintenance/Facilities Coordinator
- 1–2 Paraprofessionals (based on enrollment)

Potential Hiring Timeline (June 2025 – August 2026)

June–August 2025: Finalize job descriptions, salary bands, and recruitment materials; ensure compliance with DESE hiring policies.
Sept–Oct 2025: Begin outreach through university partners (AR Tech, UA-Monticello), newsletters, and CTE networks.
Nov 2025: Pending charter approval, launch formal postings via ADE and outdoor/environmental job boards.
Dec–Jan 2026: Begin application window; host virtual info sessions; start first-round interviews for key roles.
Feb–March 2026: Finalize hiring of superintendent and directors; launch leadership planning meetings.
March–April 2026: Focus on certified teachers and CTE instructors; offer signing bonuses for high-need roles.
May 2026: Issue formal offers; complete credential and reference checks.
June–July 2026: Conduct onboarding, outdoor safety training, curriculum PD, and team-building retreats.
August 2026: School opens; initiate weekly support sessions for all new staff in the first quarter.

Potential Recruitment Strategy

Campaign Theme: "Teach Outside the Box"

AOA will launch a multimedia recruitment campaign highlighting outdoor classrooms, staff culture, and student transformation stories. Educator testimonials and conservationist interviews will showcase the mission.

Incentive Programs

- **Founding Educator Bonuses** for early hires
- **Outdoor Certification Bonuses** for Wilderness First Aid, Hunter Safety, or ACA Canoe/Kayak instructors

Potential Talent Pipelines

- Teacher Residency Programs
- Arkansas Teacher Corps
- UCA MAT program
- TFA Arkansas Alumni
- Partnerships with the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission

Retention Plan

Competitive Pay & Recognition

- Salaries aligned with local districts, plus stipends for outdoor certifications and CTE credentials

Professional Development

- Annual PD in environmental literacy, trauma-informed care, and outdoor safety
- Leadership pathways for emerging talent

Supportive Culture

- Shared leadership model and clear mission alignment
- Year-round wellness initiatives and community-building practices

AOA's approach ensures a thriving team equipped to deliver a transformative outdoor education experience rooted in student wellness, academic excellence, and purpose-driven teaching.

Q39. C.3 Faculty and Staff Describe the policies and procedures for evaluating staff and providing performance feedback. Describe how the school intends to handle unsatisfactory leadership or teacher performance, including termination, as well as leadership/teacher changes. Please upload a copy of the policy and procedures listed in your employee handbook (If available).

Staff Evaluation, Feedback, and Personnel Management Policies

At the Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA), our mission is to provide transformative outdoor experiences that combine education, recreation, and skill development in a supportive and engaging environment. Our vision is to cultivate a generation of confident and capable leaders who will become stewards of the outdoors and positively impact their communities. In alignment with this mission and vision, AOA is committed to building and maintaining a faculty and leadership team of the highest professional and personal integrity.

To ensure that our team consistently meets these expectations, AOA will implement clear, consistent, and equitable policies and procedures for evaluating staff, providing performance feedback, and addressing unsatisfactory performance, including termination and leadership/staff transitions. These procedures will be outlined in detail in the official Arkansas Outdoor Academy Employee Handbook, which will be made available upon hiring and updated annually.

Staff Evaluation and Performance Feedback

AOA will use a formalized staff evaluation system that aligns with the Arkansas Department of Education's Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS) and Leader Excellence and Development System (LEADS). These systems promote a culture of growth, professionalism, and accountability.

Key Evaluation Elements:

- **Certified Teachers** will be evaluated on:
  - Instructional effectiveness
  - Classroom and behavior management
  - Student engagement and growth
  - Leadership and professional conduct

- **School Leaders** will be evaluated on:
  - Visionary leadership and team development
  - Implementation of the school mission and strategic plan
  - Stakeholder engagement and operational excellence

- **Support Staff** will be evaluated based on:
  - Role-specific performance
  - Collaboration and communication
  - Contribution to school climate and mission

Performance Feedback Procedures:

- **Annual Evaluations**: All staff will receive a formal evaluation at least once per academic year.
- **Ongoing Coaching**: Informal observations, feedback sessions, and coaching meetings will be held regularly throughout the year.

- **Growth Plans**: Personalized professional development plans will be designed to align with staff goals and school-wide needs.

Addressing Unsatisfactory Performance and Termination Procedures

Arkansas Outdoor Academy operates in compliance with Arkansas state law regarding at-will employment. All employment with AOA is at-will unless otherwise stated by written agreement. However, in the interest of fairness, transparency, and due process, AOA will follow a structured improvement and accountability process:

Performance Improvement and Termination Process:

Step 1: Documentation of Concern

- Supervisor identifies performance issue(s
- Employee receives verbal notice and documentation

Step 2: Development of a Professional Improvement Plan (PIP)

- The PIP outlines:
  - Specific performance issues
  - Clear, measurable goals
  - Timelines for improvement (typically 30–90 days)
  - Supports provided (mentoring, PD, coaching)

Step 3: Monitoring and Follow-up

- Regular check-ins and progress reviews
- Adjustments to the PIP as needed
- Written updates on status of improvement

Step 4: Final Review

- If goals are not met within the timeline, a final performance review is conducted
- Termination recommendation may be made, pending administrative and legal review

Step 5: Termination (If Necessary)

- Final written notice of termination is delivered
- Employee is informed of the decision, effective date, and documentation provided
- Termination process will comply with all applicable federal and state employment laws, including documentation for personnel records
- In cases of gross misconduct, ethical violations, or immediate risk to student safety, AOA reserves the right to bypass the PIP process and proceed directly to suspension or termination, consistent with legal protections and due process.

Leadership or Teacher Transitions

AOA acknowledges that changes in staffing may arise due to resignations, non-renewals, or terminations. The following procedures will be used to ensure continuity:

- **Interim Appointments**: Interim staff or leadership will be appointed to ensure program continuity
- **Transparent Communication**: Parents and stakeholders will be informed of changes in a timely, professional manner
- **Successor Planning**: AOA will maintain a leadership pipeline through internal development and external recruitment
- **Exit Interviews**: Conducted to gather feedback and improve retention practices

Staff Handbook and Guidelines

All procedures listed above will be fully detailed in the Arkansas Outdoor Academy Employee Handbook (In Process), which serves as the official source for HR policy, performance expectations, evaluation schedules, professional conduct standards, and personnel actions. This handbook will include these key factors:

- Be distributed during onboarding
- Be reviewed and signed by all staff
- Be updated annually to reflect legal or operational changes

Applicant Evidence :

PDF
AOA Staff Handbook (w...
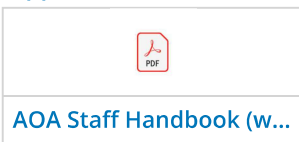
Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by
Christopher Horton

Q40. D.1 Transportation Will the school provide transportation services? If so, describe the transportation services plan that the school will provide.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

Commitment to Accessibility

Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) is committed to serving all students, regardless of financial need or location. To ensure equitable access, we will implement a two-phase transportation plan designed to eliminate logistical barriers for families.

Phase 1: Carpooling Support
AOA will facilitate voluntary carpooling by sharing an interest map based on enrollment forms, using digital tools to connect families in similar areas, and promoting carpooling as a flexible, cost-effective option, especially for parents with long commutes or nontraditional work schedules.

Phase 2: School-Provided Transportation
For families unable to carpool, AOA will offer bus service based on need. Sample routes have been created for one school site, prioritizing areas with higher concentrations of economically disadvantaged students. Routes will be refined based on enrollment data.

Transportation Models

- **Option 1: Contracted Service**
Contract with a transportation provider for three routes (12 miles each) at $400/day per route, totaling approximately $204,000/year.
- **Option 2: In-House Leased Buses**
Operate leased buses at $48,000/year with potential reimbursements reducing net costs to -$75,989/year. This option may offer more flexibility and long-term savings.

Next Steps

- Survey families during enrollment to assess transportation needs
- Request bids from regional providers
- Consult with peer charter schools for best practices

Applicant Evidence :
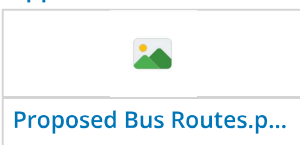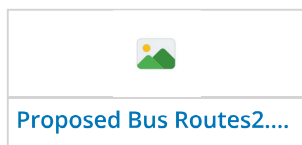
Proposed Bus Routes.p...	Proposed Bus Routes2....
Uploaded on **6/13/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **6/13/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

Q41. E.1 Food Service Describe how the school will provide meal services.

Legal Framework for School Meal Services

Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) will ensure all students have access to nutritious meals in full compliance with state and federal laws. Meal operations will align with:

- **Arkansas Code § 6-18-705**: Requires schools to provide meals meeting USDA nutrition standards.
- **Arkansas Code § 6-20-709**: Prohibits denial of meals or public identification of students unable to pay.
- **Arkansas Code § 6-18-716**: Addresses respectful and equitable policies for unpaid meal balances.

AOA will apply to participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) through the Arkansas Department of Education's Child Nutrition Unit to provide free, reduced-price, and paid meals.

Meal Service Model

AOA will serve breakfast and lunch daily, meeting USDA nutrition standards and offering meals in flexible settings (indoor/outdoor) to complement the school's outdoor focus. Compostable or reusable materials will support environmental goals.

Operational Options

- **Option A**: Build an on-site kitchen and hire staff for in-house meal prep and nutrition education.
- **Option B**: Contract with a local district, co-op, or certified vendor to deliver meals daily.

A final decision will depend on cost, facilities, and enrollment. All models will adhere to food safety and health regulations.

Access and Oversight

Families will complete Free and Reduced-Price Meal Applications confidentially. AOA will explore Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) participation if eligible. A Child Nutrition Director will oversee compliance, procurement, and staff training in USDA guidelines, allergy protocols, and equitable distribution.

AOA is committed to student health, dignity, and sustainability in all meal service operations.

Q42. **E.2 Food Service Describe the food service space at the facility.**

Facility Requirements and Compliance

Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) will ensure that all food service facilities comply with standards set by the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Arkansas Department of Health (ADH), and USDA guidelines under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

Key Facility Features

1. Cafeteria Space

AOA will maintain a designated dining area with appropriate seating and sanitary, non-slip surfaces. Meals will be served in rotating shifts to accommodate student enrollment and supervision, especially for outdoor or hybrid dining aligned with the school's mission.

2. Kitchen / Food Prep Area

The kitchen will feature commercial-grade equipment including refrigerators, ovens, warmers, prep counters, and ADH-compliant handwashing stations. Mechanical ventilation and fire suppression systems will be installed per building and fire codes.

3. Dishwashing and Sanitation

Facilities will include three-compartment sinks, mop sinks, and proper sanitization stations. Hot water supply, pest control, and clear separation of cleaning chemicals from food areas will be enforced.

4. Storage and Receiving Areas

Dry storage will feature raised shelving and secure chemical storage. A dedicated receiving area will support food inspection and delivery access. Waste disposal will follow ADH health code guidelines.

Meal Service Plan

AOA will participate in the NSLP and may contract meal services temporarily until full kitchen operations are in place.

Inspections and Temporary Use

ADH will inspect food areas prior to opening. A valid Food Establishment Permit will be maintained. In temporary facilities, compliant portable kitchens or vendor-delivered meals will be utilized.

Q43. **F.1 Safety Describe how the school safety and security plan for students, staff, facility, and property will be developed and updated in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.**

Operations Plan (EOP) and Safety Oversight

AOA will develop and maintain a comprehensive, campus-wide Safety and Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). This living document will be updated annually and will be reviewed in collaboration with the following agencies and partners:

- Arkansas Division of Emergency Management (ADEM)
- Arkansas Department of Education (ADE)
- Local Fire, EMS, and Law Enforcement
- Certified wilderness safety trainers and outdoor education experts

The school's EOP will align with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and follow protocols consistent with the Arkansas School Safety Commission. A standing Safety Committee will oversee this process. This committee will include:

- School administration and leadership
- Teacher representatives
- The licensed school nurse
- Facilities/maintenance staff
- Parent/community emergency partners (fire/rescue or medical)
- A certified wilderness safety advisor

This committee will meet quarterly to review:

- Incident logs and trends
- Safety training completion
- Emergency drill feedback
- Updates to emergency protocols and checklists

Health and Safety in Outdoor Settings

Because students at AOA will spend 50–70% of their school day outdoors, weather permitting, the school must maintain layered health and safety systems specifically designed for outdoor education environments.

Staff Preparedness and Training

- All instructional and support staff responsible for outdoor programming will be certified in Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR) training.
- Additional training will include Stop the Bleed, CPR/AED certification, and heat and cold exposure management.
- Staff will receive annual refreshers and scenario-based simulations.

School Nurse Role

- A licensed school nurse will be available on campus during all operational hours.
- The nurse will accompany or remain in close radio contact with staff during off-campus excursions.

- The nurse will be responsible for student medical documentation, emergency care plans, medication distribution, and first aid oversight.

Outdoor Safety Equipment

Each off-campus learning group will be equipped with:

- First aid kits
- Roster and emergency contact lists
- Two-way radios or satellite phones
- Route logs
- Portable water, sun protection, and thermal emergency blankets
- Protective gear (e.g., life vests, helmets, gloves)

Weather and Environmental Conditions

AOA will establish clear thresholds and protocols for inclement weather:

- Outdoor instruction will be suspended immediately if lightning is observed within a 10-mile radius, during high heat index days, or in poor air quality conditions.
- Students will be relocated to designated indoor shelters or weather-safe facilities.
- Instructors will monitor apps and NOAA alerts during all outdoor sessions.

Emergency Procedures and Drills

AOA will conduct emergency drills in accordance with Arkansas Code § 6-10-110, integrating both indoor and outdoor response scenarios. Drills and response plans will be developmentally appropriate and clearly communicated to students and families.

Lockdown Procedures

- Staff and students will receive annual lockdown training, including silent movement, communication blackout, and shelter-in-place procedures.
- Monthly drills will be coordinated with local law enforcement and include lockdowns initiated from outdoor sites.

Severe Weather (Tornado, Storms)

- AOA will designate a FEMA-compliant tornado shelter that can accommodate all students and staff.
- Tornado and severe weather drills will occur each semester and will simulate evacuation from outdoor locations.
- All outdoor locations will have evacuation maps and signal protocols.

Evacuation and Fire Response

- Indoor and outdoor evacuation routes will be posted in every classroom, yurt, pavilion, and trailhead.
- Monthly fire drills will include timed evacuations and student accountability systems.

- Instructors will use color-coded flag systems to signal "clear," "assist needed," or "unsafe route" status during outdoor emergencies.

Outdoor Risk-Specific Safety Protocols

AOA's nature-based curriculum includes a variety of hands-on, potentially high-risk activities. Each program area will follow strict risk management procedures:

Canoeing, Kayaking, Fishing

- Students will wear Coast Guard-approved life vests at all times.
- At least one instructor per group will be certified in water safety and small craft navigation.
- A buddy system and shoreline spotter will be maintained at all times.

Hiking, Biking, Climbing

- All students must wear helmets and appropriate gear.
- Trails will be pre-approved and mapped, with check-in/check-out protocols at trailheads.
- Instructors will conduct safety briefings, hydration checks, and pre-hike gear inspections.

Archery and Fire-Making

- These high-skill areas will only be led by certified instructors.
- Secure perimeters, gear inventory, and student safety contracts will be enforced.
- Fire-making activities will be conducted in controlled settings with fire suppression tools present.

Expectations for Staff and Students

Staff Responsibilities

- Attend mandatory annual safety trainings
- Conduct headcounts before, during, and after each transition
- Model calm, compliant behavior during drills and incidents
- Maintain accurate emergency contact and health records for each student

Student Orientation and Training

- Students will receive structured orientation through Advisory and Outdoor Leadership classes
- Training topics include:
  ○ Emergency signals and whistle codes
  ○ How to use the buddy system
  ○ Wilderness hazard awareness (e.g., ticks, dehydration, poison ivy)
  ○ Reporting unsafe behavior or injuries

Incident Reporting and Oversight

- All safety incidents or near misses will be logged in an Incident Review System within 48 hours
- Reports will include:
  ○ Description of the event

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

- ○ Personnel involved
- ○ First aid provided
- ○ Follow-up recommendations
- Families will receive written notification of any significant incident involving their child.
- An Annual Safety Report will be presented to the AOA Governing Board and submitted to the Arkansas Department of Education as required.

Policy Transparency and Training Calendar

AOA will publish all relevant safety protocols in both the Student & Family Handbook and the Employee Handbook. These documents will include:

- Emergency contact numbers
- Evacuation routes
- Safety drills and expected behavior
- Communication protocols with families
- Calendar of required staff training and certification deadlines

Handbooks will be updated annually and distributed at the start of each school year.

Commitment to a Culture of Safety

AOA's unique outdoor learning environment requires a proactive, layered safety culture that engages students, staff, and community partners. Through comprehensive planning, training, and responsiveness, AOA aims to model best-in-class practices for school safety in both traditional and wilderness settings.

The safety and security of all learners is foundational to our mission. By embedding safety into daily operations, we protect not only our students but also the transformative power of outdoor education itself.

Q44. **G.1 Facilities**
a. Provide a description of the school facility if it has been obtained. If not, describe the process for identifying and securing a facility.

Powered by ◀ Edlusion   8/22/2025

Facility Planning Objectives

The selected facility must:

- Accommodate projected enrollment of 200–600 students in grades 6–12
- Support outdoor and project-based learning, including access to green space, trails, and natural environments
- Comply with Arkansas Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation standards
- Be accessible and safe, meeting ADA, fire safety, and occupancy codes
- Allow for modular or phased expansion over time

Identification Process

A. Needs Assessment

- Conducted by school leadership to define space requirements, including:
  - Classrooms and STEM labs
  - Outdoor instructional areas
  - Multipurpose spaces
  - Administrative offices
  - Transportation access and parking

B. Site Search Criteria

- Prioritize sites that:
  - Are located near or within natural environments (state parks, forested land, rivers, etc.)
  - Have existing infrastructure that can be adapted for school use (e.g., former school, camp, or retreat center)
  - Are zoned appropriately for educational use
  - Are within a 30-minute drive of the target enrollment region to ensure transportation feasibility

C. Real Estate Engagement

- The school will work with a licensed real estate broker, developer, or facilities consultant experienced in school property acquisition.
- Site visits will be conducted with:
  - School leaders
  - Architects and contractors (for retrofit or construction estimates)

Due Diligence and Evaluation

A. Feasibility Studies

- Review of:
  - Building condition
  - Land use and zoning
  - Environmental safety (e.g., lead, asbestos, flood zones)
  - Utility access and capacity

- Estimated costs for renovation or construction

B. Cost-Benefit Analysis

- Comparison of leasing vs. purchasing
- Consideration of build-to-suit agreements, public-private partnerships, or long-term ground leases
- Evaluation of total cost of occupancy, including utilities, maintenance, and insurance

Securing the Facility

A. Lease or Purchase Negotiation

- All agreements will be reviewed by legal counsel
- The school will ensure:
- Fair market value terms
- No conflicts of interest
- A lease term that supports long-term stability (5+ years with renewal options)

B. Compliance with State Regulations

- Submit documentation to the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), including:
- Certificate of Occupancy
- Fire marshal inspection
- Health inspection
- Floor plan and square footage analysis
- Notify DESE of any temporary or phased facilities used during expansion

Long-Term Facility Strategy

- Arkansas Outdoor Academy may pursue:
- Acquisition of land to build a permanent, mission-aligned campus
- Partnerships with parks, nature centers, or land trusts for access to outdoor learning space
- Capital campaigns or grant funding to support facility development

Applicant Evidence :

[PDF] 1500 Riverfront Potenti...
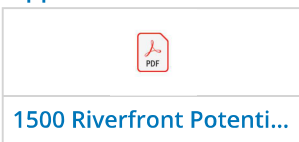
Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by
Christopher Horton

Q45. **G.2 Facilities Briefly describe the contingency plan should you not be able to acquire the desired facility.**

Alternative Facility Options

The school has identified several backup options in the region, including:

- Leasable commercial or educational buildings (e.g., former schools, community centers, retreat centers)
- Modular classroom units on leased land, compliant with building codes and Arkansas Department of Education standards
- Partnerships with local churches, civic centers, or universities that have classroom space and outdoor access available temporarily

These contingency sites are being pre-screened for:

- Code compliance and zoning
- Accessibility (ADA, transportation)
- Utility readiness (water, electric, internet)

Temporary Phased Occupancy Plan

If the full campus is not available at opening:

- The school may open with a limited number of grade levels or students (based on facility capacity), consistent with its charter.
- Expansion to full enrollment will be phased in as space becomes available or is constructed.

Portable Classroom Option

- If necessary, Arkansas Outdoor Academy will lease portable, code-compliant modular classrooms to be placed on leased land or public property.
- These units will meet all state requirements for safety, occupancy, and accessibility.
- Utilities and sanitation will be arranged in coordination with local authorities.

Communication and Compliance

- Any contingency plan will be communicated in writing to the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).
- The school will submit required approvals (Certificate of Occupancy, fire marshal approval, etc.) before operating in any temporary space.
- Families will be notified of any temporary arrangements and given clear expectations for transportation, schedule, and services.

Q46. H.1 Additional Operations Describe the school's technology plan for meeting the academic and operational needs of classrooms, labs, library/media standards, district website, and other relevant areas of the school.

Technology Plan for Arkansas Outdoor Academy

Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) will integrate technology into all aspects of learning to support innovation, outdoor exploration, and digital literacy. A one-to-one device program will provide each student in grades 6–12 with a Chromebook or tablet for use with platforms like Google Classroom, Schoology, and collaboration tools such as Google Docs and Microsoft 365.

A robust Learning Management System (LMS) will centralize assignments, communication, and progress tracking. Outdoor education will be enhanced by rugged portable devices with GPS, nature documentation apps, and tools for real-time data collection during fieldwork. Virtual labs, Google Earth, and science sensors will enrich inquiry-based projects.

STEM labs will feature specialized tech tools to connect environmental learning with engineering and design. For remote learning or weather-related interruptions, AOA will provide synchronous and asynchronous options.

The school website will serve as a central hub for calendars, enrollment, grades, and announcements. Social media and virtual conferencing tools like Zoom and Google Meet will support family engagement and virtual events.

Operationally, AOA will use a Student Information System (SIS) for enrollment, grading, and compliance reporting. Cloud platforms like Google Drive will enable staff and student collaboration, with cybersecurity measures in place to protect data and comply with FERPA regulations.

Staff will receive regular professional development in tech integration and field-based digital tools. On-site IT support will ensure smooth operation. AOA's technology plan bridges outdoor learning with modern tools, creating an engaging, connected, and future-ready educational experience.

Q47. H.2 Additional Operations Describe the school's school health and nursing services plan.

School Health and Nursing Services Plan

At Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA), student health is essential for academic and outdoor learning success. A certified school nurse will oversee daily care, health screenings, medication management, and emergency response, ensuring every student has access to physical and emotional support.

Health Services
The school nurse will conduct routine screenings (vision, hearing, BMI) and maintain confidential health records, including immunizations, allergies, and chronic conditions. Individualized Health Plans (IHPs) and Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) will be created for students with medical needs such as asthma or severe allergies.

Outdoor Health & Safety
Given AOA's outdoor emphasis, staff will conduct pre-activity health checks and carry first aid kits, emergency contacts, and medical supplies during excursions. Hydration, sun safety, and nutrition protocols will be followed, especially for younger students. Staff will be trained in allergy and asthma response procedures.

Mental Health & Wellness
AOA will integrate Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), mindfulness, and stress reduction programs such as nature walks and journaling. A licensed counselor will support students dealing with emotional challenges and collaborate with teachers and the nurse to identify students in need.

Illness & Injury Protocols
The nurse will manage minor injuries and coordinate emergency care. Illness protocols will follow Arkansas Department of Health guidelines, including isolation, sanitation, and return-to-school requirements.

Family & Community Partnerships
AOA will engage families through health workshops and clear communication. Local health providers will support student wellness through partnerships.

This comprehensive plan ensures AOA students are healthy, safe, and ready to thrive in every learning environment.

Q48. H.3 Additional Operations Describe the school counseling services that the school will provide to enrolled students, including how the school will staff these services in a way that meets the academic, career, and other needs of all students.

Counseling Services at Arkansas Outdoor Academy

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) will provide a comprehensive, equitable counseling program that supports students' academic, career, and social-emotional development, key to our mission of preparing students for lifelong success through outdoor and experiential education. Counseling services will be fully integrated into all aspects of student life, aligned with three career pathways: Environmental and Outdoor Education, Sustainable Agriculture and Conservation, and Outdoor Leadership and Recreation.

Comprehensive Counseling Program

AOA's program will align with the Arkansas Department of Education School Counseling Standards, Arkansas Counseling Association guidelines, Act 190, and the ASCA model, adapted to our outdoor-focused context.

Core Services:

- **Academic Counseling:** Course selection, credit tracking, academic interventions, and graduation planning.
- **Career Counseling:** Career exploration aligned to AOA pathways, industry awareness, and integration of tools like aptitude assessments and resume building.
- **Social-Emotional Counseling:** Support in wellness, resilience, conflict resolution, identity development, and self-regulation, aligned with whole-child development.

Student Success Plans (SSPs)

All students will develop a Student Success Plan (SSP) with input from counselors and families. These plans will evolve yearly and guide students in setting academic, career, and personal goals. Key checkpoints include:

- **8th Grade:** Pathway selection
- **10th Grade:** Credential alignment
- **12th Grade:** Postsecondary transition planning

Staffing and Delivery Model

AOA will employ licensed counselors at a target ratio of **1:250** students, surpassing state minimums to ensure personalized support. Counselors will also serve as pathway-specific advisors, building deep, ongoing relationships. The counseling team may include:

- A Director of Counseling Services
- Career Advisors or pathway coordinators
- Partnerships with community mental health providers for referrals and crisis intervention

College, Career, and Pathway Integration

Counselors will work with pathway leaders to coordinate:

- Potential College partnerships with Arkansas Tech, UA Monticello, NWACC , offering dual-credit enrollment, campus visits, guest speakers, and summer programs.

- Industry certifications aligned with pathways, including First Aid/CPR, Leave No Trace, GIS Mapping, Agricultural Technician, and Outdoor Leadership credentials.
- Internships and externships through organizations like the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and colleges.

Counselors will also support documentation and portfolio building, helping students track certifications and experiences relevant to their goals.

Family and Community Engagement

AOA's counseling program will actively involve families. Regular student-led conferences, digital communication tools, and progress tracking will keep families informed. Events such as career nights, college planning workshops, and mental health awareness programs will reinforce the school's commitment to student well-being and postsecondary success.

Q49. **I.1 Recruitment and Marketing**
Describe the Year 0 plan to recruit students. Include strategies, activities, events, responsible parties, and a timeline
a. Describe the key elements of the school's marketing plan aimed at recruiting and retaining students in subsequent years.

Year 0 Recruitment Goals

- Enroll a diverse student body in grades 6–12 for the inaugural year.
- Build community relationships with local families, schools, and organizations.
- Create a strong online presence and clear access to enrollment information.
- Generate excitement around AOA's mission of outdoor and experiential learning.

Local Partnerships and Engagement

Lead: Executive Director, Recruitment Team

- Host meetings with local district leaders, principals, and parent groups to introduce AOA.
- Partner with environmental organizations, youth programs, and businesses to share information.
- Attend community events, school board meetings, and PTA functions to spread awareness.

Timeline:

- Months 1–3: Initial outreach and relationship building.
- Months 4–6: Ongoing participation in events and deeper community engagement.

School Fairs and Info Sessions

Lead: Recruitment Team, Staff Volunteers

- Host sessions in community centers, libraries, and local schools.
- Set up booths at farmers markets, fairs, and festivals to distribute materials and collect inquiries.

Timeline:

- Months 2–6: Monthly sessions and presence at community events.

Website Development

Lead: Communications Team

- Build a user-friendly website with enrollment information, virtual tours, staff bios, and FAQs.
- Include an application portal and downloadable forms.

Timeline:

- Month 2: Begin development.
- Month 4: Launch website publicly.

Social Media Campaign

Lead: Social Media Manager

- Launch Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube profiles to showcase campus life, outdoor learning, and student stories.
- Run targeted social media ads to reach local families interested in experiential education.

Timeline:

- Month 1: Set up platforms, begin organic posting.
- Month 3: Launch paid ad campaigns.

Email Campaigns and Newsletters

Lead: Marketing Team

- Collect email addresses at events and info sessions.
- Send regular updates, student testimonials, event invites, and deadline reminders.

Timeline:

- Month 1: Begin list building.
- Month 3: Begin biweekly newsletters.

Open Houses & Exploration Days

Lead: Recruitment Team, School Leadership

- **Open Houses**: Introduce families to staff, programs, and outdoor education through presentations and campus tours.
- **Exploration Days**: Offer sample experiences (e.g., gardening, survival skills, nature hikes).
- **Prospective Student Field Day**: Engage students in collaborative outdoor challenges.

Timeline:

- Month 2–3: First Open House
- Month 4: Exploration Day
- Month 6: Field Day

Public Relations & Local Media

Lead: Marketing & Community Relations Teams

- Issue press releases and coordinate interviews with local media outlets.
- Promote AOA's opening, staff stories, and student-centered outdoor programming.

Timeline:

- Month 1: Initial press release
- Month 2–4: Media outreach and interviews

Easy Application Process

Lead: Admissions Team

- Launch an online portal with step-by-step guidance.
- Offer support through open office hours and Q&A sessions (in-person and virtual).

Timeline:

- Month 4: Launch application portal
- Months 4–6: Host enrollment workshops

Outreach to Underrepresented Families

Lead: Admissions & Community Engagement Team

- Partner with community groups serving low-income families, students of color, and ELLs.
- Offer fee waivers, transportation assistance, and multilingual materials.

Timeline:

- Months 2–6: Continuous outreach

Family Feedback & Continuous Improvement

Lead: Recruitment & Community Teams

- Collect post-event surveys to assess effectiveness and inform adjustments.
- Evaluate application numbers monthly and adapt outreach strategies accordingly.

Timeline:

- End of Month 3: First review
- End of Month 6: Final evaluation and planning

Recruitment Timeline Snapshot

Month	Key Activities
Month 1	Social media launch, press release, email collection
Month 2	Website development, Open House, event outreach begins
Month 3	Social media ads, media interviews, first feedback survey
Month 4	Application portal live, Outdoor Exploration Day

Month 5	Application workshops, community tabling continues
Month 6	Field Day, outreach wrap-up, evaluate recruitment results

Recruitment Marketing Brand Identity

- Consistent messaging: *"Learning beyond the classroom – where nature meets innovation"*
- Visual branding across platforms (logo, colors, voice)

Digital Presence

- Website with real-time updates, event announcements, curriculum previews
- SEO optimization for keywords like *"Arkansas outdoor school"*, *"hands-on learning"*
- Targeted social media ads during enrollment season

Community-Based Engagement

- Relationships with feeder schools and afterschool programs
- Pop-up learning events in public spaces (parks, libraries)
- Seasonal open houses and interactive family nights

Publicity

- Press releases highlighting student achievements
- Blog/vlog series like *"A Day at the Academy"* to build interest and transparency

Retention Marketing

Parent Engagement

- Weekly emails or app notifications with student updates
- Parent portal access to grades, attendance, and events
- Feedback via surveys, suggestion boxes, and town halls
- Seasonal family events and student-led conferences

Student Engagement

- Outdoor clubs (e.g., nature photography, science exploration)
- Celebrations for academic and outdoor achievements
- Long-term alumni network for mentorship and community-building

Academic & Social Support

- Personalized learning pathways with regular check-ins
- Peer mentoring and staff-led advisory programs
- Intramural and enrichment activities aligned with student interests

Post-Year 0 Annual Marketing Calendar

Month	Key Focus
August	Welcome events, community service launch
September	Fall ads, Open House season, outdoor features
October	Local events, school fairs, parent survey
November	Student spotlights, mid-year enrollment push
December	Project showcases, alumni highlights
Jan–March	Application push: info nights, digital campaigns
April	Spring Open House, family night, media outreach
May	Year-end celebrations, retention events
June–July	Follow-up with enrolled families, prep for fall

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

Applicant Evidence :
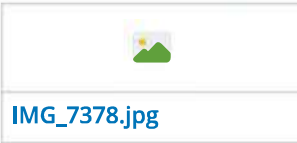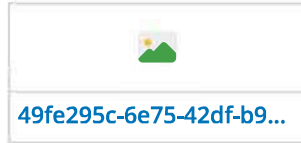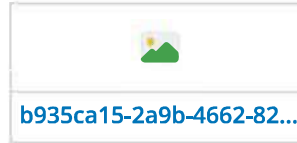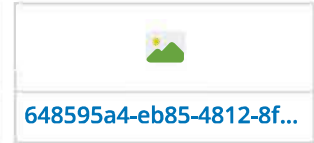
IMG_7378.jpg	49fe295c-6e75-42df-b9...	b935ca15-2a9b-4662-82...	648595a4-eb85-4812-8f...
Uploaded on **8/5/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **8/8/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **8/8/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **8/8/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**

Q50. **I.2 Recruitment and Marketing In accordance with Arkansas law 6-23-306, the school must prohibit discrimination in its admission policy based on gender, national origin, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or academic or athletic eligibility. If the school has more applicants than available seats, then it shall conduct a random, anonymous lottery to fill the seats. Describe how the school's enrollment lottery process will comply with these requirements.**
a. Code Ann 6-23- 306(14)(B)(ii)(a) and (b) allows for certain enrollment preferences. Will the charter school utilize any of the permitted enrollment preferences? If so, please briefly describe the school's policy.

Enrollment Lottery Policy for Arkansas Outdoor Academy
In Compliance with Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-306

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy is committed to maintaining an open, equitable, and nondiscriminatory enrollment process, in full compliance with Arkansas law § 6-23-306. This law mandates that no applicant shall be discriminated against based on gender, national origin, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or academic or athletic eligibility. The following outlines the school's lottery and enrollment procedures to ensure fair and lawful admissions:

Non-Discrimination Statement

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy affirms that:

- Admission will be open to all students residing in Arkansas.
- The school does not discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the basis of:
  - Gender
  - National origin
  - Race
  - Ethnicity
  - Religion
  - Disability
  - Academic or athletic ability
- No admissions tests or interviews will be used to screen applicants.

Enrollment Capacity & Application Process
Step 1: Public Notification

- The application window will be publicly announced on the school's website, social media, and through local media outlets and community partners.
- The open enrollment period will run for a minimum of 30 days, and all application materials will be made accessible and available in multiple languages as needed.

Step 2: Application Submission

- Families will complete an online or paper application during the open enrollment window.
- The application will require only basic identifying information and grade level but will not include any screening criteria.

Step 3: Determining Enrollment Capacity

- After the application window closes, the school will determine if the number of applications exceeds the number of available seats per grade level.
  - If fewer or equal applicants than seats are received, all applicants will be accepted.
  - If more applicants than seats are received for any grade level, a lottery will be conducted.

Lottery Procedure

If required, the lottery will be conducted according to the following guidelines:

1. Public Lottery Event

- The lottery will be held publicly and transparently, with the date, time, and location announced in advance on the school's website and in other communications.
- Families are welcome to attend, but attendance is not required for participation or selection.

2. Random and Anonymous Process

- Each applicant will be assigned a unique, anonymous number or code.
- The drawing will be conducted using a randomized process, such as a digital randomizer or a physical draw (e.g., numbered balls or slips).
- The drawing will be supervised by an impartial third party, such as a school board member, not directly involved in the selection process.

3. Enrollment and Waitlist

- The lottery will continue until all available seats are filled.
- Remaining applicants will be placed on a numerical waitlist, also determined by the randomized draw.
- As space becomes available, students will be contacted in waitlist order.

Lottery Preferences (if applicable)

Per Arkansas law, charter schools may give preference in the lottery to specific categories, as long as they are applied consistently and are clearly stated in the school's charter. If approved in the charter, Arkansas Outdoor Academy may offer the following preferences:

- Children of staff members
- Siblings of currently enrolled students

Note: These preferences would be applied prior to the general lottery if applicable and allowed under the final charter agreement.

Post-Lottery Communication

- All applicants will be notified in writing (via email and/or mail) of their lottery results within 5 business days after the lottery is conducted.
- Students selected for admission will have a defined period (e.g., 10 business days) to accept their offer and complete registration paperwork.
- If a family declines or fails to respond, the next student on the waitlist will be offered the seat.

Record Keeping and Oversight

- The entire lottery process, including application counts, assignment of lottery numbers, the random selection process, and final enrollment outcomes, will be documented and archived for at least three years.

- Records will be available for audit or review by the Arkansas Department of Education or other regulatory entities.

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy is committed to equity, access, and transparency in its admissions process. The lottery will be conducted with integrity and compliance to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to benefit from the school's innovative outdoor learning environment.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

7. Financial Plan and Fiscal Sustainability

Q51.

A.1 Indicate the number of students the charter school intends to serve for each year of the initial charter term. What data and factors were used to determine the demand for the school and the projected enrollment provided?

For each school year in the initial charter term please provide the following

a. School Year (e.g. Year One, Year Two, etc.)
b. Grade Levels offered per school year
c. Total projected Student Enrollment for all grades per school year (min, anticipated, max)
d. Faculty projections based on anticipated enrollment per school year
e. Non-faculty projections based on anticipated enrollment per school year

Arkansas Outdoor Academy: 5-Year Enrollment & Staffing Plan

Arkansas Outdoor Academy has developed a strategic, data-informed plan to serve between **200 and 600 students** over its first five years of operation. The plan supports scalable, high-quality instruction grounded in outdoor, STEM-integrated learning while ensuring operational sustainability and strong academic outcomes.

Enrollment and Grade-Level Expansion

Year	Grades Offered	Enrollment (Min–Anticipated–Max)	Faculty (Teachers)	Non-Faculty Staff
Year 1	Grades 6–9	200 – 250 – 300	15	10
Year 2	Grades 6–10	250 – 350 – 400	20	12
Year 3	Grades 6–11	300 – 450 – 500	25	14
Year 4	Grades 6–12	350 – 500 – 550	28	16
Year 5	Grades 6–12	400 – 550 – 600	30	18

This tiered approach ensures responsible growth that matches available resources, space, and instructional capacity.

Demand Drivers and Enrollment Rationale

1. Regional Demographics and Market Demand

Data from the Arkansas Department of Education and U.S. Census projections show sustained population growth in rural and underserved areas near the school's target location. Families in these regions often face limited educational options, especially those seeking small learning environments or specialized programs in nature-based or STEM education.

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy is designed to fill this gap—targeting families who value hands-on, experiential learning that integrates core academics with outdoor and environmental experiences.

Faculty & Staff Planning

Arkansas Outdoor Academy is committed to maintaining a **low student-teacher ratio (12:1 to 15:1)** to support personalized learning and strong teacher-student relationships. Non-faculty staffing is scaled to ensure safety, operations, and student well-being as enrollment increases.

Faculty Includes:

- Core content teachers (ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies)
- Electives teachers (Outdoor Education, Health, Art, Environmental Science)
- STEM and project-based instructors
- Intervention staff for Special Education, English Language Learners (ELL), and gifted services

Non-Faculty Includes:

- Administrative leadership (Principal, Assistant Director)
- Counselors and licensed mental health professionals
- Front office and operations staff
- Maintenance, custodial, and grounds keeping staff
- Bus drivers
- Instructional aides and paraprofessionals

Staffing is reviewed annually based on student needs, enrollment actuals, and instructional priorities.

Grade-Level Expansion Timeline

Year	Grades Served	Description
Year 1	6–9	Launches with middle and early high school
Year 2	6–10	High school phase-in begins
Year 3	6–11	Full junior and senior high blend
Year 4	6–12	First graduating class begins
Year 5	6–12	Full model stabilized

This model supports consistent teacher pipelines, curriculum continuity, and a stable academic identity as the school grows.

Staffing Ratios and Operational Philosophy

- **Student-Teacher Ratio**: Targeted between **12:1 and 15:1** to ensure rigorous, project-based instruction with individual support.
- **Non-Faculty Ratio**: Approximately 1 support staff per 25–30 students, ensuring student safety, access to mental health and counseling services, and efficient campus operations.

These ratios align with best practices in high-performing charter schools and reflect the specialized nature of Arkansas Outdoor Academy's outdoor-integrated instructional model.

Data-Informed Planning

The enrollment and staffing model was developed using the following data and planning inputs:

- **Arkansas Department of Education enrollment trends** in charter and traditional public schools
- **Regional population growth** and census data
- **Best-practice staffing models** from national outdoor schools and STEM-focused charters
- **Cost-per-student modeling** tied to minimum, anticipated, and maximum enrollment thresholds

Enrollment projections are revisited each quarter during Year 0 and Year 1 to refine staffing, budgets, and outreach strategies.

Strategic Planning Alignment

The enrollment and staffing strategy directly supports Arkansas Outdoor Academy's mission to deliver:

- Outdoor, nature-integrated education
- STEM-driven academic and career pathways
- Personalized, inclusive, and equitable instruction
- Community-connected learning experiences

Budget planning, staff hiring, and facility expansion are directly linked to these goals, ensuring mission fidelity and financial stability at every stage of growth

Costs and Considerations for Outdoor Learning Settings

Outdoor learning is a central feature of Arkansas Outdoor Academy's mission and instructional design. To ensure outdoor settings are accessible, safe, and sustainable, AOA has incorporated a range of cost categories and strategic considerations into its financial and operational planning

Equipment & Materials for Outdoor Instruction

To deliver a high-quality, outdoor-integrated curriculum, AOA will invest in durable materials suitable for all seasons and learning activities.

- Fieldwork Kits
- Outdoor Science & STEM Materials

Professional Development in Outdoor Instruction

- Schedule adjustments
- Shelter access
- Clothing Equity
- Risk Management Protocols

Seasonal and Climate Considerations

AOA is located in a region with hot summers, wet springs, and mild winters. Planning ensures that outdoor instruction remains safe and effective year-round:

- Transportation for off-site outdoor learning
- Gear for teachers and students

Staff Training and Safety

Outdoor learning demands additional training in supervision, risk mitigation, and environmental education:

AOA will engage students in off-campus fieldwork and environmental projects beginning Year 1, costs include:

- Annual Inspections & Repairs
- Student Stewardship Model
- Entry Fees and Permits

AOA will pursue partnerships with state and local agencies (e.g., Arkansas Game & Fish, Higher Education programs, state parks) to reduce costs through fee waivers or collaborative programming.

Maintenance & Sustainability

To maintain quality and safety over time:

- Annual Inspections and repairs
- Student Stewardship Model

Applicant Evidence :

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education
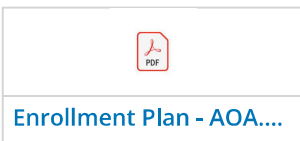
PDF	PDF
Enrollment Plan - AOA....	Outdoor Learning Cost...
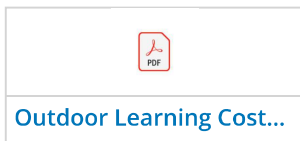
Uploaded on **8/6/2025** by
Christopher Horton

Uploaded on **8/2/2025** by
Christopher Horton

Q52. A.2 Provide a startup budget and a three-year budget forecast beginning July 1 of year 1, necessary to sustain the successful startup of the school. Include revenue projections, expenses, and anticipated fund balances. Upload a copy of the startup and three-year projected budgets.
a. Include in your budget analysis the line-item revenue and expenditure assumptions on which the operating and start-up budgets are based. This description should include the basis for revenue projections, staffing levels, and expenses. Provide sufficient information to guide a full understanding of how budgetary figures were determined.
b. Describe any anticipated state and federal funding sources the school expects to receive in addition to per-pupil foundation funding. In addition to these alternative income sources, clearly explain the degree to which the school budget will rely on variable income (grants, donations, fundraising).

Startup and Three-Year Operating Budgets

AOA's startup budget includes one-time investments in facilities, instructional materials, transportation planning, staffing, and technology infrastructure needed for a successful launch. The three-year forecast outlines projected revenues and expenditures as the school grows enrollment, adds grade levels, and expands program offerings. These forecasts are conservative in nature, excluding any variable income to ensure financial sustainability regardless of outside grant awards or fundraising efforts.

Startup Budget Overview:

- **Facilities and Site Preparation:** Renovation, furnishing, and compliance with health and safety codes.
- **Instructional Materials:** Curriculum aligned with Arkansas standards and outdoor education principles.
- **Technology Infrastructure:** One-to-one device purchases, internet connectivity, and LMS setup.
- **Transportation Planning:** Preliminary routing, cost modeling, and contingency planning.
- **Staff Recruitment & Onboarding:** Initial salaries, benefits, hiring costs, and professional development.
- **Community Engagement:** Marketing, recruitment events, and outreach costs.

Three-Year Forecast Highlights:

- **Year 1 Enrollment Target:** 300 students (Grades 6–9), scaling to 450 students by Year 3.
- **Staffing Plan:** Year 1 will employ core instructional and support staff, growing proportionally with student enrollment.
- **Annual Operating Expenses:** Includes salaries and benefits, instructional materials, transportation, facility costs, utilities, and insurance.
- **Operating Reserve:** Maintained annually to cover 8–12% of total expenditures, exceeding the minimum recommended for public charter schools.

Detailed line-item budgets, with revenue projections, staffing expenses, and fund balances, are included in the attached budget document. These documents also break down each cost center to ensure transparency and effective financial oversight.

Revenue Assumptions

AOA's financial projections are grounded in current state per-pupil foundation funding as defined by the Arkansas Department of Education, with estimates updated annually based on state budget legislation. As of the most recent guidance, the per-pupil funding amount is estimated at $8100 per student.

Revenue Projections Include:

- **State Foundation Funding:** (100% of projected enrollment)
- **Special Education Funding:** Allocated based on anticipated enrollment of students with IEPs.
- **NSLP Reimbursements:** For eligible students receiving school meals.
- **Transportation Reimbursements:** State reimbursements based on submitted transportation expenses.

- **Start-Up Reserves:** Contingency funds for early implementation phases, drawn from philanthropic support or cash reserves if available.

These revenue sources form the guaranteed income stream and are used exclusively to support core operations including staffing, instruction, transportation, and administration.

Expenditure Assumptions and Staffing Levels

The school's expense model is built to reflect modest but high-quality operations, especially during the launch years. All salaries and benefits are competitive within the local public school landscape and include health insurance, payroll taxes, and retirement contributions.

Staffing Plan:

- **Year 1 (2026–27):**
  - Superintendent
  - Principal
  - CTE Coordinator
  - 6–9 Teachers (Core and Electives)
  - 2 Assistant Principals (Behavior and Curriculum)
  - School Counselor
  - Administrative Assistant
  - 1–2 Paraprofessionals
  - Nurse and Custodial/Maintenance Support

Staffing levels will grow in Years 2 and 3 proportionally with student enrollment. Instructional and operational costs have been planned with scalability in mind.

Other Major Expenses:

- Facility lease, utilities, maintenance
- Outdoor instructional equipment (e.g., GPS units, science kits)
- Technology hardware/software (Chromebooks, LMS, cybersecurity)
- Transportation (contracted or leased model)
- Professional development and staff certification (e.g., Wilderness First Aid)

Anticipated State and Federal Funding Beyond Per-Pupil Revenue
Federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) Grant

AOA intends to apply for the CSP Start-Up Grant, administered by the U.S. Department of Education. The anticipated grant request is $350,000 to support early planning, curriculum development, and staff training. If awarded, this funding will be used for:

- Purchasing instructional materials and outdoor learning gear

- Professional development aligned with experiential learning
- Supporting early-stage administrative infrastructure

However, CSP funds are not included in the base budget assumptions. The school's operational viability is not dependent on the grant, ensuring responsible planning.

Arkansas Transportation Modernization Grant

AOA will also pursue the Arkansas Transportation Modernization Grant, a competitive program designed to support innovative transportation models. Funding may assist in offsetting costs of a three-route bus system or in piloting eco-friendly and rural-access transportation options. This grant is likewise not included in the base budget, but would provide significant enhancements.

Private Donations and Strategic Philanthropy

While the foundational budget is self-sustaining, AOA will actively try to cultivate relationships with potential funders who align with the school's mission, such as:

- **The Walton Family Foundation**
- **The Stephens Foundation**
- **The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation**

These organizations are known for supporting charter schools, rural innovation, and education equity in Arkansas. Grant proposals will be developed in support of environmental literacy programs, school gardens, outdoor equipment, and enrichment opportunities.

In addition, the school will engage community donors and launch a fundraising campaign to support special projects, student fieldwork, and family engagement initiatives.

Degree of Reliance on Variable Income

AOA's budgeting philosophy is intentionally conservative. No variable income (grants, donations, fundraising) is included in the baseline operating budgets. The school is structured to be fully functional using state-determined per-pupil revenue alone. All additional funds will be treated as enhancement dollars, not operational necessities.

This approach ensures that:

- The school can open and operate without dependence on uncertain revenue sources.
- Programs critical to student achievement are not vulnerable to changes in grant availability.
- Fundraising can focus on innovation, expansion, and long-term strategic goals.

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy has built a thoughtful and financially sound budget that prioritizes student needs, outdoor education, and long-term sustainability. The combination of conservative revenue projections, realistic staffing plans, and a commitment to fiscal discipline ensures that the school can thrive regardless of

fluctuations in external funding.

While AOA will pursue grant opportunities and philanthropic partnerships to enrich programming and expand impact, the school's operational foundation rests securely on state per-pupil funding and prudent management. Our budgeting strategy supports both immediate success and future growth, setting the stage for AOA to become a model of innovation and sustainability in outdoor public education.

☑ Upload Required   File Type: **pdf, image, excel, word, text**   Max File Size: **30**   Total Files Count: **10**

Applicant Evidence :

PDF	PDF	PDF	PDF
AOA Budget Estimates -...	AOA Forecast.xlsx - For...	AOA_Forecast_with_Pro...	AOA Budget Estimates -...
Uploaded on **6/13/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **6/13/2025** by **Teal Lovelady**	Uploaded on **6/13/2025** by **Christopher Horton**	Uploaded on **6/13/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

PDF
AOA Budget Estimates -...
Uploaded on **6/13/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

Q53.

A.3 If the budget is contingent upon funding sources beyond those typically provided by the state and federal government, provide evidence of such funding.

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

Contingent Funding and Evidence of External Support for Arkansas Outdoor Academy

Arkansas Outdoor Academy is committed to financial sustainability through a solid foundation of state and federal funding based on conservative enrollment projections. However, to enhance student programming—particularly in outdoor education, STEM integration, and experiential learning, the school will also pursue external funding from federal grants, private foundations, local donors, and in-kind contributions. This plan outlines those efforts and the accompanying documentation to ensure compliance with **Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-306** and charter authorization standards.

1. Federal and Private Grant Funding

A. Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Start-Up Grant

The Arkansas Outdoor Academy will apply for the **federal Charter School Program (CSP) Start-Up Grant**, administered by the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). This grant supports high-quality charter schools during their launch phase by funding non-recurring expenses such as:

- Curriculum development
- Teacher professional development
- Furniture and equipment
- Startup operational costs

Evidence Submitted or Anticipated Includes:

- Confirmation of application submission to DESE
- Timeline of grant review and disbursement cycles
- Copies of proposal narratives and budgets
- If applicable, prior CSP award history or communication from DESE regarding review status

The CSP grant is critical in helping offset one-time launch costs without placing strain on per-pupil operational funds.

B. Private Foundation Support

The school is also actively pursuing funding from **regional and national foundations** that align with the mission of outdoor and STEM-based education. Focus areas for foundation proposals include:

- Outdoor education and recreation
- Environmental and sustainability education
- Public health and wellness
- STEM curriculum and career readiness

Potential (no agreements have been made) targeted funders may include:

- Walton Family Foundation (support for innovation in public education)

- Arkansas Community Foundation (local education grants and rural impact funding)
- National Environmental Education Foundation
- Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas

Evidence of Grant Activity Includes:

- Submitted grant proposals and letters of inquiry
- Confirmation emails or review acknowledgments from funders
- Award letters, if secured
- Letters of intent or correspondence indicating funding consideration

These private sources are intended to fund **non-core enhancements**, such as technology for STEM labs, trail-building equipment, or teacher externships—ensuring that base operations are not dependent on these funds.

2. Fundraising and Donations

A. Local Fundraising Campaigns and Sponsorships

Arkansas Outdoor Academy will leverage its strong community identity and relationships in the outdoor sector to raise funds locally. Local campaigns may include:

- Business sponsorships
- Community fundraising events such as outdoor festivals or "gear drives"
- Sponsorship packages for branded items, facility naming rights, or student scholarships

These efforts are designed to build community support and awareness while providing targeted funding for specific student experiences.

Documentation and Evidence Includes:

- Signed letters of commitment from business partners
- Donation receipts and records
- Samples of marketing materials or campaign planning documents
- Records of past fundraising event results (if applicable)

These donations will be accounted for in the school's fundraising revenue ledger and earmarked for clearly defined purposes.

3. In-Kind Contributions and Community Partnerships

To minimize operational costs while enhancing the outdoor education experience, Arkansas Outdoor Academy will also seek in-kind contributions. These may include:

A. Land Use and Facility Access

- Access to trails, outdoor classrooms, or natural spaces through partner parks, conservancies, or land trusts
- Reduced or free leases for facility use in collaboration with municipalities or nonprofits

B. Equipment and Supplies

- Donated equipment (e.g., GPS units, climbing gear, field kits) from outdoor retailers or nonprofits
- Classroom materials from educational suppliers or private donors

C. Volunteer and Instructional Support

- Guest instruction or mentorship from professionals in environmental science, conservation, or outdoor leadership
- Partnerships with universities for interns, fieldwork support, or dual-credit instruction

Evidence Provided May Include:

- MOUs or Letters of Support outlining the scope of partnerships
- Inventory logs of donated goods
- Use agreements for facility or land access at reduced or no cost
- Schedules of volunteer services and hours committed

These partnerships enhance the school's outdoor learning model and reduce the cost of programming while deepening real-world student experiences.

4. Evidence Submission to Charter Authorizer

To ensure compliance with Arkansas charter school authorization standards, Arkansas Outdoor Academy will submit a full funding evidence packet during its initial charter approval and subsequent renewal phases. This packet will include:

- Budget documents showing what portion of the operational plan relies on outside funding
- Copies of grant award letters, donation records, or letters of commitment from in-kind partners
- Written verification that no essential operating expense (e.g., staff salaries, facility leases, utilities, academic programming) is contingent upon unsecured or speculative external funding

All grant and donation income will be recorded separately in financial statements and monitored to ensure restrictions (if any) are honored and aligned with stated purposes.

Q54.

A.4 Explain how the school will remain fiscally sustainable and describe the school's emergency plan for cash flow challenges, a budget shortfall, lower-than-expected enrollment, or other financial challenges in the early years of operation.

Financial Sustainability and Risk Mitigation

Arkansas Outdoor Academy is committed to long-term financial sustainability through conservative planning, responsive financial management, and robust oversight. The school's fiscal strategies are aligned with Arkansas law and best practices for public charter schools, ensuring the school remains financially healthy even amid enrollment fluctuations, funding delays, or economic uncertainty.

1. Conservative Budgeting and Cost Management

The foundation of the school's fiscal strategy is a conservative approach to revenue and expenditure forecasting, aimed at reducing risk and ensuring operational resilience in the early years.

A. Conservative Revenue Planning

Budget development is based on **minimum enrollment projections,** beginning with a conservative base of **200 students in Year One**, with scalability built in as growth occurs. Revenue projections are limited to **confirmed, recurring state and federal sources**, such as:

- Arkansas state foundation funding
- Federal allocations (e.g., Title I, Title II, IDEA)
- Pre-approved startup funding (e.g., CSP, if awarded)

This conservative approach ensures that the core instructional program, staffing, and operations can be fully supported even at minimum enrollment levels. Non-essential or growth-contingent investments, such as facility upgrades or program expansions—will only be triggered once corresponding revenue thresholds are met.

B. Enrollment Monitoring and Cost Scaling

To manage budget stability amid changing student numbers, the school will implement a **monthly enrollment tracking system**. This will allow for real-time comparisons between projected and actual enrollment, triggering proactive budgetary adjustments as needed.

Staffing models and discretionary expenses (such as elective programming, marketing campaigns, or extracurricular enhancements) will be scaled proportionally based on revenue tied to enrollment.

This cost-scaling strategy ensures that the school does not overcommit resources in advance of growth and maintains balanced operations even in lower-than-expected enrollment scenarios.

C. Reserve Fund and Emergency Set-Aside

The school will maintain an unrestricted operating reserve of 5–10% of the annual operating budget. This fund will serve as a financial cushion for unexpected or one-time events, such as:

- Delayed state payments
- Emergency facility repairs

- Enrollment shortfalls
- Equipment replacement

This reserve policy ensures that the school can continue operations and maintain payroll without disruption while other financial remedies are pursued.

D. Diversified Funding and Grant Pursuit

To reduce reliance on public per-pupil funding, Arkansas Outdoor Academy will pursue supplemental funding sources, including:

- Federal Charter School Program (CSP) startup funds
- Competitive grants in STEM education, outdoor learning, and environmental literacy
- Fundraising campaigns tied to the school's mission and community engagement

These additional revenue streams will support non-core enhancements (such as gear purchases, enrichment trips, and equipment), ensuring public funds remain focused on core instructional and operational costs.

2. Emergency Plan for Financial Challenges

AOA has developed a multi-tiered emergency response framework to manage common risks.

A. Response to Lower-Than-Expected Enrollment
Tiered Staffing Model

-
Hiring is tied to confirmed enrollment numbers at key checkpoints (e.g., July 15, September 15).

-
Optional positions—such as elective teachers, additional paraprofessionals, or expansion-focused roles —will only be filled if enrollment thresholds are met.

Phase-In of Non-Essential Expenditures

-
Delay or cancel discretionary purchases (e.g., enrichment programming, elective supplies, non-essential tech upgrades).

-
Adjust contracts or service agreements based on actual student numbers (e.g., meal services, transportation).

Enrollment Monitoring and Budget Realignment

-
Monthly enrollment tracking and revenue recalculation will inform adjustments to expenditures.

•

Leadership will prepare a "Plan B" budget in July for rapid implementation if enrollment does not reach planned benchmarks by August.

B. Budget Shortfall or Delayed State Payments

In the event of a revenue shortfall or delay in state funding distribution:

• The school will draw from its emergency reserve fund to cover essential operating costs, such as payroll and utilities.
• A temporary spending freeze will be enacted on all non-essential expenditures, such as travel, professional development, supplies, and minor equipment.
• Leadership and the board will conduct an immediate review of the budget to identify areas for cost reductions that do not compromise core instructional delivery.

C. Cash Flow and Liquidity Management

To ensure cash liquidity at all times, the school will:

• Maintain a 12-month rolling cash flow forecast reviewed monthly by school leadership and the finance committee.
• Establish a line of credit or short-term loan agreement with a reputable local bank, to be used only as a last resort for bridging temporary gaps.
• Maintain regular contact with DESE to monitor the timing and distribution of public funds.

These tools will help the school avoid payroll interruptions and maintain vendor relationships during tight financial periods.

D. Financial Transparency and Oversight

Key to financial recovery and sustainability is a governance structure that emphasizes oversight, transparency, and accountability. Measures include:

• Monthly financial reporting to the school's Governing Board Finance Committee, detailing revenue, expenses, variances, and cash position
• A public-facing financial summary on the school's website in compliance with Arkansas transparency laws
• Annual independent audits, as well as internal audits by leadership and the finance committee
• Clear board-approved financial policies covering budget modifications, emergency spending, and internal fund transfers

These systems provide the community and stakeholders confidence in the school's fiscal discipline and legal compliance.

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION**
Arkansas Department of Education

3. Governance, Finance Oversight, and Operational Support

The Governing Board of Arkansas Outdoor Academy will play a central role in fiscal governance, overseeing budget development, approving financial policies, and monitoring the overall financial health of the school.

Board Oversight and Fiscal Leadership

- The Finance Committee will meet monthly to review budget-to-actuals, evaluate cash flow, and make recommendations for adjustments.
- The full Board will approve the annual budget, any major budget revisions, emergency fund usage, and key vendor contracts.
- Financial dashboards will be reviewed quarterly to assess alignment with enrollment projections, strategic goals, and DESE standards.

Business Management Capacity

The school will engage either:

- A charter-experienced business manager on staff, or
- A back-office financial service provider with expertise in Arkansas charter finance and reporting

This individual or service will be responsible for ensuring timely financial reporting, maintaining compliance with state accounting standards, overseeing payroll and procurement systems, and supporting the leadership team in budget execution.

By investing in specialized financial leadership, the school will strengthen its operational integrity and reduce administrative risk in the early years.

Applicant Evidence :

PDF	PDF
Contingency Plan_ Und...	AOA Cash Flow for App....

Uploaded on **8/4/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

Uploaded on **8/7/2025** by **Christopher Horton**

Q55. **A.5 Describe how the annual operating budget will be developed and refined each year in accordance with Ark. Code Ann. §6-23-306 (10). Please include how resource allocation decisions are aligned with organizational improvement priorities, student achievement data, and mission-driven priorities.**

Financial Management and Budget Oversight

Effective fiscal oversight is critical to ensuring Arkansas Outdoor Academy fulfills its educational mission while remaining financially sustainable. The school's governance and financial policies are built to ensure full compliance with Arkansas law, sound budgeting practices, and alignment with student needs and program priorities.

1. Legal Compliance and Governance Oversight

In accordance with **Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-306(10) and all applicable regulations issued by the Arkansas Department of Education/Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Arkansas Outdoor Academy will implement strong financial governance systems. These systems include:**

- Development and approval of an annual balanced budget before the start of each fiscal year.
- Compliance with all state laws and reporting requirements, including the submission of required financial documentation to DESE.
- Engagement of an independent certified public accountant to conduct annual financial audits in accordance with state standards.
- Establishment of internal controls to safeguard assets, prevent fraud, and monitor fiscal performance.

The school's **Board of Directors**, through its **Finance & Audit Committee**, will oversee the budgeting process and maintain fiscal discipline by:

- Reviewing budget drafts and amendments
- Monitoring expenditures and financial reports monthly
- Ensuring funds are aligned with the school's mission, academic priorities, and improvement plans
- Reviewing audit findings and approving any necessary corrective actions

By maintaining strict adherence to Arkansas fiscal accountability standards, the school will ensure transparency, operational integrity, and long-term sustainability.

2. Annual Budget Development Process

The school's annual budgeting process is structured, inclusive, and aligned with both long-term strategy and short-term needs. The process follows a predictable cycle to ensure thoughtful planning and board oversight.

Budget Development Phases

Phase	Timeline	Key Activities

Planning	January–March	Review prior-year performance, identify emerging needs using student and operational data, gather input from school leadership and stakeholders
Drafting	March–April	Leadership team prepares budget draft aligned with enrollment, priorities, and program needs
Review	April–May	Finance Committee and full board review, make adjustments, and post for public comment
Approval	June	Final budget adopted by the Board before July 1 deadline, in compliance with state law
Monitoring	Monthly	Financial reports reviewed by the Board, with adjustments made as needed

3. Alignment with Mission, Student Data, and School Improvement Goals

Arkansas Outdoor Academy's budgeting philosophy is mission-centered, equity-focused, and data-driven. Resources will be allocated to advance the school's core vision: delivering outdoor, STEM-integrated, place-based education that fosters academic excellence, personal development, and environmental stewardship.

Mission-Driven Resource Allocation

Core funding priorities will include:

- Outdoor and science equipment for field-based learning
- Materials for project-based, interdisciplinary instruction
- Transportation and logistics for off-campus field experiences
- Partnerships with outdoor organizations, conservation agencies, and STEM institutions
- Ongoing professional development for teachers in experiential learning models

Use of Student Achievement and Needs Data

Student data will be central in driving targeted investments. The school will regularly analyze:

- Formative and summative assessment data (e.g., NWEA MAP, ACT Aspire)
- Literacy screeners and dyslexia diagnostics
- Attendance, behavior, and engagement metrics
- Subgroup performance for ELLs, SPED students, gifted learners, and at-risk students

This data will be used to allocate funding for:

- Tiered academic interventions (MTSS)
- Literacy support and dyslexia services
- ELL programming and language acquisition tools
- Tutoring, enrichment, and extended learning time
- Classroom aides and specialists to support inclusive education

Alignment with the School Improvement Plan (SIP)

Budget priorities will directly reflect the SIP goals, which are informed by:

- Achievement gap analysis
- Teacher and parent input
- Behavioral and attendance trends
- Strategic goals tied to outdoor and place-based learning outcomes

Staffing plans will be driven by both enrollment projections and programmatic needs, ensuring the school can scale sustainably while preserving quality instruction and support.

4. Stakeholder Engagement and Budget Transparency

Engaging stakeholders in the budget development process ensures that resource decisions reflect the values and needs of the entire school community.

Methods of Stakeholder Engagement

- Surveys and focus groups involving teachers, students, and parents to identify funding priorities
- Regular input from the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and teacher leadership teams
- Public budget hearings and formal board presentations to ensure transparency and invite community dialogue

The finalized annual budget—and any mid-year revisions—will be posted on the school website in accordance with Arkansas law and transparency guidelines. Financial summaries will also be included in newsletters and at school events to maintain open communication and trust.

5. Budget Monitoring, Refinement, and Adjustments

Fiscal agility is key to addressing unexpected needs, enrollment fluctuations, and academic shifts. To maintain financial health and responsiveness, Arkansas Outdoor Academy will implement a structured monitoring and revision process.

Quarterly Reviews and Mid-Year Adjustments

Each fiscal quarter, the Finance Committee will:

- Compare actual revenues and expenditures to the approved budget

- Analyze variances and determine if adjustments are necessary
- Review enrollment trends, staff capacity, and updated student needs

If material changes (such as significant enrollment shifts or unforeseen expenses) occur, the school leadership will develop a revised budget and submit it to the board and DESE as required.

Emergency reserve funds will be established to help the school navigate cash flow shortfalls, state funding delays, or operational emergencies in the early years of operation.

Contingency Plans for Financial Challenges

To mitigate early-stage risks, the school will:

- Maintain conservative enrollment projections
- Build reserves during early years of operation
- Seek external grants or philanthropic support when possible
- Establish lines of credit or access to short-term financing if needed
- Regularly engage in scenario planning for low-enrollment or funding disruptions

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER

SCHOOL APPLICATION

Arkansas Department of Education

---

8. Waivers

Q58.

Will you be requesting waivers for this school year? If yes, please provide the following information for each waiver. Each waiver request must include a rationale. Failure to provide a rationale will result in your application being marked as incomplete.

Please include the following:

a. Waiver Topic

b. Arkansas Code Annotated

c. Standard for Accreditation

d. ADE Rules

e. Rationale for Waiver

- ⦿ Yes

- ○ No

Resources

[PDF] 2024_charter_waiver_re...

Applicant Evidence :

[PDF] Waiver List for Applicat...

Uploaded on **6/13/2025**
by **Christopher Horton**

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

9. Appendix A ARKANSAS STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

Please review the Statement of Assurances (see Appendix A) and acknowledge with your signature that they will be addressed through policies adopted by the charter school or sponsoring entity.

As an authorized representative of the applicant group, I hereby certify that under the penalties of perjury, the information submitted in this application is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. Further, I understand that if awarded a charter, the school and its charter school board will address the assurances listed below through policies adopted by the sponsoring entity and charter school board. In addition, if the application is approved, the charter school board, administration, staff of the charter school, and educational service provider shall comply with all relevant state and federal laws in addition to the assurances listed below.

1. The charter school shall be open to all students on a space-available basis and shall not discriminate in its admission policy on the basis of gender, national origin, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or academic or athletic eligibility, except as follows: the charter school may adopt admissions policies that are consistent with state and federal law, regulations, or guidelines applicable to charter schools. The charter may provide for the exclusion of a student who has been expelled from another public school district.
2. If applications exceed the approved enrollment cap, the open-enrollment charter school shall hold an annual random and anonymous public lottery, followed by notifying parents of the enrollment status of all applicants. The waiting list generated by the lottery is valid until the next time the open-enrollment public charter school is required to conduct a random, anonymous student selection in accordance with Ark. Code Ann. §6-23-306 (14)(B)(b)(2).
3. The charter school shall comply with all applicable laws concerning the recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, or termination of its employees.
4. The charter school shall operate in accordance with federal laws and rules governing public schools, applicable provisions of the Arkansas Constitution, and state laws and regulations governing public schools not waived by the approved charter.
5. The charter school shall not use the money that it receives from the state for any unlawful sectarian program, obligations, or activity or as collateral for debt except as allowed by law.
6. Charter schools may enter public-private partnerships where they enter into a lease-purchase agreement for the acquisition or construction of a school building or related facilities built or acquired by private entities exempt from federal taxes under 26 U.S.C. 142(a)(13) as allowed by Ark. Code Ann. 6-20-402(a)(1)(B).
7. The charter school shall not impose taxes or charge students' tuition or fees that are not allowable by law
8. The charter school shall not be religious in its operations or programmatic offerings in accordance with Ark. Code Ann. 6-23-401(a)(7) or as otherwise allowed by law.
9. The charter school shall ensure that any of its employees who qualify for membership in the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System or the Arkansas State and Public-School Employee Insurance Program are covered under those systems to the same extent required by law.
10. Under applicable state laws, the employees and volunteers of the charter school are immune from liability to the same extent as other public school district employees and volunteers.
11. The charter school shall carefully review the potential impact of its application on the efforts of a public school district or public-school districts to comply with court orders and statutory obligations to create and maintain a unitary system of desegregated public schools in accordance with Ark. Code Ann. §6-23-106 (a).
12. The charter school shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local health and safety laws, rules, and regulations regarding the facilities and school property.
13. The applicant confirms the understanding that certain provisions of state law shall not be waived. The charter school is subject to any prohibition, restriction, or requirement imposed by Title 6 of the Arkansas Code and any rule and regulation approved by the State Board of Education under this title relating to (a) Monitoring compliance with Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-101 et seq., as determined by the Commissioner of the Department of

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

Arkansas Department of Education

Education; (b) Conducting criminal background checks for employees; (c) High school graduation requirements as established by the State Board of Education; (d) Special education programs as provided by this title; (e) Public school accountability under this title; (g) Health and safety codes as established by the State Board of Education and state and local governmental entities, pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. 6-23-401(b).

14. No indebtedness of any kind incurred or created by the charter school shall constitute an indebtedness of the state or its political subdivisions. No debts of the charter school shall involve or be secured by the faith, credit, or taxing power of the state or its political subdivisions, pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. 6-23-503. Upon dissolution of the charter school or nonrenewal or revocation of the charter, all net assets of the charter school, including any interest in real property purchased with public funds, shall be deemed the property of the state unless otherwise specified in the charter of the charter school. If the charter school used state or federal funds to purchase or finance personal property, real property, or fixtures for use by the charter school, the authorizer may require that the property be sold. The state has a perfected priority security interest in the net proceeds from the sale or liquidation of the property to the extent of the public funds used in the purchase.

15. The school's curriculum will be aligned with the Arkansas Academic Standards.

16. The school will operate within the statewide assessment system.

17. The Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN) Financial Management System, provided by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, shall be the original and official accounting system of record for the public charter school as required by state law and the rules and regulations of the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education for all financial transaction records and reporting (including, but not limited to, payroll processing and wage and tax reporting to the IRS ATRS, DFA, etc., accounts payable, fixed assets, personnel budgeting, and budgeting). APSCN shall be used to record all private, as well as local, state, and federal revenues and expenditures.

18. The charter school shall comply with Ark. Code Ann. §6-24-105-107 concerning contracting with charter school board members, administrators, and employees.

19. The Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN) Student Management System, provided by the Department of Education, shall be the original and official student management system for the public charter school as required by state law and the rules and regulations of the Department of Education for all student management areas (including, but not limited to, systems administration, demographics, attendance, scheduling, report cards, discipline, medical, Cognos reporting, and Statewide Information System reporting).

20. The facility to be used will comply with all applicable accessibility requirements in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and all other state and federal laws and local zoning ordinances.

21. Should your charter school application be approved, the charter school board must be incorporated as a nonprofit corporation in the State of Arkansas . Additionally, the charter school board will be expected to obtain Federal 501(c)(3) status. A copy of the charter school board's application for Federal 501(c)(3) status must be included with the application.   The charter school board must receive formal tax-exempt status under §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 prior to the first day of its operation with students.

To the best of my knowledge, I certify that the information and data contained in the application are true and correct. The applicant will comply with the Arkansas Statement of Assurances for Charter Schools and all State and Federal laws guiding Charter Schools in Arkansas unless granted a waiver. The charter school board and any educational service providers affirm and acknowledge the information and affirmations presented in this application.

Q59.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER
SCHOOL APPLICATION
Arkansas Department of Education

Type your name.

    Christopher Horton

Q60.

Type your job title.

    Superintendent/Expedition Leader

Q61.

Verify the above statement by signing.

Signature

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

Arkansas Department of Education

10. Addendum – Experienced Operator or Charter Management Organization

Q60.

Are you an experienced Operator and/or do you plan to use a CMO?

○ Yes

◉ No

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CHARTER

SCHOOL APPLICATION

Arkansas Department of Education

---

11. Addendum – Virtual or Blended Operator

Q68.

Will you be a virtual or blended operator?

○ Yes

◉ No

ARKANSAS
OUTDOOR FUTURES

Sharon Bennett

9/22/2024

1

Table of Contents

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program for Outdoor Leadership in Arkansas

Program Overview

CTE Outdoor Leadership Program Curriculum

Year 1: Foundations of Outdoor Leadership

- **Semester 1: Introduction to Outdoor Leadership**

  o **Course Topics:**

    ▪ Principles of Outdoor Leadership

    ▪ Basic Wilderness Skills

    ▪ Environmental Ethics

    ▪ First Aid and CPR Certification

  o **Industry Credentials (IRCs):**

    ▪ First Aid and CPR Certification (American Red Cross)

- **Semester 2: Outdoor Recreation and Safety**

  o **Course Topics:**

    ▪ Outdoor Recreation Planning

    ▪ Risk Management

    ▪ Leave No Trace Principles

    ▪ Basic Navigation Skills

    ▪ Leave No Trace Trainer Certification

Year 2: Advanced Outdoor Skills and Leadership

- **Semester 1: Wilderness Survival and Rescue**

  o **Course Topics:**

    ▪ Advanced Wilderness Survival Skills

    ▪ Search and Rescue Techniques

    ▪ Wilderness First Responder (WFR) Certification

  o **Industry Credentials (IRCs):**

    ▪ Wilderness First Responder (WFR) Certification

- **Semester 2: Leadership and Group Dynamics**
  - o **Course Topics:**
    - Leadership Theories and Practices
    - Group Dynamics and Team Building
    - Conflict Resolution
    - Outdoor Education Methods
  - o **Industry Credentials (IRCs):**
    - Certified Outdoor Leader (COL) - National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)

Year 3: Specialized Outdoor Activities and Career Preparation

- **Semester 1: Specialized Outdoor Activities**
  - o **Course Topics:**
    - Rock Climbing and Rappelling
    - Canoeing and Kayaking
    - Winter Survival Skills
    - Outdoor Program Management
    - Trail Building and Maintenance
    - Outdoor Recreation Therapy
    - Parks Management
    - Bike Mechanics
    - Tourism and Hospitality Management
    - Business Management
  - o **Industry Credentials (IRCs):**
    - American Canoe Association (ACA) Instructor Certification
    - Trail Building Certification (Professional Trail Builders Association - PTBA)
    - Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS) - National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC)
    - Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) - National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)
    - Bicycle Technician Certification - Barnett Bicycle Institute

- - Certified Hospitality and Tourism Management Professional (CHTMP) - American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI)
    - Certified Business Manager (CBM) - Association of Professionals in Business Management (APBM)
- **Semester 2: Career Preparation and Internship**
  - **Course Topics:**
    - Career Planning and Development
    - Internship with Local Outdoor Organizations
    - Capstone Project
  - **Industry Credentials (IRCs):**
    - Internship Completion Certificate

Environmental Stewardship

- **Course Topics:**
  - Principles of Environmental Stewardship
  - Conservation Practices
  - Sustainable Outdoor Recreation
  - Impact of Human Activities on Ecosystems
  - Community-Based Environmental Projects
- **Industry Credentials (IRCs):**
  - Certified Environmental Steward (CES) - National Association for Interpretation (NAI)

Additional Program Components

- **Field Trips and Expeditions:**
  - Regular field trips to local parks and wilderness areas
  - Multi-day expeditions to practice skills in real-world settings
- **Guest Speakers and Workshops:**
  - Sessions with industry professionals
  - Workshops on specialized topics like wilderness photography and outdoor gear maintenance
- **Partnerships:**

o Collaborations with local outdoor organizations and businesses for internships and job placements.

Potential Career Paths

Graduates of this program can pursue various career paths, including but not limited to:

- Outdoor Adventure Guide: Leading groups on outdoor expeditions such as hiking, rock climbing, and kayaking.

- Wilderness First Responder: Providing emergency medical care in remote settings.

- Environmental Educator: Teaching about environmental conservation and sustainable practices.

- Recreation Program Coordinator: Planning and managing outdoor recreation programs for camps, parks, and community centers.

- Trail Builder: Designing and maintaining trails for hiking, biking, and other outdoor activities.

- Therapeutic Recreation Specialist: Using outdoor activities to improve the physical, emotional, and social well-being of clients.

- Park Ranger: Protecting and managing national and state parks, ensuring visitor safety, and conducting educational programs.

- Outdoor Leadership Instructor: Teaching outdoor skills and leadership principles at educational institutions or outdoor schools.

- Biologist: Conducting field research, studying ecosystems, and working on conservation projects to protect wildlife and natural habitats.

- Parks Manager: Overseeing the operations and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities.

- Bike Mechanic: Repairing and maintaining bicycles for outdoor recreation and transportation.

- Tourism Manager: Managing tourism operations, promoting sustainable tourism practices, and enhancing visitor experiences.

- Business Manager: Overseeing business operations, managing finances, and developing strategies for outdoor and recreation-related businesses.

This comprehensive curriculum, along with the potential career paths, aims to equip students with the skills and certifications needed to excel in the outdoor leadership industry.

Assessment Methods

1. Written Exams and Quizzes

- Purpose: To evaluate students' understanding of theoretical concepts.

- Frequency: At the end of each module or unit.

- Content: Multiple-choice questions, short answers, and course essays.

2. Practical Skills Assessments

- Purpose: To assess students' proficiency in hands-on skills.

- Frequency: Throughout the semester during lab sessions and field trips.

- Content: Demonstrations of wilderness skills, first aid procedures, navigation, leadership techniques, and specific skills like bike mechanics and trail building.

3. Projects and Presentations

- Purpose: To encourage in-depth exploration of specific topics and develop communication skills.

- Frequency: Once per semester.

- Content: Research projects, group presentations, and individual reports on environmental stewardship, outdoor program management, and therapeutic methods.

4. Fieldwork and Expeditions

- Purpose: To provide real-world experience and assess practical application of skills.

- Frequency: Regularly scheduled throughout the program.

- Content: Participation in field trips, multi-day expeditions, and community-based environmental projects.

5. Internship Performance

- Purpose: To evaluate students' ability to apply their knowledge in a professional setting.

- Frequency: During the final semester.

- Content: Performance reviews from internship supervisors, reflective journals, and a final internship report.

6. Capstone Project

- Purpose: To integrate and apply all learned skills and knowledge in a comprehensive project.

- Frequency: Final semester.

- Content: A major project that involves planning, executing, and presenting an outdoor leadership program or initiative.

7. Industry Certification Exams

- Purpose: To obtain industry-recognized credentials.

- Frequency: At the end of relevant courses.

- Content: Exams for certifications such as First Aid and CPR, Wilderness First Responder, Leave No Trace Trainer, Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, and others.

Additional Assessment Components

- Participation and Attendance: Regular attendance and active participation in classes, labs, and field activities.

- Peer and Self-Evaluations: Opportunities for students to assess their own and their peers' contributions and performance.

These varied assessment methods ensure that students are well-prepared for careers in outdoor leadership by evaluating both their academic knowledge and practical skills.

Arkansas Workforce Paths

Mountain Biking

Maintaining Arkansas's mountain bike industry involves a variety of roles, each requiring specific skills and credentials. Here are some key positions:

1. **Bicycle Mechanic**

   o **Credentials**: Experience in bike repair and maintenance, certifications from organizations like the Barnett Bicycle Institute or United Bicycle Institute.

   o **Skills**: Proficiency in diagnosing and fixing mechanical issues, customer service, and knowledge of bike components.

2. **Trail Crew Member**

   o **Credentials**: Experience in trail building and maintenance, certifications in trail construction and safety.

   o **Skills**: Physical fitness, knowledge of tools and equipment, ability to work outdoors in various conditions.

3. **Bike Shop Manager**

   o **Credentials**: Business management degree or relevant experience, certifications in bike mechanics.

   o **Skills**: Leadership, inventory management, customer service, and sales.

4. **Mountain Bike Guide**

   o **Credentials**: First aid and CPR certification, experience in guiding and outdoor education.

   o **Skills**: Knowledge of local trails, strong communication skills, and ability to handle emergencies.

5. **Event Coordinator**

   o **Credentials**: Degree in event management or related field, experience in organizing events.

   o **Skills**: Project management, marketing, and logistics planning.

6. **Marketing Specialist**

   o **Credentials**: Degree in marketing or communications, experience in digital marketing.

   o **Skills**: Social media management, content creation, and analytics.

7. **Sales Representative**

   o **Credentials**: Experience in sales, and knowledge of the biking industry.

   o **Skills**: Strong communication, negotiation, and customer relationship management.

8. **Bike Rental Technician**

   o **Credentials**: Experience in bike maintenance, and customer service training.

   o **Skills**: Technical skills for bike setup and repair, ability to assist customers with rentals.

Outdoor Recreation Therapist

Workforce Staffing and Credentials for Therapeutic Outdoor Recreation

Therapeutic outdoor recreation combines outdoor activities with therapeutic practices to improve physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Here are the key roles and credentials needed:

1. Recreational Therapists

- **Role**: Develop and implement therapeutic recreation programs tailored to individual needs.

- **Credentials**:

   o **Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS)**: Certification from the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC)

   o **Bachelor's or Master's Degree**: In therapeutic recreation or a related field.

2. Outdoor Adventure Therapists

- **Role**: Use adventure-based activities like hiking, climbing, and kayaking as therapeutic interventions.

- **Credentials**:

    o **Wilderness First Responder (WFR)**: Certification in advanced first aid and emergency care in remote settings[1]

    o **Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)**: State licensure for counseling.

3. Program Coordinators

- **Role**: Plan, organize, and oversee therapeutic outdoor programs and activities.

- **Credentials**:

    o **Bachelor's Degree**: In recreation management, therapeutic recreation, or a related field.

    o **Experience**: Previous experience in program management and outdoor recreation.

4. Environmental Educators

- **Role**: Educate participants about the natural environment and promote conservation through therapeutic activities.

- **Credentials**:

    o **Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG)**: Certification from the National Association for Interpretation (NAI)

    o **Bachelor's Degree**: In environmental science, education, or a related field.

5. Support Staff

- **Role**: Assist with the logistics, safety, and administration of therapeutic outdoor programs.

- **Credentials**:

    o **First Aid and CPR Certification**: Basic life-saving skills.

    o **Experience**: Relevant experience in outdoor recreation or therapeutic settings.

Training and Development

- **Continuing Education**: Regular training and workshops to stay updated on best practices and new therapeutic techniques.

- **Internships and Practicums**: Hands-on experience through internships and practicums in therapeutic recreation settings.

Key Skills

- **Communication**: Effective communication with participants, families, and healthcare providers.

- **Leadership**: Ability to lead and motivate participants in outdoor activities.
- **Problem-solving**: Quick thinking and problem-solving skills, especially in outdoor settings.
- **Empathy**: Understanding and addressing the emotional and psychological needs of participants.

For more information on careers and certifications in therapeutic outdoor recreation, you can visit the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) and the National Association for Interpretation (NAI).

National Forest Service

Staffing operations in the national forest areas of Arkansas involve a variety of roles, each requiring specific credentials and qualifications. Here are some key positions and their typical requirements:

1. **Foresters**:
    - **Education**: Bachelor's degree in forestry or a related field.
    - **Certifications**: Society of American Foresters (SAF) certification can be beneficial.
    - **Skills**: Knowledge of forest management, ecology, and conservation practices.

2. **Wildland Firefighters**:
    - **Education**: High school diploma or equivalent; specialized training programs.
    - **Certifications**: National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) certifications.
    - **Skills**: Physical fitness, fire suppression techniques, and safety protocols.

3. **Biologists/Ecologists**:
    - **Education**: Bachelor's or advanced degree in biology, ecology, or environmental science.
    - **Certifications**: Relevant state or federal certifications.
    - **Skills**: Research, data analysis, and habitat management.

4. **Recreation Managers**:
    - **Education**: Degree in recreation management, natural resource management, or a related field.
    - **Certifications**: Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) can be advantageous.
    - **Skills**: Public relations, facility management, and program development.

5. **Law Enforcement Officers**:

   o **Education**: Degree in criminal justice or a related field.

   o **Certifications**: Law enforcement certification from a recognized academy.

   o **Skills**: Law enforcement, public safety, and conflict resolution.

6. **Resource Assistants**:

   o **Education**: Varies by position; often requires a degree in a related field.

   o **Certifications**: Specific to the role, such as GIS certification for mapping positions.

   o **Skills**: Technical skills relevant to the position, such as GIS, data collection, and analysis.

Rock Climbing & Mountain Guiding

To staff rock climbing guiding operations in Arkansas, you'll need individuals with specific skills and credentials. Here are the key roles and their typical requirements:

1. **Rock Climbing Guides**:

   o **Education**: No specific degree is required, but a strong personal climbing resume is essential.

   o **Certifications**:

      ▪ American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) Single Pitch Instructor (SPI) certification.

      ▪ AMGA Rock Guide Course or higher certifications are highly preferred.

   o **Skills**: Technical climbing skills, safety protocols, first aid, and excellent communication skills.

2. **Assistant Guides**:

   o **Education**: Similar to lead guides, no specific degree is required.

   o **Certifications**:

      ▪ Basic climbing certifications such as AMGA Climbing Wall Instructor (CWI).

      ▪ Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR) certifications.

   o **Skills**: Basic climbing techniques, safety awareness, and customer service.

3. **Support Staff**:

- o **Education**: Varies by role; a high school diploma or equivalent is common.
- o **Certifications**:
    - First aid and CPR certifications.
- o **Skills**: Administrative skills, equipment maintenance, and logistics management.

4. **Instructors for Climbing Courses**:
- o **Education**: No specific degree is required, but extensive climbing experience is necessary.
- o **Certifications**:
    - AMGA Single Pitch Instructor (SPI) or higher.
    - Specialized certifications for teaching specific skills (e.g., lead climbing, rescue techniques).
- o **Skills**: Teaching and instructional skills, patience, and the ability to work with climbers of all levels.

Land & Water Conservation

Staffing for land and water conservation in Arkansas involves a variety of roles, each requiring specific credentials and qualifications. Here are some key positions and their typical requirements:

1. **Conservation Scientists**:
- o **Education**: Bachelor's or master's degree in environmental science, natural resource management, or a related field.
- o **Certifications**: Society of American Foresters (SAF) certification or similar.
- o **Skills**: Land management, conservation planning, and ecosystem restoration.

2. **Water Resource Specialists**:
- o **Education**: Degree in hydrology, environmental science, or civil engineering.
- o **Certifications**: Professional Engineer (PE) license, Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM).
- o **Skills**: Water quality monitoring, watershed management, and hydrological modeling.

3. **Wildlife Biologists**:
- o **Education**: Bachelor's or advanced degree in wildlife biology, ecology, or a related field.

o   **Certifications**: Certified Wildlife Biologist (CWB) from The Wildlife Society.

o   **Skills**: Wildlife research, habitat management, and conservation strategies.

4. **Environmental Technicians**:

o   **Education**: Associate or bachelor's degree in environmental science or a related field.

o   **Certifications**: Relevant state or federal certifications.

o   **Skills**: Field data collection, environmental sampling, and laboratory analysis.

5. **Natural Resource Managers**:

o   **Education**: Degree in natural resource management, forestry, or environmental science.

o   **Certifications**: Certified Forester (CF) or similar credentials.

o   **Skills**: Resource management, policy development, and stakeholder engagement.

6. **Environmental Educators**:

o   **Education**: Degree in environmental education, biology, or a related field.

o   **Certifications**: Certified Environmental Educator (CEE).

o   **Skills**: Public outreach, educational program development, and community engagement.

The Arkansas Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) are key organizations involved in these efforts. They offer various programs and initiatives to support conservation efforts across the state.

The Nature Conservancy

Staffing for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Arkansas involves a variety of roles, each requiring specific credentials and qualifications. Here are some key positions and their typical requirements:

1. **Conservation Scientists**:

o   **Education**: Bachelor's or master's degree in environmental science, biology, or a related field.

o   **Certifications**: Relevant state or federal certifications.

o   **Skills**: Research, data analysis, habitat restoration, and conservation planning.

2. **Land Stewards**:

- o **Education**: Degree in natural resource management, forestry, or environmental science.
- o **Certifications**: Society of American Foresters (SAF) certification can be beneficial.
- o **Skills**: Land management, invasive species control, and ecological monitoring.

3. **Water Resource Specialists**:
- o **Education**: Degree in hydrology, environmental science, or civil engineering.
- o **Certifications**: Professional Engineer (PE) license, Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM).
- o **Skills**: Water quality monitoring, watershed management, and hydrological modeling.

4. **Environmental Educators**:
- o **Education**: Degree in environmental education, biology, or a related field.
- o **Certifications**: Certified Environmental Educator (CEE).
- o **Skills**: Public outreach, educational program development, and community engagement.

5. **Project Managers**:
- o **Education**: Degree in project management, environmental science, or a related field.
- o **Certifications**: Project Management Professional (PMP) can be advantageous.
- o **Skills**: Project planning, stakeholder coordination, and budget management.

6. **Development and Fundraising Staff**:
- o **Education**: Degree in communications, marketing, or a related field.
- o **Certifications**: A Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) can be beneficial.
- o **Skills**: Grant writing, donor relations, and event planning.

The Nature Conservancy in Arkansas works collaboratively with private landowners, businesses, public agencies, and other organizations to conserve and restore the lands and waters of the state. They focus on science-based solutions to address environmental challenges and promote sustainable practices

Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission

The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC) is a part of the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism. The workforce needed to staff the ANHC typically includes

professionals in various fields related to conservation, biology, environmental science, and public administration. Here are some key roles and their general credentials:

1. **Conservation Biologists**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's or master's degree in biology, Ecology, Environmental Science, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Fieldwork experience, knowledge of local flora and fauna, and familiarity with conservation practices.

2. **Environmental Scientists**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's or master's degree in environmental science, Geology, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Experience in environmental assessment, data analysis, and regulatory compliance.

3. **Public Administrators**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's or master's degree in public administration, Business Administration, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Experience in managing public programs, budgeting, and policy development.

4. **Education and Outreach Coordinators**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's degree in education, Communications, Environmental Science, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Experience in public speaking, educational program development, and community engagement.

5. **Administrative Staff**:

   o **Education**: Varies by position, but generally a high school diploma or equivalent; some positions may require a Bachelor's degree.

   o **Experience**: Administrative experience, proficiency in office software, and strong organizational skills.

The ANHC also employs field technicians, GIS specialists, and other support staff to assist with various projects and initiatives.

Trail Building & Maintenance

Maintaining Arkansas trail systems requires a dedicated workforce with a variety of skills and credentials. Here are some key roles and their general requirements:

1. **Trail Technicians**:

   o **Education**: High school diploma or equivalent; specialized training programs, such as the Trail Technician program at Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC), are highly beneficial.

   o **Experience**: Practical experience in trail construction and maintenance, knowledge of sustainable trail design, and familiarity with tools and equipment used in trail work.

2. **Trail Crew Leaders**:

   o **Education**: High school diploma or equivalent; additional coursework in environmental science, forestry, or a related field is advantageous.

   o **Experience**: Leadership experience, extensive trail maintenance experience, and skills in project management and crew supervision.

3. **Environmental Scientists**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's or master's degree in environmental science, Ecology, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Experience in environmental assessment, conservation practices, and regulatory compliance.

4. **Heavy Equipment Operators**:

   o **Education**: High school diploma or equivalent; certification in heavy equipment operation.

   o **Experience**: Hands-on experience operating machinery used in trail construction and maintenance, such as excavators and bulldozers.

5. **Volunteer Coordinators**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's degree in public administration, Environmental Science, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Experience in volunteer management, community outreach, and event planning.

6. **GIS Specialists**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's degree in Geography, GIS, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Proficiency in GIS software, experience in mapping and spatial analysis, and knowledge of trail systems.

Arkansas State Parks & Tourism

The Arkansas tourism industry requires a diverse workforce with various skills and credentials to effectively promote and manage the state's attractions. Here are some key roles and their general requirements:

1. **Tourism Consultants**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's degree in Tourism Management, Marketing, Business Administration, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Experience in tourism promotion, relationship building with communities and organizations, and knowledge of marketing strategies.

2. **Marketing and Communications Specialists**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's degree in marketing, Communications, Public Relations, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Experience in digital marketing, content creation, social media management, and public relations.

3. **Event Coordinators**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's degree in Event Management, Hospitality, Tourism, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Experience in planning and executing events, strong organizational skills, and the ability to manage budgets and logistics.

4. **Visitor Services Managers**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's degree in hospitality management, Tourism, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Experience in customer service, managing visitor centers, and coordinating with local attractions and businesses.

5. **Tour Guides**:

   o **Education**: High school diploma or equivalent; additional training or certification in tour guiding is beneficial.

   o **Experience**: Strong communication skills, knowledge of local history and attractions, and experience in public speaking.

6. **Administrative Staff**:

   o **Education**: Varies by position, but generally a high school diploma or equivalent; some positions may require a Bachelor's degree.

   o **Experience**: Administrative experience, proficiency in office software, and strong organizational skills.

7. **GIS Specialists**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's degree in Geography, GIS, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Proficiency in GIS software, experience in mapping and spatial analysis, and knowledge of tourism-related data.

8. **Volunteer Coordinators**:

   o **Education**: Bachelor's degree in public administration, Environmental Science, or a related field.

   o **Experience**: Experience in volunteer management, community outreach, and event planning.

These roles collectively ensure that Arkansas's tourism industry is well-promoted, managed, and able to provide excellent experiences for visitors.

Secondary Education & Specific Programs

Outdoor Leadership Focus

- **University of Arkansas Outdoor Leadership Minor**: Offers professional certifications and field-based experiences.

- **Lyon College Outdoor Leadership Concentration**: Provides skills in outdoor education and experiential learning.

- **University of Arkansas**

  - **Programs**: Offers degrees in Recreation and Sport Management, Environmental Science, and Criminal Justice, which are relevant for park ranger careers[1].

- **Arkansas Tech University**

  - **Programs**: Provides a Bachelor of Science in Recreation and Park Administration, which includes coursework in natural resource management and outdoor recreation[2].

- **Southern Arkansas University**

  - **Programs**: Offers a degree in Wildlife and Conservation Biology, which is beneficial for careers in park management and conservation[3].

- **University of Central Arkansas**

  - **Programs**: Offers a degree in Environmental Science and a minor in Outdoor Recreation, which can prepare students for roles in park management and tourism[4].

- **Arkansas State University**

  - **Programs**: Provides degrees in Environmental Science and Wildlife Ecology and Management, which are relevant for park ranger and tourism careers[5].

- **Additional Training and Certifications**

  - **Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy (ALETA)**: Required for park rangers involved in law enforcement[2].

  - **National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)**: Offers certifications in outdoor leadership and wilderness skills[6].

One notable program in Arkansas that offers education on trail design and maintenance is the **Trail Technician program at Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC)**. This program teaches essential skills and techniques required to create and maintain well-designed, safe, and sustainable trails. It includes hands-on experience with real-world projects and fieldwork, guided by expert instructors.

National Park College (NPC): Located in Hot Springs, NPC offers a Hospitality and Tourism Administration program. This program provides a solid foundation in hospitality management and includes hands-on experience. Students can earn an Associate of Applied Science degree and have the option to transfer to Arkansas Tech University for further studies.

Credentialing for Outdoor Educators

1. **Specialized Training**:

   o **Wilderness Education Association (WEA)**: Offers the Certified Outdoor Educator (COE) credential.

   o **Outward Bound Schools**: Provides various outdoor educator courses.

   o **National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)**: Offers extensive outdoor leadership and education training.

2. **Experience**:
   o **Internships and Volunteer Opportunities**: Organizations like the Student Conservation Association and local outdoor education centers offer hands-on experience.

Specialized Training and Certifications:

1. **Kayaking**:

   o [American Canoe Association (ACA): Offers various levels of instructor certification for kayaking](#).

2. **Mountain Biking**:

   o [International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA): Offers instructor certification programs](#)[2].

   o [Professional Mountain Bike Instructors Association (PMBIA): Provides comprehensive training and certification](#).

3. **Rock Climbing**:

   o [American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA): Offers Single Pitch Instructor and Climbing Wall Instructor certifications](#).

   o [National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS): Provides rock climbing instructor courses](#).

4. **Hiking**:

   o [Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics: Offers trainer and master educator courses focusing on sustainable hiking practices](#).

   o [Wilderness Education Association (WEA): Provides certifications in outdoor leadership and hiking](#).

5. **Wilderness Survival**:

   o [NOLS Wilderness Medicine: Offers Wilderness First Responder and Wilderness EMT courses](#).

- **Outward Bound**: Provides comprehensive wilderness survival training.

  Places to Obtain Training:

1. **American Canoe Association (ACA)**:

   - Website: americancanoe.org

2. **International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA)**:

   - Website: imba.com

3. **American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA)**:

   - Website: amga.com

4. **National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)**:

   - Website: nols.edu

5. **Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics**:

   - Website: lnt.org

6. **Wilderness Education Association (WEA)**:

   - Website: weainfo.org

7. **Outward Bound**:

   - Website: outwardbound.org

   These certifications and training programs will equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to lead students safely and effectively in various outdoor activities.

A service provided by ADE,
Office of Information Technology
Created at 6/4/2025 3:52 PM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2024-2025

School Comparison

	State of Arkansas	Joe T. Robinson Middle School	Joe T. Robinson High School	Estem Junior High Public Charter School	North Little Rock Middle School	North Little Rock High School
Information						
LEA	N/A	6003143	6003127	6047702	6002070	6002082
District	N/A	Pulaski County Special School District	Pulaski County Special School District	Estem Public Charter School	North Little Rock School District	North Little Rock School District
Grades Served		6 - 8	9 - 12	7 - 8	7 - 8	9 - 12
Website	www.arkansased.gov	http://www.pcssd.org	http://www.pcssd.org	http://www.estemschools.org	http://www.nlrsd.org	http://www.nlrsd.org
Total Enrollment	474,337	607	1,030	401	1,036	1,652
School Letter Grade	N/A					

	State of Arkansas	Joe T. Robinson Middle School	Joe T. Robinson High School	Estem Junior High Public Charter School	North Little Rock Middle School	North Little Rock High School
Statistics						
College Going Rate	Data not available for year 2024-2025					
Graduation Rate	Data not available for year 2024-2025					

A service provided by ADE,
Office of Information Technology
Created at 6/4/2025 3:52 PM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2024-2025

Average Years
Teaching
Experience

Values

10

5

0

Average Years of Teacher Experience

● State of Arkansas (LEA AR)● Joe T. Robinson Middle School (LEA 600314●) Joe T. Robinson High School (LEA 600312●) Estem Junior High Public Charter School (LEA 6047702)
● North Little Rock Middle School (LEA 60020●)North Little Rock High School (LEA 6002082)

Student /
Teacher Ratio

Values

10

5

0
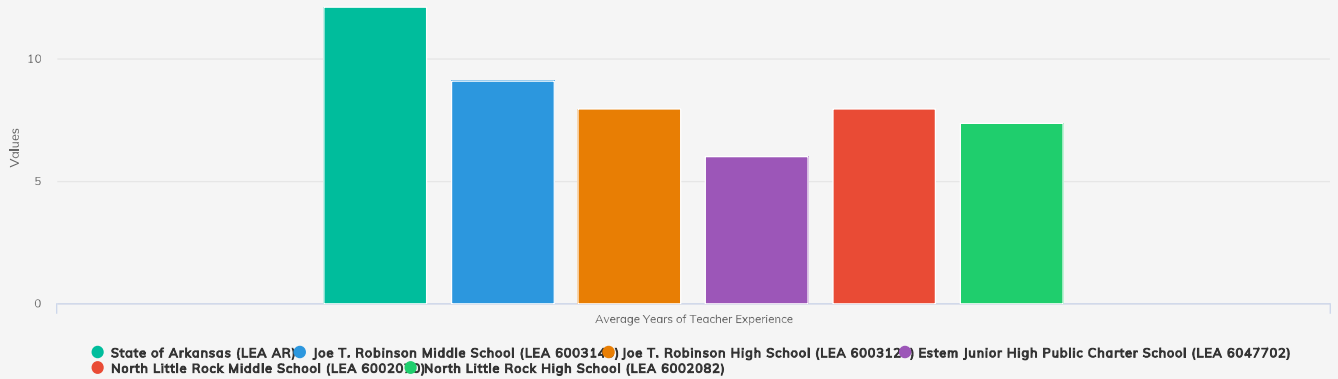
Student Teacher Ratio

● State of Arkansas (LEA AR)● Joe T. Robinson Middle School (LEA 600314●) Joe T. Robinson High School (LEA 600312●) Estem Junior High Public Charter School (LEA 6047702)
● North Little Rock Middle School (LEA 60020●)North Little Rock High School (LEA 6002082)

| State of Arkansas | Joe T. Robinson Middle School | Joe T. Robinson High School | Estem Junior High Public Charter School | North Little Rock Middle School | North Little Rock High School |

Performance

A service provided by ADE,
Office of Information Technology
Created at 6/4/2025 3:52 PM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2024-2025

Student Performance	Data not available for year 2024-2025

ACT Scores	Data not available for year 2024-2025

	State of Arkansas	Joe T. Robinson Middle School	Joe T. Robinson High School	Estem Junior High Public Charter School	North Little Rock Middle School	North Little Rock High School
Demographics						
American Indian	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Asian	2%	7%	4%	0%	1%	1%
Black / African American	19%	29%	37%	71%	62%	59%
Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Hispanic / Latino	15%	10%	7%	11%	15%	15%
White	57%	48%	47%	13%	17%	20%
Two or More Races	5%	6%	5%	4%	5%	4%
English Learners	9%	8%	6%	6%	8%	10%
Low Income	60%	47%	29%	74%	75%	70%
Special Education	15%	14%	12%	12%	16%	13%

A service provided by ADE
Office of Information Technology
Created at 6/4/2025 4:00 PM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2022-2023
LEA# 6002082

2022 - 2023 • Accountability At-a-Glance • North Little Rock High School

Contact Information

North Little Rock High School | North Little Rock School District

Principal: Nadia Saint-Louis | Superintendent: Gregory J Pilewski

201 W 22nd St North Little Rock, AR 72114-

http://www.nlrsd.org | (501) 771-8100

Student Information

Grades	9 - 12	Total Enrollment	1,949
Black	56.49%	*English Learners*	7.18%
Hispanic	11.85%	*Economically Disadvantaged*	70.29%
White	27.14%	*Students with Disabilities*	10.57%

Public School Rating Score (State Accountability: A-F Letter Grade)

State Accountability	58.49

Public School Rating	D **

Rating Scale

A = 73.22 and Above
B = 67.96 - 73.21
C = 61.10 - 67.95
D = 52.95 - 61.09
F = 0.00 - 52.94

* Alternative Education (AE) program students included in attendance zone for school rating

** Results reflect the impact on student learning due to the COVID pandemic. Please use caution when comparing the results and making decisions.

School Performance • ESSA School Index Score 2023

All Students

State Avg.
64.14*

58.49

*State Average of ESSA School Index Scores for Grade Span.

A service provided by ADE
Office of Information Technology
Created at 6/4/2025 4:00 PM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2022-2023
LEA# 6002082

	State Avg.			State Avg.
Black/African American	55.27* / 52.16		*English Learners*	57.09* / 49.01
Hispanic/ Latino	62.12* / 56.6		*Low-Income*	61.24* / 58.68
White	67.83* / 74.09		*Special Education*	49.52* / 47.61
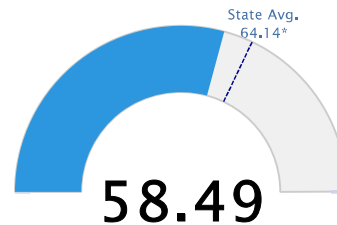
	ELA % Tested	Math % Tested		ELA % Tested	Math % Tested
All Students	96.55%	97.51%			
Black / African American	96.21%	97.53%	English Learners	94.50%	94.55%
Hispanic / Latino	95.30%	96.00%	Economically Disadvantaged	96.55%	97.51%
White	98.34%	98.76%	Students with Disabilities	97.58%	98.40%

Prepared by the Arkansas Department of Education: Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

A service provided by ADE
Office of Information Technology
Created at 6/4/2025 3:47 PM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2022-2023
LEA# 6002070

2022 - 2023 • Accountability At-a-Glance • North Little Rock Middle School

Contact Information

North Little Rock Middle School | North Little Rock School District

Principal: Elise Hampton | Superintendent: Gregory J Pilewski

2400 LAKEVIEW ROAD North Little Rock, AR 72116-

http://www.nlrsd.org | (501) 771-8200

Student Information

Grades	7 - 8	Total Enrollment	1,115
Black	59.28%	English Learners	6.55%
Hispanic	13.00%	Economically Disadvantaged	74.80%
White	22.06%	Students with Disabilities	13.18%

Public School Rating Score (State Accountability: A-F Letter Grade)

State Accountability	55.9	Public School Rating	D **	Rating Scale	A = 75.59 and Above B = 69.94 - 75.58 C = 63.73 - 69.93 D = 53.58 - 63.72 F = 0.00 - 53.57

* Alternative Education (AE) program students included in attendance zone for school rating

** Results reflect the impact on student learning due to the COVID pandemic. Please use caution when comparing the results and making decisions.

School Performance • ESSA School Index Score 2023

All Students	State Avg. 66.74* 55.9

*State Average of ESSA School Index Scores for Grade Span.

A service provided by ADE
Office of Information Technology
Created at 6/4/2025 3:47 PM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2022-2023
LEA# 6002070

Black/African American

State Avg. 58.86*

51.05

English Learners

State Avg. 63.69*

54.13

Hispanic/Latino

State Avg. 65.93*

56.19

Low-Income

State Avg. 63.38*

55.92

White

State Avg. 70.27*

67.64

Special Education

State Avg. 50.29*

44.26
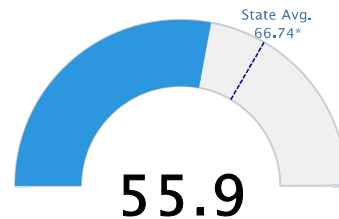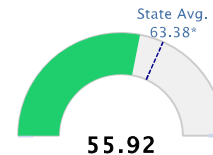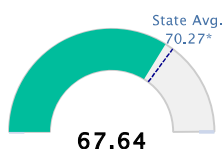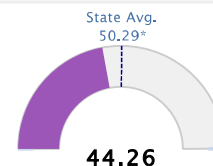
	ELA % Tested	Math % Tested		ELA % Tested	Math % Tested
All Students	96.89%	97.90%			
Black / African American	96.49%	97.71%	English Learners	98.02%	99.01%
Hispanic / Latino	97.93%	98.62%	Economically Disadvantaged	96.89%	97.90%
White	97.40%	97.84%	Students with Disabilities	96.27%	97.52%

Prepared by the Arkansas Department of Education: Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

A service provided by ADE
Office of Information Technology
Created at 2/25/2025 2:55 PM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2022-2023
LEA# 6003127

2022 - 2023 • Accountability At-a-Glance • Joe T. Robinson High School

Contact Information

Joe T. Robinson High School | Pulaski County Special School District

Principal: Michelle Lea Camp | Superintendent: Jerry D Guess

21501 CANTRELL RD Little Rock, AR 72223-

http://www.pcssd.org | (501) 868-2400

Student Information

Grades	9 - 12	Total Enrollment	783
Black	33.33%	*English Learners*	3.83%
Hispanic	8.56%	*Economically Disadvantaged*	24.27%
White	53.90%	*Students with Disabilities*	13.79%

Public School Rating Score (State Accountability: A-F Letter Grade)

State Accountability	65.7	Public School Rating	C **	Rating Scale	A = 73.22 and Above B = 67.96 - 73.21 C = 61.10 - 67.95 D = 52.95 - 61.09 F = 0.00 - 52.94

* Alternative Education (AE) program students included in attendance zone for school rating

** Results reflect the impact on student learning due to the COVID pandemic. Please use caution when comparing the results and making decisions.

School Performance • ESSA School Index Score 2023

All Students	State Avg. 64.14* 65.7

*State Average of ESSA School Index Scores for Grade Span.

A service provided by ADE
Office of Information Technology
Created at 2/25/2025 2:55 PM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2022-2023
LEA# 6003127

Black/African American	State Avg. 55.27* **60.75**	English Learners	State Avg. 57.09* **55.41**
Hispanic/ Latino	State Avg. 62.12* **61.04**	Low-Income	State Avg. 61.24* **58.73**
White	State Avg. 67.83* **69.98**	Special Education	State Avg. 49.52* **54.17**

	ELA % Tested	Math % Tested		ELA % Tested	Math % Tested
All Students	98.29%	98.53%			
Black / African American	97.10%	97.83%	English Learners	95.83%	95.83%
Hispanic / Latino	97.14%	97.14%	Economically Disadvantaged	97.27%	98.18%
White	99.07%	99.07%	Students with Disabilities	100.00%	100.00%

Prepared by the Arkansas Department of Education: Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

A service provided by ADE
Office of Information Technology
Created at 2/25/2025 2:56 PM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2022-2023
LEA# 6003143

2022 - 2023 • Accountability At-a-Glance • Joe T. Robinson Middle School

Contact Information

Joe T. Robinson Middle School | Pulaski County Special School District

Principal: Zondria Campbell | Superintendent: Jerry D Guess

21201 CANTRELL RD Little Rock, AR 72223-

http://www.pcssd.org | (501) 868-2410

Student Information

Grades	6 - 8	Total Enrollment	544
Black	30.70%	*English Learners*	6.80%
Hispanic	10.29%	*Economically Disadvantaged*	34.74%
White	51.47%	*Students with Disabilities*	13.97%

Public School Rating Score (State Accountability: A-F Letter Grade)

State Accountability	73.06	Public School Rating	B**	Rating Scale	A = 75.59 and Above B = 69.94 - 75.58 C = 63.73 - 69.93 D = 53.58 - 63.72 F = 0.00 - 53.57

* Alternative Education (AE) program students included in attendance zone for school rating

** Results reflect the impact on student learning due to the COVID pandemic. Please use caution when comparing the results and making decisions.

School Performance • ESSA School Index Score 2023

All Students

State Avg.
66.74*

73.06

*State Average of ESSA School Index Scores for Grade Span.

A service provided by ADE
Office of Information Technology
Created at 2/25/2025 2:56 PM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2022-2023
LEA# 6003143

Black/African American

State Avg. 58.86*

68.69

English Learners

State Avg. 63.69*

63.76

Hispanic/Latino

State Avg. 65.93*

61.82

Low-Income

State Avg. 63.38*

73.07

White

State Avg. 70.27*

78.42

Special Education

State Avg. 50.29*

49.42
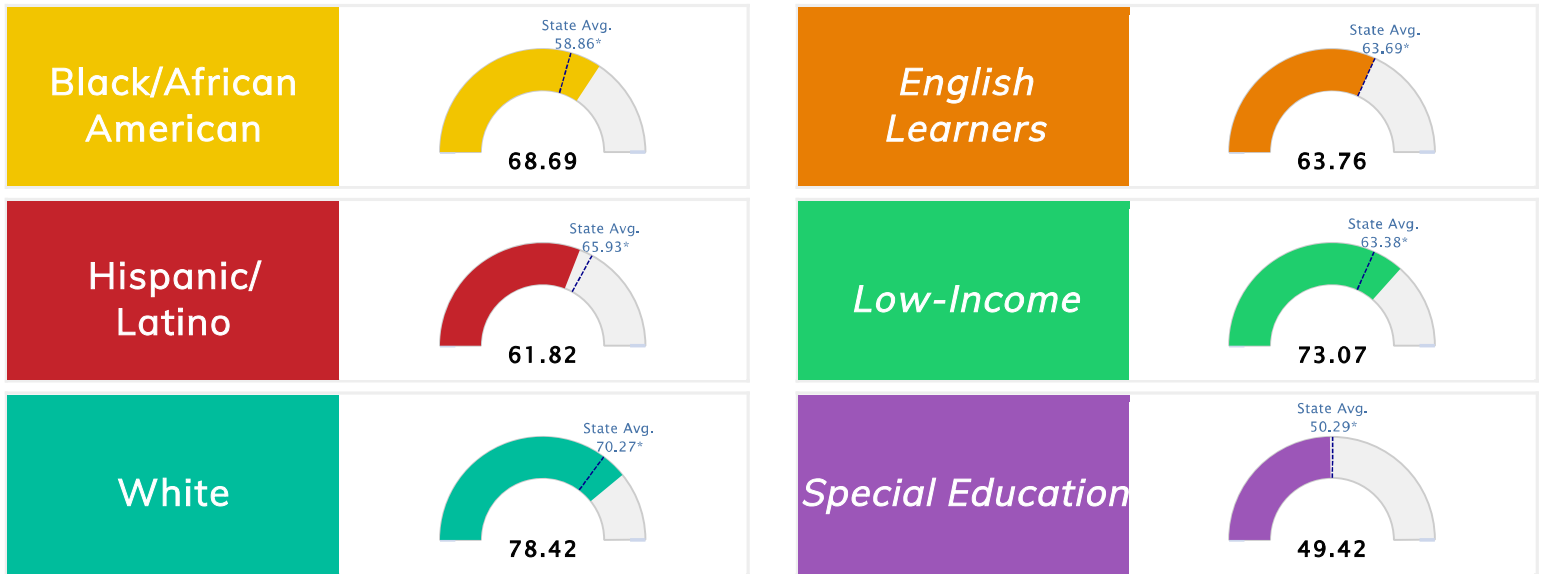
	ELA % Tested	Math % Tested		ELA % Tested	Math % Tested
All Students	99.08%	99.08%			
Black / African American	98.24%	98.24%	English Learners	98.44%	98.44%
Hispanic / Latino	98.18%	98.18%	Economically Disadvantaged	99.08%	99.08%
White	99.63%	99.63%	Students with Disabilities	97.22%	97.22%

Prepared by the Arkansas Department of Education: Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

A service provided by ADE
Office of Information Technology
Created at 3/5/2025 8:16 AM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2022-2023
LEA# 6047702

2022 - 2023 • Accountability At-a-Glance • Estem Junior High Public Charter School

📇 Contact Information

Estem Junior High Public Charter School | Estem Public Charter School

Principal: Melissa Gray | Superintendent: Nicholas G Patterson

123 W 3rd Street Little Rock, AR 72201-

http://www.estemschools.org | (501) 748-9335

🧑 Student Information

Grades	7 - 9	Total Enrollment	406
Black	66.01%	*English Learners*	3.94%
Hispanic	8.37%	*Economically Disadvantaged*	67.98%
White	18.47%	*Students with Disabilities*	7.88%

Public School Rating Score (State Accountability: A-F Letter Grade)

State Accountability	67.93

Public School Rating	C **

Rating Scale	A = 75.59 and Above B = 69.94 - 75.58 C = 63.73 - 69.93 D = 53.58 - 63.72 F = 0.00 - 53.57

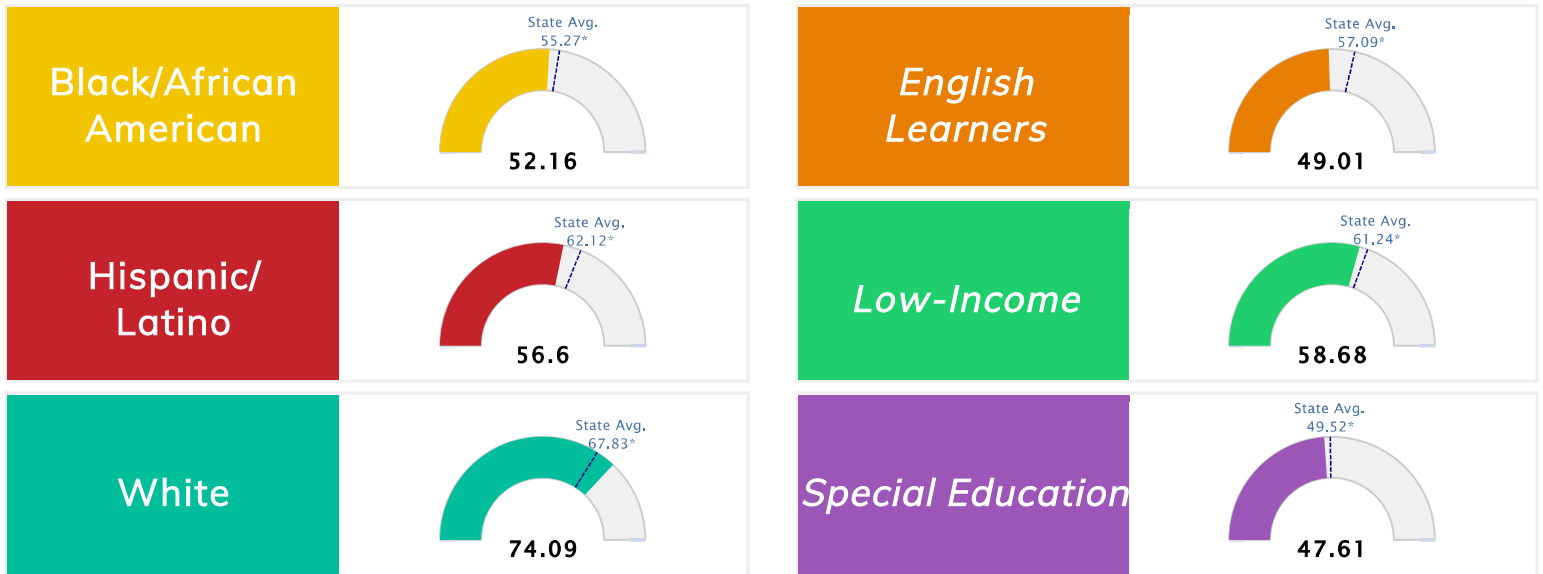* Alternative Education (AE) program students included in attendance zone for school rating

** Results reflect the impact on student learning due to the COVID pandemic. Please use caution when comparing the results and making decisions.

School Performance • ESSA School Index Score 2023

All Students	State Avg. 66.74* 67.93

*State Average of ESSA School Index Scores for Grade Span.

A service provided by ADE
Office of Information Technology
Created at 3/5/2025 8:16 AM

MY SCHOOL INFO
SEARCH • COMPARE • INFORM

2022-2023
LEA# 6047702

Black/African American	State Avg. 58.86*	61.91		English Learners	State Avg. 63.69*	67.39
Hispanic/Latino	State Avg. 65.93*	68.8		Low-Income	State Avg. 63.38*	62.22
White	State Avg. 70.27*	89.62		Special Education	State Avg. 50.29*	50.44
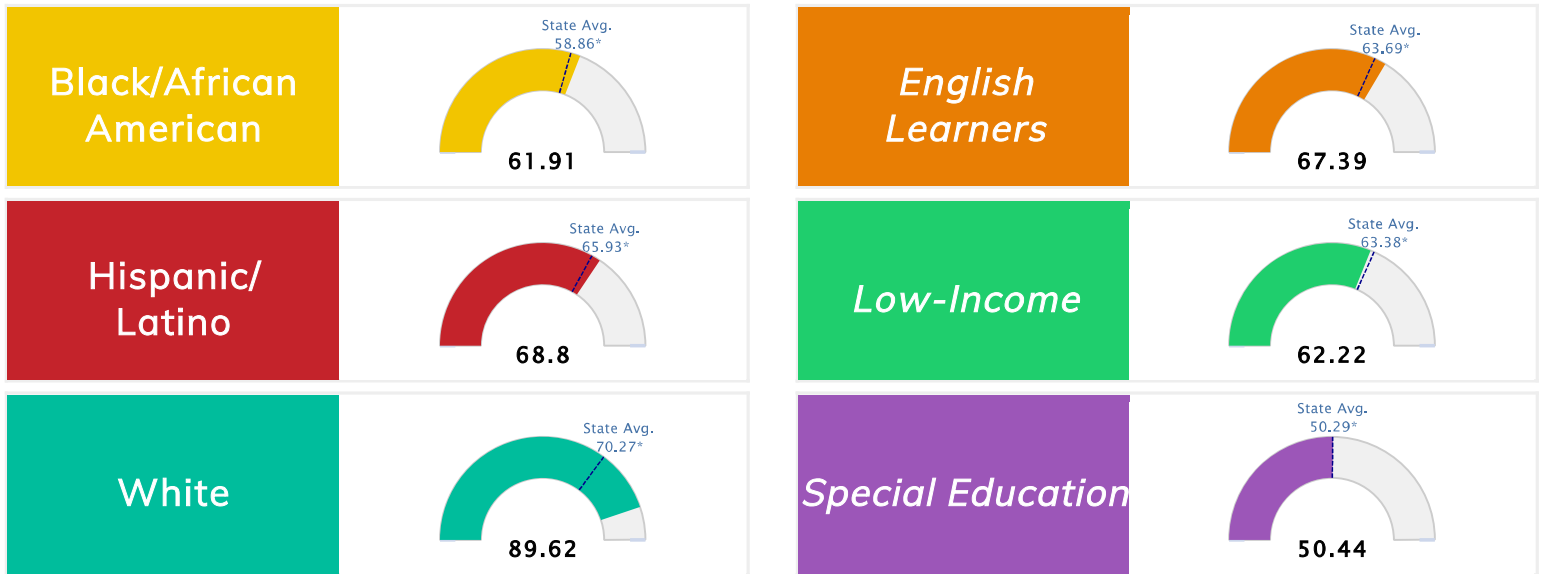
	ELA % Tested	Math % Tested		ELA % Tested	Math % Tested
All Students	99.22%	99.22%			
Black / African American	98.80%	98.80%	English Learners	100.00%	100.00%
Hispanic / Latino	100.00%	100.00%	Economically Disadvantaged	99.22%	99.22%
White	100.00%	100.00%	Students with Disabilities	100.00%	100.00%

Prepared by the Arkansas Department of Education: Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Demographic Comparison of Selected Arkansas Schools
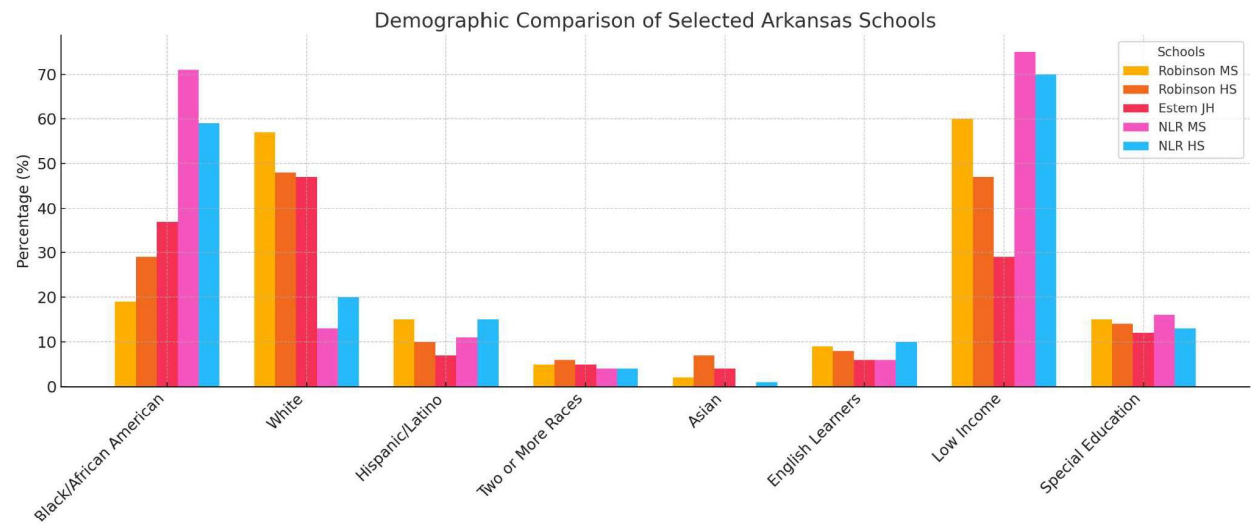
Multi-Tiered System of Supports Within Schools: The What and The How

Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports

January 2025

The Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports at American Institutes for Research® (MTSS Center) is a national leader in supporting states, districts, and schools across the country in implementing MTSS. The MTSS Center provides professional learning, consultation, and technical assistance to support sites with implementation of MTSS. The use of MTSS enables sites to integrate data and instruction within a multi-level prevention system that maximizes student success from a strengths-based perspective.

For more information, contact us at mtsscenter@air.org or at our website: mtss4success.org.

**Center on
Multi-Tiered System of Supports**

AIR®
Advancing Evidence.
Improving Lives.

Introduction

To assist educators with planning for MTSS, the Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports at the American Institutes for Research (MTSS Center) has developed this information brief. This brief provides a definition of MTSS, reviews the essential MTSS components, and outlines our approach to implementation of MTSS within school sites.

Since 2007, the MTSS Center and its parent company, the American Institutes for Research, have provided comprehensive, ongoing professional learning opportunities on MTSS to hundreds of districts in more than 40 states. In our approach to MTSS, we focus on ensuring consensus among key personnel, building the capacity of educators to sustain implementation, and leveraging existing resources to create a manageable action plan. We provide a layered, systematic, and comprehensive approach that builds readiness and understanding at the district level, from which we then build capacity and provide support to school teams and local educators. We have worked with large and small school districts in rural, urban, and suburban settings across the United States and internationally, conducting needs assessment, facilitating virtual and in-person professional learning, and providing direct and ongoing coaching.

The What: Defining MTSS and Its Components

Our understanding of MTSS and approach to implementation was developed from more than 15 years of experience supporting state departments, school districts, school sites, and local educators with MTSS. In creating a practical definition and applied method for MTSS, we leveraged extensive local expertise and collaborated with leading national experts. As such, the MTSS Center defines MTSS as follows:

> A multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) is a proactive and preventative framework that integrates data and instruction to maximize student success from a strengths-based perspective. MTSS offers a framework for educators to engage in data-based decision making to ensure positive outcomes for districts, schools, teachers, students, and families.

MTSS offers a reorganization of the school setting and how educators provide instruction and supports to students. By implementing MTSS, educators can experience some of the following benefits:

MTSS helps appropriately identify students with disabilities.

Encouraging practitioners to implement MTSS enables them to improve the performance of students. Further, the MTSS Center knows that MTSS implementation will contribute to a more meaningful identification of learning needs of students; improve instructional quality; and provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed in school. In turn, practitioners can increase the accurate identification of students with a disability.

MTSS proactively uses data to support every student.

MTSS organizes the school into layers of supports for students and proactively uses data to match students to an appropriate level of support. It is a prevention-oriented approach that links assessment and instruction to inform educators' decisions about how best to teach students. With MTSS, schools proactively screen and identify students who are at risk for poor learning outcomes so that supports can be provided sooner rather than later.

MTSS creates a framework that improves the overall system and meets the needs of individual students.

MTSS is a comprehensive framework that serves a dual purpose. By implementing MTSS, schools can create a healthy system that meets the needs of all students and reduces the number of students at risk for poor learning outcomes. For students who need additional support, MTSS provides a structure to match students to an appropriate level of support.

Through our research and decades of experience, we have identified four essential components for a complete and successful MTSS:

- Screening
- Multi-Level Prevention System
- Progress Monitoring
- Data-Based Decision Making

Exhibit 1 illustrates the components of MTSS, as well as the infrastructure and support mechanisms needed to support it (i.e., leadership and policy, communication and collaboration, and professional capacity). Further, the components and infrastructure must be implemented in an integrated manner, using culturally responsive and evidence-based practices.

Exhibit 1. Illustration of MTSS and Its Components
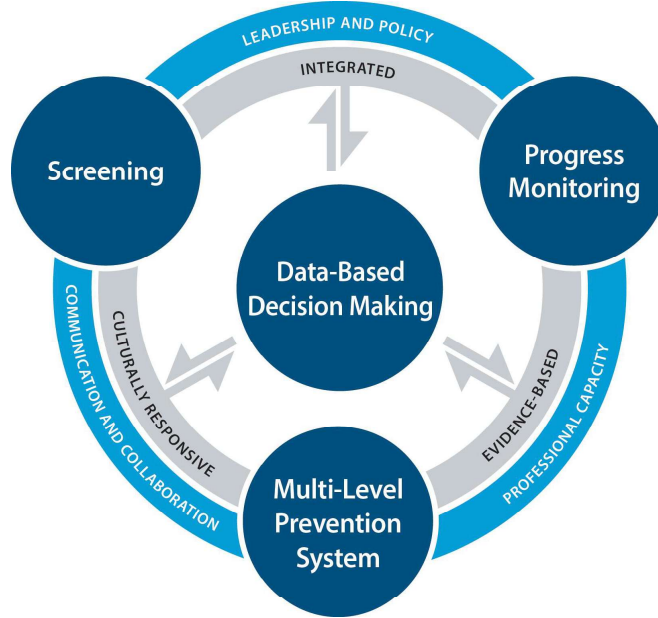
Screening

A systematic process for identifying students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes

With screening, teams select and use valid and reliable tools and processes to identify students who are at risk for poor learning outcomes and to improve Tier 1 instruction. Educators confirm students' risk status using additional data or short-term progress monitoring, referred to as *risk verification*.

For effective screening, schools need

- brief, reliable and valid screening tools,
- processes to screen all students more than once per year,
- procedures to ensure consistent and accurate screening processes, and
- risk verification procedures to ensure accuracy of decisions about students.

Multi-Level Prevention System
The organization of supports for students that includes three tiers of intensity for instruction and intervention

When schools create a multi-level prevention system, educators can match an appropriate level of support to each student's needs. Tier 1 is high-quality, schoolwide programming and supports designed to meet the needs of all students. Tier 2 is small-group, standardized interventions that target identified needs using validated programs to support students identified at risk for future learning outcomes. Tier 3 is intensive intervention that is intensified and individualized based on student need.

Tier 1 should include
- teaching and learning objectives that are well articulated from one grade to another and within grade levels;
- evidence-based materials that are aligned with state standards,
- agreed-upon evidence-based instructional practices,
- adequate time to teach content,
- sufficient opportunities for students to respond, practice, and receive feedback on taught skills, and
- use of data to design and differentiate for the needs of students on, below, and above grade level.

Tier 2 should be
- delivered using standardized evidence-based interventions matched to the needs of students,
- aligned with Tier 1 and incorporate foundational skills that support the Tier 1 objectives,
- delivered using evidence-based instructional practices,
- led by trained staff
- provided with optimal group size and dosage, and
- provided in addition to Tier 1.

Tier 3 should be
- individualized and intensified interventions based on student data, including diagnostic data,
- delivered using evidence-based instructional practices,
- provided by trained staff experienced in individualizing instruction based on student data, and
- aligned with and complement Tier 1 on a student-by-student basis.

Progress Monitoring

The ongoing, frequent collection and use of formal data to assess a student's performance

Progress-monitoring uses reliable and valid measures to (1) assess students' performance, (2) quantify a student's rate of improvement or responsiveness to instruction or intervention, and (3) evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and intervention.

Progress monitoring requires tools that
- are brief, reliable, and valid,
- are sensitive to growth,
- allow for repeated measurement, and
- have typical growth rates and end-of-year benchmarks.

Progress monitoring also requires a process that ensures
- data collection occurs at least biweekly for students receiving Tier 2 supports and at least weekly for students receiving Tier 3 supports and that
- procedures are in place to ensure consistent and accurate administration.

Data-Based Decision Making

The use of screening, progress monitoring, and other forms of data to make decisions within MTSS

Data-based decision making includes making decisions about instruction, movement within the multi-level prevention system, intensification of instruction and supports, allocation of resources, and identification of students with disabilities (in accordance with state law). Data-based decision making occurs at all levels of MTSS implementation, including individual students, groups of students, system-level or schoolwide, and the district level.

Data-based decision making includes
- a data-driven process for making student and system-level decisions that involves appropriate personnel with decision-making authority,
- clearly outlined decision rules,
- guidelines for setting goals,
- a data system that allows users to document and access individual student-level data that are represented visually or graphically,
- agreed-upon decision rules that have procedures to ensure they are used consistently and accurately.

The Why Behind MTSS

Implementation of MTSS is connected to many positive benefits for staff, students, and families. Key positive outcomes include the following:

	Increases in students graduating on time (Jimerson et al., 2016)
	Increases in academic outcomes that are sustained over time (Dexter et al., 2008; Freeman et al., 2015; Lee & Gage, 2020; Simons et al., 2008; Solomon et al., 2012)
	Decreases in expulsions, behavioral referrals, and suspension rates (Bradshaw et al., 2012; Freeman et al., 2015; Lee & Gage, 2020)
	Decreases in inappropriate special education referral rates and placement (Ainsworth et al., 2024; Burns et al., 2005)
	Reduction in student grade retention (Jimerson et al., 2016)
	Positive effects on the system, including increases in instructional and planning time, more efficient use of resources and staff, and improved organizational health (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Horner et al., 2018; Lacireno-Paquet & Reedy, 2015)

The MTSS Center has found that rigorous implementation of MTSS includes not only defining *what* MTSS is but also clarifying *how* to implement it. Schools design what each of the components will look like within their sites as they clarify the "what" of MTSS, which also includes the mindset and beliefs that support it. MTSS is a restructuring of systems and processes in schools to support all students. It requires a shift in thinking within schools to focus on data-based conversations, collaboration among all staff, build collective efficacy, and establish efficient processes. With such a shift in thinking, schools can reduce issues with bias, avoid unintended delays in identification of students who need additional support, and provide more support for less experienced teachers.

ALL STUDENTS CAN LEARN, GIVEN THE RIGHT SUPPORT

MTSS is a unified framework that requires coordination of systems and resources to support all students. To implement MTSS, all staff should support its use and work to match students with the right level of support. When staff believe all students can learn with the right supports, they can engage in continuous problem solving for all students and seek to find variables that can be adjusted across the instruction, curriculum, and environment. Further, educators are empowered to support students because these variables are within their locus of control.

Implementation: The How of MTSS

The how of MTSS refers to (1) defining your MTSS, (2) building infrastructure, and (3) collecting and using data to evaluate progress. For sites to achieve positive student and system outcomes, they need to attend to all aspects of implementation.

Implementation of MTSS includes

- design of the components (What will they look like for our site?),

- building of infrastructure to support the components (What structures and processes are needed to ensure use of the components of MTSS?), and

- active use of data to monitor implementation fidelity (What data sources will inform the implementation of MTSS as a system and its components?).

Ideally, a district leadership team would lead and guide implementation within a district and its schools. That team oversees implementation and provides support for schools to implement MTSS (see District Leadership Team for MTSS below). The next section focuses on steps schools can take, but educators can find more information about MTSS at the district level with our *Guidance for District Leadership on Multi-Tiered System of Supports*.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM FOR MTSS

In our experience, MTSS is more successful when it is led by a district leadership team. The district leadership team meets regularly to outline guidance on MTSS for teams and provides the necessary resources and professional learning to implement.

Build partnerships and support for MTSS.

Secure and align resources and initiatives to support MTSS, including funding and staff time and capacity.

Outline guidance and policies on MTSS for schools.

Meet regularly to identify and resolve barriers to implementation.

Provide professional learning to schools, including initial and ongoing training and ongoing coaching.

Evaluate implementation by analyzing fidelity data and outcomes related to staff, students, and families.

Implementation Steps

We offer broad steps for school leadership teams to consider.

1. Identify a School Leadership Team

Our data and experience suggest that a school leadership team dedicated to supporting, monitoring, and evaluating MTSS results in better implementation and more positive outcomes for sites. The leadership team can be a new team or an existing team, but it consists of approximately 3 to 8 members and includes administration, general education representation, and special education representation. The team meets regularly to complete its 3 key functions:

1. Lead and guide implementation of MTSS, including identifying a vision and developing an action plan.
2. Identify and address barriers to implementation as they come up and implement solutions.
3. Provide resources and training to their staff so that they can implement the practices and gather the data needed for MTSS.

Next Steps

- Conduct a team audit to determine which team can lead MTSS.
- Access our MTSS Teams Tip Sheet for a general structure of teams within MTSS.

2. Take Stock and Set a Vision

To ensure all staff understand why they are implementing MTSS, the school leadership team needs to know where they are starting and where they are going. They take stock of their current implementation; identify current resources and practices they have in place; and clarify priorities by examining the needs of students, using current data and examining strategic plans and/or legislation mandates.

Next Steps

- Take stock by using the *MTSS Fidelity of Implementation Rubric*.
- Conduct resource mapping by listing current practices, interventions, and assessments used at each tier.
- Use the FAIR Test to identify practices to continue to implement and those to de-implement.

3. Build Buy-In and Understanding of MTSS

To build understanding and support of MTSS, the school leadership team provides an introduction and overview of MTSS to their staff. This ensures all staff are using the same language to describe MTSS, understand MTSS for their site, and support the vision and direction of MTSS.

Next Steps	
	• Identify barriers related to implementation among staff by administering a brief survey about their concerns about implementation. • Outline a purpose and vision for MTSS.

4. Screen All Students

By screening all students, schools can proactively identify which students are at risk for poor learning outcomes. At least three times per year, schools will administer screening assessments to students and/or evaluate early warning indicators (e.g., office referrals, course grades, attendance). Schools use that data to identify students who need additional support, but they also conduct risk verification to ensure students are accurately identified. Further, schools use screening data to understand the overall health of their school by identifying the percentage of students achieving grade-level benchmarks.

Next Steps	
	• Identify effective screening tools and risk verification procedures to use. • Identify a screening process that is efficient and manageable for staff. • Train staff on an efficient screening method, ensuring they follow screening processes with fidelity.

SCREENING RESOURCES

- *What Is Screening?*
- *Ensuring Fidelity of Assessment and Data Entry Procedures*
- *Guide to Designing the Screening Process*

---

5. Respond to the Data by Adjusting Core Instruction (as Needed) and Providing Interventions to Students at Risk

School teams use data to adapt core instruction and curriculum to ensure students' needs are met and that they are able to access and progress in the standards-based instruction. If screening data indicate that less than 80% of students are at or above targets, schools may need to provide supplemental instruction on Tier 1 skills to most students to ensure their needs are met. School teams also use screening, risk verification data, and additional diagnostic data to match students to supplemental intervention and instruction.

Next Steps

- Use a selection process, such as the FAIR Test, to identify effective practices at Tier 1 and effective interventions to use with students.
- Use practice guides to identify approaches to adapting core programming and providing interventions.
- Develop decision rules to ensure consistent and accurate matching of supports to students.

6. Progress Monitor Students and Adjust Instruction as Needed

Schools conduct progress monitoring to evaluate the extent to which interventions are beneficial to the students receiving them. Schools gather fidelity data to determine if interventions are provided as intended. They also gather progress-monitoring data to determine the extent to which the intervention may be benefiting the student. Schools then adjust interventions provided to students based on these data.

Next Steps

- Ensure you are gathering fidelity data and progress-monitoring data.
- For students not making adequate progress, examine additional evidence related to alterable variables when intensifying interventions on instruction, curriculum, and environment.

PROGRESS-MONITORING RESOURCES

- *What Is Progress Monitoring?*
- Data Graphing Tool
- National Center on Intensive Intervention Tools Chart

7. Reflect on MTSS Implementation and Continuously Improve

Implementation of MTSS can take several years, depending on the size of the school. To ensure implementation is successful, schools gather data and information on their implementation efforts to ensure they are refining their processes and improving over time. They analyze fidelity data related to their selected practices and assessments, and they can examine data from implementation measures (i.e., *MTSS Fidelity of Implementation Rubric*). They also evaluate data on students' outcomes. Using these data, schools can adjust their implementation efforts to improve them over time.

Next Steps
 ? 	• Gather staff input about implementation processes, including the extent to which staff are able to gather data and implement the necessary practices and interventions for MTSS. • Analyze fidelity data on the practices, interventions, and assessments to check that staff are using them accurately.

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

The MTSS Center provides more training and information on a variety of topics related to MTSS.

- *MTSS Fidelity of Implementation Rubric*
- *Fidelity Within MTSS* infographic
- Essential Components of MTSS Infographic Collection
- MTSS Infrastructure and Support Mechanisms Tip Sheets
- Snapshot of MTSS Implementation infographic
- *A Flipbook to Support Use of the Problem-Solving Model* article
- *What to Do When Students Don't Respond to Interventions* article
- Resources to support problem analysis
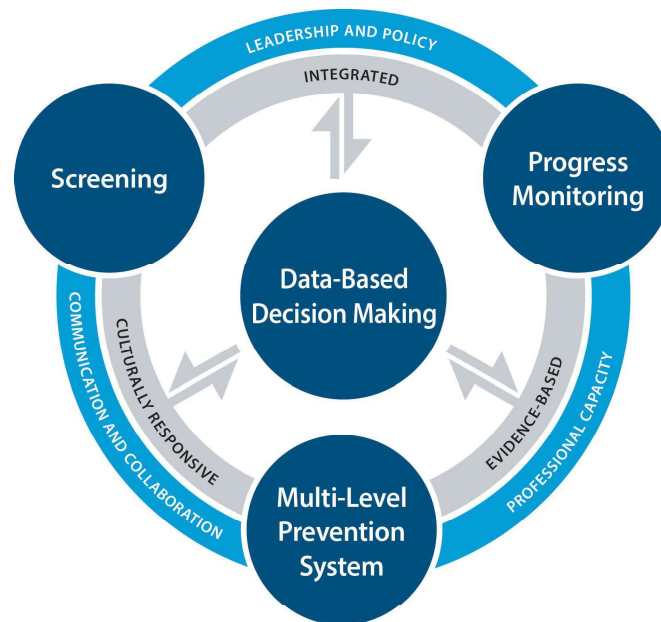
CASEL'S SEL FRAMEWORK:
What Are the Core Competence Areas and Where Are They Promoted?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school–family–community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities.

COMMUNITIES

FAMILIES & CAREGIVERS

SCHOOLS

CLASSROOMS

SELF-AWARENESS

SELF-MANAGEMENT

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

SOCIAL AWARENESS

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

SEL Instruction & Classroom Climate

Schoolwide Culture, Practices. & Policies

Authentic Partnerships

Aligned Learning Opportunities
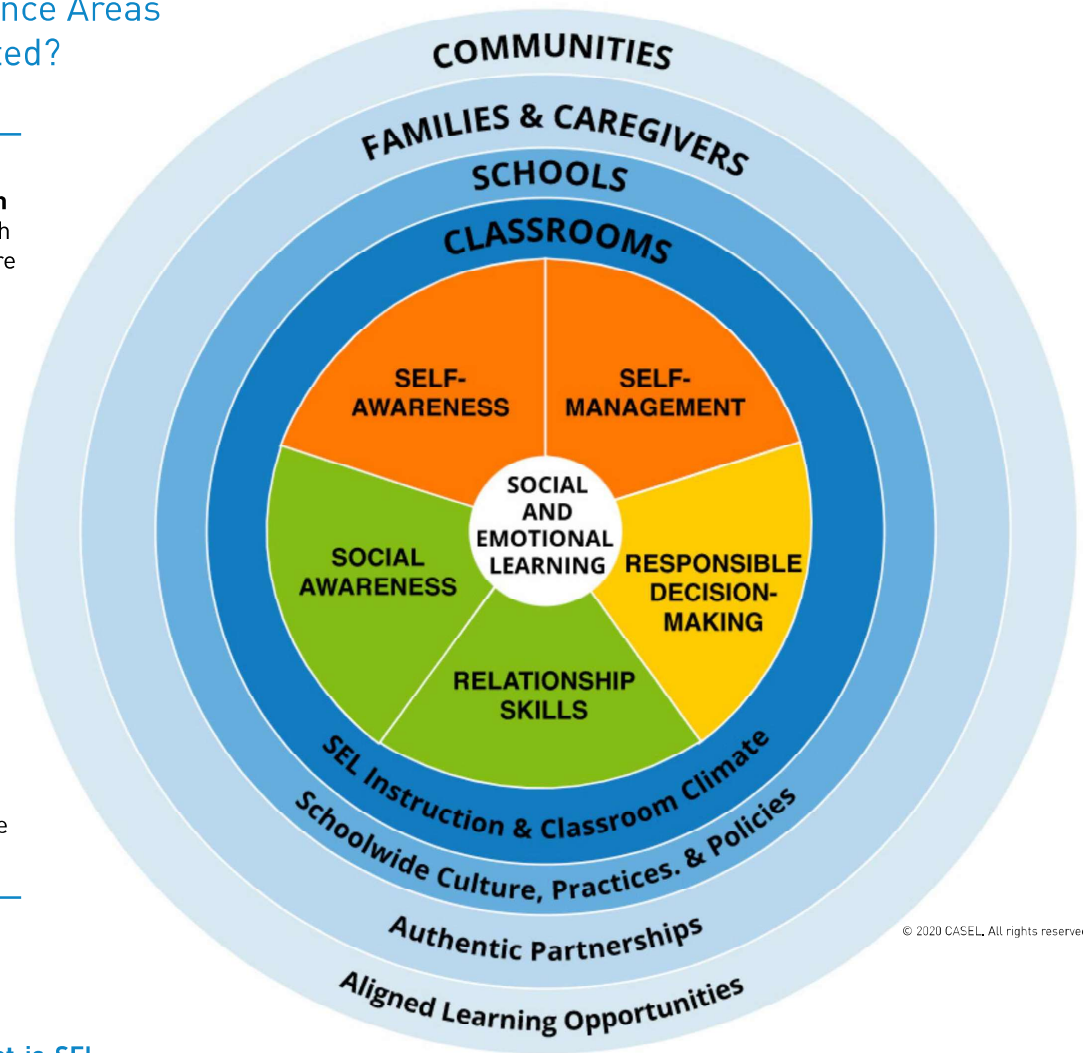
Learn more: www.casel.org/what-is-SEL

THE CASEL 5:

The CASEL 5 addresses five broad, interrelated areas of competence and examples for each: *self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills,* and *responsible decision-making*. The CASEL 5 can be taught and applied at various develop-mental stages from childhood to adult-hood and across diverse cultural contexts to articu-late what students should know and be able to do for academic success, school and civic en-gagement, health and wellness, and fulfilling careers.

SELF-AWARENESS: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. This includes capacities to recognize one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose. Such as:

- Integrating personal and social identities
- Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets
- Identifying one's emotions
- Demonstrating honesty and integrity
- Linking feelings, values, and thoughts
- Examining prejudices and biases
- Experiencing self-efficacy
- Having a growth mindset
- Developing interests and a sense of purpose

SOCIAL AWARENESS: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts. This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behav-ior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. Such as:

- Taking others' perspectives
- Recognizing strengths in others
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- Understanding and expressing gratitude
- Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones
- Recognizing situational demands and opportunities
- Understanding the influences of organizations/systems on behavior

SELF-MANAGEMENT: The abilities to manage one's emo-tions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situ-ations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation & agency to accomplish personal/collective goals. Such as:

- Managing one's emotions
- Identifying and using stress-management strategies
- Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation
- Setting personal and collective goals
- Using planning and organizational skills
- Showing the courage to take initiative
- Demonstrating personal and collective agency

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS: The abilities to establish and main-tain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups. This includes the capacities to communicate clearly, listen ac-tively, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem solve and negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with dif-fering social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when needed. Such as:

- Communicating effectively
- Developing positive relationships
- Demonstrating cultural competency
- Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving
- Resolving conflicts constructively
- Resisting negative social pressure
- Showing leadership in groups
- Seeking or offering support and help when needed
- Standing up for the rights of others

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety con-cerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being. Such as:

- Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness
- Identifying solutions for personal and social problems
- Learning to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, facts
- Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions
- Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside & outside of school
- Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being
- Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts

THE KEY SETTINGS:

Our framework takes a systemic approach that emphasizes the importance of establishing equitable learning environments and coordinating practices across key settings to enhance all students' social, emotional, and academic learning. We believe it is most beneficial to integrate SEL throughout the school's academic curricula and culture, across the broader contexts of schoolwide practices and policies, and through ongoing collaboration with families and community organizations. These coordinated efforts should foster youth voice, agency, and engagement; establish supportive classroom and school climates and approaches to discipline; enhance adult SEL competence; and establish authentic family and community partnerships.

CLASSROOMS. Research has shown that social and emotional competence can be enhanced using a variety of clasroom-based approaches such as: (a) explicit instruction through which social and emotional skills and attitudes are taught and practiced in developmentally, contextually, and culturally responsive ways; (b) teaching practices such as cooperative learning and project-based learning; and (c) integration of SEL and academic curriculum such as language arts, math, science, social studies, health, and performing arts. High-quality SEL instruction has four elements represented by the acronym SAFE: Sequenced - following a coordinated set of training approaches to foster the development of competencies; Active - emphasizing active forms of learning to help students practice and master new skills; Focused - implementing curriculum that intentionally emphasizes the development of SEL competencies; and Explicit - defining and targeting specific skills, attitudes, and knowledge.

SEL instruction is carried out most effectively in nurturing, safe environments characterized by positive, caring relationships among students and teachers. To facilitate age-appropriate and culturally responsive instruction, adults must understand and appreciate the unique strengths and needs of each student and support students' identities. When adults incorporate students' personal experiences and cultural backgrounds and seek their input, they create an inclusive classroom environment where students are partners in the educational process, elevating their own agency. Strong relationships between adults and students can facilitate co-learning, foster student and adult growth, and generate collaborative solutions to shared concerns.

SCHOOLS. Effectively integrating SEL schoolwide involves ongoing planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement by all members of the school community. SEL efforts both contribute to and depend upon a school climate where all students and adults feel respected, supported, and engaged.

Because the school setting includes many contexts—classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, playground, bus—fostering a healthy school climate and culture requires active engagement from all adults and students. A strong school culture is rooted in students' sense of belonging, with evidence that suggests that it plays a crucial role in students' engagement. SEL also offers an opportunity to enhance existing systems of student support by integrating SEL goals and practices with universal, targeted, and intensive academic and behavioral supports. By coordinating and building upon SEL practices and programs, schools can create an environment that infuses SEL into every part of students' educational experience and promotes positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes for all students.

Continue to families/caregivers and communities...

www.casel.org/what-is-SEL
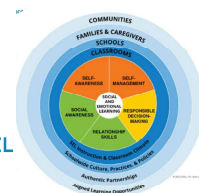
THE KEY SETTINGS (CONT.)

FAMILIES/CAREGIVERS. **When schools and families form authentic partnerships, they can build strong connections that reinforce students' social and emotional development.** Families and caregivers are children's first teachers, and bring deep expertise about their development, experiences, culture, and learning needs. These insights and perspectives are critical to informing, supporting, and sustaining SEL efforts. Research suggests that evidence-based SEL programs are more effective when they extend into the home, and families are far more likely to form partnerships with schools when their schools' norms, values, and cultural representations reflect their own experiences. Schools need inclusive decision-making processes that ensure that families—particularly those from historically marginalized groups—are part of planning, implementing, and continuously improving SEL.

Schools can also create other avenues for family partnership that may include creating ongoing two-way communication with families, helping caregivers understand child development, helping teachers understand family backgrounds and cultures, providing opportunities for families to volunteer in schools, extending learning activities and discussions into homes, and coordinating family services with community partners. These efforts should engage families in understanding, experiencing, informing, and supporting the social and emotional development of their students.

COMMUNITIES. **Community partners often provide safe and developmentally rich settings for learning and development,** have deep understanding of community needs and assets, are seen as trusted partners by families and students, and have connections to additional supports and services that school and families need. Community programs also offer opportunities for young people to practice their social and emotional skills in settings that are both personally relevant and can open opportunities for their future. To integrate SEL efforts across the school day and out-of-school time, school staff and community partners should align on common language and coordinate strategies and communication around SEL-related efforts and initiatives.

> Students, families, schools, and communities are all part of broader systems that shape learning, development, and experiences. Inequities based on race, ethnicity, class, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other factors are deeply ingrained in the vast majority of these systems and impact young people and adult social, emotional, and academic learning. While SEL alone will not solve longstanding and deep-seated inequities in the education system, it can create the conditions needed for individuals and schools to examine and interrupt inequitable policies and practices, create more inclusive learning environments, and reveal and nurture the interests and assets of all individuals.

www.casel.org/what-is-SEL
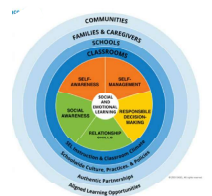
ARKANSAS OUTDOOR RECREATION DATA HIGHLIGHTS

ARKANSAS OUTDOOR ECONOMY SUMMIT | ARKANSAS THE NATURAL STATE EST 1836 | ARKANSAS OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

Arkansas' outdoor economy is a national leader in key recreation related segments, manufacturing and conservation-driven construction. Its economic strength continues to grow, shaping the state's identity and future.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OUTDOOR RECREATION IN ARKANSAS

- Outdoor recreation directly accounts for **2.5% of Arkansas' GDP ($4.5 billion)**, surpassing farming.
- From **2019 to 2023**, the sector grew by 33%, with an **8.2% increase between 2022 and 2023**.
- The sector accounts for **3% of all jobs in Arkansas**.
- Including indirect and induced impacts, outdoor recreation supports **68,431 jobs** and contributes **$7.3 billion** to the state's GDP.

REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Northwest Arkansas (31.3% of outdoor recreation jobs) is home to major brands such as Bass Cat Boats, Shawnee Boats, Wapsi, Buffalo Outdoor Center, Allied Cycle Works, Livsn Designs, Quack Rack and SwampOx.

Central Arkansas (27.2% of outdoor recreation jobs) features companies like Aloha Pontoons, Remington, Sig Sauer and Uniforce Companies. JM Associates in Little Rock produces outdoor TV content for networks like ESPN.

Outdoor recreation directly accounts for 3.3% of all jobs in **West-Central Arkansas**, the highest share in the state, driven by attractions like Mount Nebo State Park, Petit Jean State Park, Hot Springs and Lake Ouachita State Park.

In the **Delta region**, the number of outdoor companies has grown 27% from 2018-2023.

MANUFACTURING AND INFRASTRUCTURE GROWTH

- **Arkansas ranks fourth nationally** in outdoor product manufacturing as a share of state GDP.
- Outdoor product manufacturing jobs pay an **average of $84,600 per year**, about **20% above the state average**.
- The state leads the nation in **outdoor amenity construction growth (up 52.7% over four years)**, including trails, fishing resorts and hunting lodges.

BOATING AND FISHING

- Boating contributes the **sixth-largest share of GDP nationally** for Arkansas.
- The **Bull Shoals Lake region** has driven major bass and trout boat innovations with leading brands: Ranger, Bass Cat, Shawnee and Supreme Boats.
- **Fishing's contribution to Arkansas' GDP grew 36.8% from 2019 to 2023** (8th best nationally), supported by world-class bass fishing lakes and trout tailwaters.

HUNTING, SHOOTING AND TRAPPING GROWTH

Arkansas saw the **third-largest GDP increase in hunting, shooting and trapping (2019-2023)**.

Growth is fueled by Arkansas' global reputation as a **waterfowl hunting destination**. Its **hunting and shooting product manufacturing,** including brands such as Remington, Sig Sauer, Umarex, Wilson Combat, Battle Armor Designs and Bayou Deview Duck Blinds.

TAX REVENUE CONTRIBUTIONS

The Arkansas outdoor economy generated in 2023:

- **$926 million** in federal tax revenue.
- **$729 million** in state tax revenue.
- **$240 million** in local tax revenue.

State tax revenue from outdoor recreation accounted for 8% of total tax revenue collected in Fiscal Year 2023 further solidifying its role as a leader in Arkansas' tourism industry.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR WORK

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Empirical Evidence Supporting Benefits of Outdoor School and Experiential Learning Programs

The following research brief outlines statements describing the benefits of outdoor school and experiential learning programs, followed by empirical evidence supporting each statement.

This brief draws heavily on a 2007 literature review conducted by the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, which looked at 76 articles examining the impacts of outdoor education programs. The review focused on studies that evaluated formal K-12 programs. Studies of outdoor and experiential education programs offered outside of school were also analyzed, including nontraditional programs such as hunting and fishing. Studies of programs in lifelong learning, home schooling, and pre-K were not included (Wheeler and Thumlert, 2007).

The benefits explored in this brief include:

Increasing Academic Achievement. Specifically in Common Core Standards, critical thinking and fields related to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), outdoor school helps kids stay more engaged in the classroom by making schoolwork more relevant and fun, through hands-on activities that show children how their lessons in school apply to the world around them.

- A 5-year study of 12,750 students in 8 California schools that compared students on the basis of environment-based education found that "treatment" students—those who had received environment-based education—performed significantly better than their "control" student peers at different schools who received no environmental education. (SEER, 2005)

  1. In 100% of reading assessments, treatment students scored as well or better than control students.
  2. In 92.5% of math assessments, treatment students scored as well or significantly higher than control students.
  3. In 95% of language assessments, treatment students scored as well or significantly higher than control students.
  4. In 97.5% of spelling assessments, treatment students scored as well or significantly higher than control students.
  5. In over 96% of all cases, treatment students scored as well or significantly higher than control students.
  6. In 42% of the cases, treatment students scored **significantly** higher than control students in reading, math, language and spelling.
  7. In 46% of reading test cases, treatment students scored **significantly** higher than control students.
  8. In 49% of math test cases, treatment students scored **significantly** higher than control students.
  9. In 40% of language test cases, treatment students scored **significantly** higher than control students.
  10. In 32.5% of spelling test cases, treatment students scored **significantly** higher than control students.

Math Achievement

- Bartosh (2003) compared state standardized scores from 77 pairs of schools (with and without environmental programs) that had been matched using U.S. Census and other economic, demographic, and geographic criteria. Bartosh found that schools with environmental education programs consistently outperformed "traditional" schools on state standardized tests in math, reading, writing, and listening. Specifically, 65 percent of the schools with environmental education programs performed significantly better in math on the Washington Assessment of

Student Learning (WASL), and 58 percent of the schools with environmental education programs did better in math on the Iowa Test of Basic skills.

- A study of 400 Washington middle school students, half of whom were participating in environmental education programs, found that these students consistently and significantly outperformed students not involved in an environmental education program in the math Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). (Bartosh, Tudor and Ferguson, 2005)

- A smaller study of 181 Grade 10 students in Washington State found that students in an environmental education program were significantly more likely to meet or exceed the state and school district average score on the math WASL (Bartosh, 2006). This study controlled for differences in pre-program achievement level, gender and education goals, therefore the findings can be considered strong evidence of the positive influence of environmental education on academic achievement.

- Lieberman and Hoody (1998) conducted four surveys and 665 interviews regarding student achievement at 40 elementary, middle, and high schools with environment-based programs across the United States. They found that 92 percent of educators reported that students demonstrated a better mastery of math skills.

- Two studies in California found that students involved in environmental education programs and programs that use hands-on outdoor education (academically known as the "Environment as an Integrating Context, or EIC) significantly outperformed students in traditional math programs on assessments. These studies compared twelve pairs of schools that had been matched using demographic and socioeconomic criteria and information about their environmental programs. (Lieberman, Hoody and Lieberman, 2000 and Lieberman, Hoody and Lieberman, 2005)

- Duffin, Phillips, and Tremblay and PEER Associates (2006a, b) explored the impact of Antioch New England Institute's Community-based School Environmental Education (CO-SEED) on 3,395 students in New Hampshire and Massachusetts from 1993 to 2005. In New Hampshire, scaled math scores for environmental education students increased by an average of twelve points from Grade 3 to Grade 6, while state scores decreased by four points. Similarly in Massachusetts, the study showed increased student achievement in math, mostly for upper-level grades but also for Grade 4, which outperformed both the district and the state in 2004.

- In a study of 18,982 students in 176 schools from Alaskan school districts that used the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI), a place-based, systemic approach, Emekauwa (2004a) compared performance on the state math tests to results from 28 non-AKRSI schools and data for the Native Alaskan student population as a whole. Grade 8, 10 and 11 students performed better on the state math tests than

students from traditional programs. AKRSI students in 2001 also showed improvement over Alaskan Native students as a whole. Improvements were seen in the percentages of AKRSI students moving into the highest quartile and out of the lowest quartile.

- A study of over 2,000 middle- and elementary-school students conducted in a Louisiana school district investigated the district's place-based program. The study found that the percentage of students performing at unsatisfactory levels on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century (LEAP 21) decreased more in participating schools than in the state as a whole in four areas. In particular, the percentage of students receiving a score of unsatisfactory in math declined by 14.1 percentage points among participating students, compared to a 3.6-point decline in the state as a whole.

- Danforth (2005) compared students' achievement in math and reading in three pairs of Texas schools (306 students in the Schoolyard Habitat Program group and 186 students in traditional classes). The study found that the math scores on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests increased more on average for participating students than for students in traditional classes.

- Workman (2005) analyzed the performance of 941 Minnesota students, including some students who attended environmental education classes and others who did not, on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment. The study found that the students involved in environmental education classes significantly outperformed the other students in math 33 to 66 percent of the time.

Science Achievement

- Bartosh (2006) analyzed the experiences of 181 students in one Washington State public high school and found statistically significant differences in the WASL science scores of students in environmental education classes compared to those in non-environmental education classes.

- Duffin, Phillips, Tremblay, and PEER Associates (2006a, b) also report increased student achievement, mostly for upper-level grades in two New Hampshire and Massachusetts school districts that participated in Antioch New England Institute's CO-SEED place-based education program.

- In one Louisiana school district with a place-based program, the number of Grade 4 students from environmental education programs scoring unsatisfactory decreased by 8.1 points between 1999-2000 and 2001-2002, while in the state overall, there was a 3.7- point decrease.

- A study of four outdoor schools in California (often referred to as outdoor science schools) conducted by the American Institutes for Research (2005) found that

students who attended outdoor programs improved their science scores significantly between the beginning and end of the program.

- Lewicki (2000) examined experiences of 14 high school students who participated in a long-term place-based program in Wisconsin, and found that science scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills increased by three grade points between the beginning and the end of the program.

- Lieberman and Hoody (1998) conducted four surveys and 665 interviews regarding student achievement at 40 elementary, middle, and high schools with environment-based programs across the United States. They found that outdoor education students performed better in three out of four science assessments. Anecdotally, 99 percent of teachers who completed the survey instrument reported increased student knowledge and understanding of science content, concepts, processes, and principles as well as their better ability to apply science to real-world situations.

- Results of the California Student Assessment project that compared results for eight pairs of schools (matched using demographic and socioeconomic criteria, and information about their environmental programs) suggest that EIC students performed better than non-EIC students in science assessments. (Lieberman, Hoody, and Lieberman, 2000)

Language Arts Achievement

- Bartosh's (2005) study of 77 pairs of schools in Washington State found a significant difference between schools with environmental education programs and schools without environmental education in language arts performance on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). On the WASL test, 56 schools with environmental education did better in writing, and 51 schools with environmental education outperformed their counterparts in reading. On the ITBS test, 45 schools with environmental education performed better in reading.

- A study conducted in Washington State by the Pacific Education Institute found that middle school students from five schools with environmental education significantly outperformed "non-environmental education program" schools on the writing WASL (Bartosh, Tudor, and Ferguson, 2005). Students from environmental education schools also tended to outperform students from non-environmental education schools on the WASL reading tests. However, the difference on the reading tests was not significant.

- Lieberman, Hoody, and Lieberman (2005) compared four pairs of schools in California that had been matched using demographic, socioeconomic criteria and information about their environmental programs, finding that outdoor education students scored as well or significantly higher than non-outdoor education students

in language, spelling, and reading assessments; 93 percent of educators reported an improved development of language arts skills.

- Gorham elementary students in New Hampshire who participated in CO-SEED demonstrated improved scaled language arts scores by an average of 16 percentage points from Grade 3 to Grade 6, compared to a 2-point decrease in state scores during the same time period for students who did not participate in CO-SEED. However, the study does not indicate if the increase was statistically significant. (Duffin, Phillips, Tremblay, and PEER Associates, 2006)

- In one Louisiana school district, the percentage of Grade 4 students who performed at the unsatisfactory level in English Language Arts decreased 13.2 percentage points (from 32.6 percent in 1999 to 18.4 percent in 2002) for students participating in an environmental education program, compared to only a 6.5-point decrease for the state as a whole. (Emekauwa, 2004b)

- Bartosh et al.'s (2005) study of 181 students in Washington State found that students from schools with environmental education programs performed better on the reading and writing WASL.

- Workman's (2005) study of elementary schools in Minnesota found a significant difference in reading scores on the MCA test between students who participated in an integrated environmental education program and students from traditional classrooms, with "environmental education" students outperforming "non-environmental education" students 33 percent of the time.

Social Studies Achievement

- In one Louisiana school district, analysis of student achievement on the LEAP 21 assessments indicates that between 1998 and 2000 there was an 11.3-point decrease in the number of students scoring unsatisfactory in social studies among students participating in a place-based program, compared to 3.2-point decrease at the state level. (Emekauwa, 2004b)

- Lieberman and Hoody's (1998) study of 40 schools across the United States found that in the two schools compared using social studies assessments, outdoor education students performed better than traditional students. Also, 95 percent of educators reported greater student comprehension of social studies content.

- A study of eight pairs of schools in California reports that EIC students performed better than traditional students in 8 out of 11 social science assessments. (Lieberman, Hoody and Lieberman, 2000)

Critical Thinking

- Athman and Monroe (2004a, 2004b) found a strong positive correlation between participation in environmental education programs and improved thinking skills. The researchers compared students who participated in environment-based programs with students who attended traditional programs in the same school (404 students from 11 Florida high schools). The study found that students in programs designed around an environmental context tended to score higher on the Cornell Critical Thinking Test than students in the traditional classes.

- Cheak, Hungerford, and Volk (2002) investigated an inquiry-based environmental education program, called Investigating and Evaluating Environmental Issues and Actions (IEEIA), in a public elementary school in Hawaii, using qualitative and quantitative methods. Thirty-eight IEEIA students and 28 non-IEEIA students completed two assessments: the critical thinking test in environmental education and the middle school environmental literacy instrument. Students in the IEEIA program scored higher both on the critical thinking test and five out of eight components of environmental literacy instrument.

- Lieberman and Hoody's (1998) study of 40 schools across the United States found that 97 percent of educators reported that students receiving hands-on place-based curriculum had a greater proficiency in solving problems and thinking strategically.

Grade Point Average

- Bartosh (2006) found the GPAs of 79 Grade 10 students in Washington State who participated in a year-long outdoor education program became significantly higher by the end of the year compared to GPAs of 102 students from traditional classes.

Graduation Rates

- In the study of 18,982 high school students in 176 Alaskan schools from districts that used the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI), a place-based, systemic approach, Emekauwa (2004) observed that reductions in the dropout rate are larger for AKRSI students than for students from 28 non-AKRSI schools. Dropout rates for Grades 7-12 in AKRSI schools declined from an average of 4.4 in 1995 to 3.6 in 2000, compared to a decrease from 2.7 to 2.4 for non-AKRSI schools over the same period. Furthermore, the first-time, freshmen enrolment at the University of Alaska from AKRSI districts increased by 49 percent in 2001 over the numbers enrolled in 1995.

Classroom Engagement and Motivation

- Athman and Monroe (2004b) compared Florida high school students who participated in environment-based programs with students who attended traditional programs in the same 11 schools, finding that students participating in an EIC program scored significantly higher on the California Measure of Mental Motivation and the Achievement Motivation Inventory.

- Lieberman and Hoody (1998) conducted surveys and interviews regarding student achievement at 40 elementary, middle, and high schools with environment-based programs across the United States. They found that most outdoor education teachers reported growing enthusiasm and motivation to learn in social studies, science, math, and language arts.

- In three elementary and two middle schools in Maryland, student engagement within each school was statistically significantly higher for students who had more intense outdoor education experiences. (Secker, 2004)

- Teachers who taught in the Model Links Program in Washington State schools identified a range of benefits of environmental programs for students: improved student motivation, self-confidence, critical thinking, technical reading and writing skills, and decrease in behavior and discipline problems. According to the teachers, students were more engaged in hands-on learning and the program has also had a positive impact on the learning of at-risk populations. (Yap, 1998)

Teaching Children How to Collaborate and Build Community. Studies show that across cultural and economic differences, students participating in outdoor education programs demonstrated less aggression, better moods, impulse control, and better cognitive functioning and social skills.

- According to teacher assessments of students, children who attended a week-long residential outdoor school program showed statistically significant gains in all eight constructs tested, including self-esteem (9.65%), leadership (7.36%), relationship with peers (11.39%), motivation to learn (4.32%), cooperation (4.95%), conflict resolution (11.73%), problem-solving (20.44%) and behavior in class (3.4%). (Parrish, et al, 2005)

- A study of over 800 middle and elementary school students who attended the IslandWood residential outdoor program in Bainbridge, WA demonstrated increased positive behavior, environmental knowledge, and development of community among students. The percent of students who reported that their group was "not functioning well" dropped from 19% at the start to 7% at the end of the program. In addition, the number of students who indicated that other group members "aren't nice/don't treat them well" dropped from 15% to 10% by the end of the IslandWood outdoor school. (Kearney, 2009)

- Duffin, Powers, Tremblay, and PEER Associates (2004) claimed that participation in Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative PEEC programs makes significant and positive contributions to student engagement in learning, student civic engagement, student time spent outdoors and student stewardship behavior.

- Cheak, Hungerford, and Volk (2002) investigated an inquiry-based environmental education program in a public elementary school in Hawaii, finding that participating students demonstrated improved personal characteristics and participatory citizenship in the community, based on data obtained from student and teacher interviews.

- In a report supported by the Pew Charitable Trust (Lieberman and Hoody, 1998), researchers found that teaching that employs natural and socio-cultural environments as the context for learning increased students' interpersonal abilities. This study of 40 schools, 400 K-12 students, and 250 teachers also demonstrates that place-based learning is successful in improving student achievement in a variety of academic measurements:

  1. 98% of educators reported that students had a better ability to work in group settings.
  2. 94% of educators reported that students had stronger communication skills.
  3. 93% of educators reported an increase in the amount of students acting with greater civility toward others.

Building Self-sufficiency, Self-esteem and Leadership Skills. For many
students, outdoor school is the first time they've ever been immersed in natural settings. For others, it is their first time spending the night away from their families. The skills and experiences gained through outdoor school instill self-confidence, help youth realize their leadership potential and make them more self-sufficient. Outdoor school also provides high school students with volunteer teaching opportunities, helping them become stronger leaders and more college and career ready.

- In the American Institutes for Research (2005) study of outdoor programs in four California elementary schools, students who participated in the course showed positive gains in self-esteem, leadership, cooperation, conflict-resolution and students' relationships with their teachers immediately after the program. Significant differences in cooperation and conflict-resolution skills were found between the participating and control groups 6 to 10 weeks later.

- Garst and Baker (2001) analyzed young people who participated in a three-day outdoor adventure program. Their study found that several areas of self-perception profiles, such as social acceptance and behavior conduct, increased immediately after the program, and that some behavior impacts may have remained four months after the trip. After conducting interviews with the participants, the researchers concluded that changes in self-perception occurred due to the novelty of the program experience and its duration.

- Cross (2002) analyzed seventeen pairs of high school students (half of whom participated in a rock climbing camp), reporting that although the two groups exhibited similar behavior before the treatment, the rock climbing group appeared to be less alienated and demonstrated a stronger sense of personal control after the program than did the control group.

Creating Good Stewards of the Land Who Know How to Use Our Natural Resources Responsibly. To appreciate the true value of Oregon's natural resources, young people need to spend time in natural settings and understand the relationships between humans, plants, animals, water, land and air. Outdoor school fosters a lifelong appreciation for Oregon's unique heritage, and teaches our youth about the role and responsibility of every Oregonian to be a steward.

- Students who participated in 3-day field trips sponsored by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation scored significantly higher on tests that measured environmentally responsible behavior than a comparison group. Students increased their mean pre-test score of "environmental sensitivity" from 19.94 to 21.85 on a post-test, a statistically significant difference from students who did not attend 3-day field trips, and a statistically significant increase from pre to post score. Students also increased their "knowledge of issues" from 13.02 to 15.68, also a statistically significant difference from the no-treatment group. Students who participated in the field trips also improved their scores in "personal responsibility" from 6.61 to 6.99, a statistically significant difference from the no-treatment group. (Zint, et al., 2002)

- In a study of 255 Grade 6 students from four elementary schools conducted by the American Institutes for Research (2005), students who attended the program showed increased concern about caring for natural resources.

- Siemer and Knuth (2001), who examined experiences of 619 Grade 6-8 students in the "Hooked on Fishing—Not on Drugs" program found that youth in fully implemented fishing programs demonstrated better fishing skills, better knowledge and awareness of aquatic environments and issues related to fishing, as well as a stronger commitment to limit their personal impact on nature while fishing.

- Research shows that the length of stay in an outdoor school produces different retentions of stewardship behavior. 5-day stays were associated with longer-term retention of awareness and knowledge increases among participants 3 months after the program's conclusion. When evaluating pre-experience and post-experience index scores, researchers found gains in students' connection to nature and stewardship. The average pre-experience score for the construct measuring connection to nature was 79. This grew to 81.1 in the post-experience scores. Pre-experience measurements of stewardship grew from 69 to 80.6 by the end of the program and environmental awareness grew from 60 to 74.4. (Stern, et al., 2008)

- Research from a study of 697 5th and 6th graders shows that after a residential outdoor education programs ranging in length from one to four nights, students have significantly more positive attitudes toward wildlife, and these attitude changes are retained for at least three months after the program. Researchers used Wilcoxon signed-rank tests to measure wildlife attitudes. Students who attended

residential outdoor school had a Wilcoxon score of .313 while the control group had a score of .158. (This is a complex statistical measurement that wouldn't mean much even to a reader with a basic understanding of statistical analysis.) (Dettmann,-Easler and Pease, 1999)

Gaining Future Employment Skills and Interest in Natural Resource Careers Like Farming and Forestry. Our state and its many natural resource-based industries are in dire need of a technically skilled workforce to solve current and future challenges that affect our communities. Outdoor school introduces our children to natural resource-based careers, augments science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies at school and drives increased interest in these professions.

- The National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (NEETF) and North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE) (2001) report notes that environmental education programs allow students to gain skills and abilities needed to be successful in the job market. While undertaking different projects in their communities, students learn problem-solving, communication and decision-making skills, and also develop the ability to work in groups.

- Seever (1991), who evaluated the Nowlin Environmental Science Magnet Middle School in Missouri, reports that about 45 percent of students reported that they learned about career opportunities in the field of environmental science through participation in the program. Furthermore, 23 to 30 percent of students in grades 6-8 said that they are thinking about a career in an environmental field.

- Outdoor school programs in Oregon often have a service-learning component, such as the volunteer high school counselors who develop practical skills while mentoring and teaching younger students. Grassi, Hanley, and Liston (2004), who examined 29 service-learning programs in Colorado, found that students reported having gained work experience, job skills, and career awareness through participation in service-learning. Parents and teachers also reported that students gained communication skills.

- Billig, Root, and Jesse (2005), who surveyed 1,000 students, including a group from schools with service-learning programs and a group from schools with a traditional curriculum, found that service-learning students significantly outperformed comparison students in the development of career and work skills.

Accessibility for All Students. Outdoor School is equally accessible to all students. Through small group learning, all students—whether or not they have disabilities, are English second language learners, or are gifted and talented—receive outdoor education that is tailored to their needs and learning styles.

- The 2005 study from the American Institutes for Research focused on 225 at-risk sixth-grade students from four California elementary schools, and the impacts of a week-long outdoor school experience. These schools serve a majority of Hispanic children, ranging from 69 to 89 percent of the student population. 81 to 100 percent of the students in this study also qualified for the free and reduced price lunch program.

  According to teacher reports, among those students who attended the program, English Learner (EL) students demonstrated gains in cooperation of 7.81 percent; 10.63 percent gains in leadership; a gain of 15.35 percent in the construct measuring relationships with peers; an incredible 22.14 percent gain in the construct measuring problem solving; and a gain of 8.17 percent in motivation to learn. All of these gains were statistically significantly compared to the gains shown by non-EL students for those constructs.

  This study also shows that Hispanic students increased their science scores by 3.6 points from pre-surveys to post-surveys after attending a week-long outdoor school program. Teachers qualitatively reported in this study that outdoor school puts children with special needs or disabilities on equal footing their peers. (Parrish, et al, 2005)

- For students with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), being outdoors in green spaces reduces their symptoms. Researchers show through regression analysis that there is a positive relationship between the greenness rating of their play setting and parents' severity of symptoms rating. Analysis showed a significant positive relationship of .08. In sum, this means that the greener the child's play environment the week before, the less severe their symptoms. This study only focused on play environments, but the main takeaway is that if students with ADD are in green spaces, like the ones outdoor school can provide, their symptoms— such as difficulty paying attention, inability to complete tasks, and being distracted easily—are reduced. (Taylor et al, 2001)

- A national study of 715 children ages 6 to 11 found that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds had greater media access in their bedrooms (52 percent had TV in their rooms, compared to 14 percent in higher income households; DVD players 39 percent versus percent; video games 21 percent versus 9 percent), highlighting the importance of exposing low-income children to the outdoors through formal outdoor school programs. (Tande et al., 2012)

- There are vast disparities in participation in outdoor recreation activities like those found in many outdoor school programs across the country. A study by the Outdoor Foundation found that 79 percent of outdoor recreation participants are Caucasian. Males make up 56 percent of outdoor recreation participants, also. (Outdoor Industry Foundation, 2010)

- A CDC survey found that 61.5 percent of children do not participate in an organized physical activity. This report additionally found that there were significant differences based on race and ethnicity, such as that parental concerns regarding barriers to participation (e.g., transportation or expenses) were reported more often by non-Hispanic black and Hispanic parents than by non-Hispanic white parents. (CDC, 2002)

Developing Healthy Habits for a Lifetime. Children are spending more and more time being sedentary in front of a screen. Outdoor School provides opportunities for Oregon students to be exposed to the health benefits of outdoor school and disconnect from technologies in ways that they may not encounter in traditional school settings or in their homes.

- Most American children spend 3 hours a day watching TV. Added together, all types of screen time can total 5 to 7 hours a day. Too much screen time can make it difficult for children to sleep, raise the risk of developing attention problems, anxiety and depression, and raise the risk of obesity. (Kaneshiro, 2014)

- Researchers recently sent 51 6th grade students to an outdoor education overnight camp facility, where they were not allowed to use any electronic devices for a week. Students engaged in typical outdoor school activities, such as learning about forest ecology and outdoor skills, orienteering and participating in hikes. When compared to a control group, researchers found that the students who went to outdoor school were much better at recognizing human emotion after being at outdoor school and not having access electronics than their peers who attended traditional school. (Uhls et al., 2014)

- The environment where students participate in play is a crucial motivator in how much physical activity they engage in. A study of Canadian K-8 students shows a 49 percent increase in vigorous activity and a 71 percent increase in moderate or light physical activity when students are surrounded by natural landscapes. Studies also show that even moderate to light activity can reduce obesity among children. Bell and Dyment, 2007)

- The American Public Health Association recently adopted 17 new policy guidelines—among them, "encouraging land use decisions that prioritize access to natural areas and green spaces for residents of all ages, abilities, and income levels." (Louv, 2013)

- A survey of over 800 mothers in the United States found that children in the early 2000s spent less time playing outdoors, participated in fewer organized youth sports and participated in more indoor activities than outdoor play activities. Seventy percent of mothers reported playing outdoors every day when they were young, compared with only 31 percent of their children. When asked about this, almost all mothers recognized the diverse benefits of outdoor play. In fact, 97 percent of mothers agreed that outdoor play offers children an outlet for reducing everyday stress, but obstacles such as television, computers, and concerns about crime, safety and injury prevented their children from engaging in outdoor play. (Clements, 2004)

Sources Cited and Reviewed in OSPI Literature Review

Athman, A., and Monroe, M. (2001). Elements of effective environmental education programs. Unpublished. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED 463936)

Bartosh, O. (2006). What do students learn in a high school environmental program? Washington, D.C.: North American Association for Environmental Education.

Bartosh, O., Tudor, M., and Ferguson, L. (2005). Environmental education and its impact on students' test scores: A study of Washington State middle schools. San Francisco, CA: Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April 7-11, 2006. Bartosh, O., Tudor, M., Ferguson. L., and Taylor, C. (2005). Improving test scores through environmental education: is it possible? Applied Environmental Education and Communication, 5(3), 161-169.

Battersby, J. (1999). Does environmental education have 'street credibility' and the potential toreduce pupil disaffection within and beyond their school curriculum? Cambridge Journal of Education, 29(3), 447-460.

Bell, A.C. and Dyment, J.E. (2007) Grounds for movement: green school grounds as sites for promoting physical activity. Health Education Research. 23(6), 952-962. Retrieved February 2015: http://her.oxfordjournals.org/content/23/6/952.full

Billig, S., Root, S., and Jesse, D. (2005). The impact of participation in service-learning on high school students' civic engagement. National Service- Learning Clearinghouse Web site: http://www.servicelearning.org/lib_svcs/lib_cat/index.php?library_id=6411

Billings, J. A., Plato, K., Anderson, J., and Wiley, M. S. (1996). Washington Environmental Education Model Schools Program "Environmental education in the school culture: a systemic approach." What did we do? What did we learn? A final report submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency by the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Olympia, WA: OSPI.

Bobilya, A. J., and Akey, L. D. (2002). An evaluation of adventure education in a residential learning community. Journal of Experiential Education, 25(2), 296-304.

CDC (2002). Physical Activity Levels Among Children Aged 9 to 13 Years. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. 52(33), 785-788. Retrieved February 2015: http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5233a1.htm

Cheak, M., Volk, T., and Hungerford, H. (2002). Molokai: an investment in children, the community, and the environment. Carbondale, IL: The Center for Instruction, Staff Development, and Evaluation.

Clements, R. (2004). An Investigation of the State of Outdoor Play. Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood. 5(1), 68-80. Retrieved February 2015: http://www.wwwords.co.uk/pdf/validate.asp?j=ciec&vol=5&issue=1&year=2004&article=7_Clements_CIEC_5_1_web

Connors, J.J., and Elliot, J.F. (1995). The influence of agriscience and natural resources curriculum on students' science achievement scores. Journal of Agricultural Education, 36(3), 57-63.

Coyle, K. (2004). Understanding environmental literacy in America: and making it a reality. Draft. National Environmental Education and Training Foundation Web site: http://www.neefusa.org/roper/ELR.pdf

Coyle, K. (2005). Environmental literacy in America. National Environmental Education and Training Foundation Web site: http://www.neefusa.org/pubs/ELR2005.pdf

Cross, R. (2002). The effects of an adventure education program on perceptions of alienation and personal control among at-risk adolescents. Journal of Experiential Education, 25(1), 247-254.

Danforth, P. (2005). An evaluation of National Wildlife Federation's Schoolyard Habitat Program in the Houston Independent School District. Unpublished Master's Thesis. San Marcos, TX: Texas State University.

Davies, K., and Cohen, M. J. (1995). Reconnecting with nature: educational self-esteem sensory activities for reducing drug use and irresponsible relationships in students at risk. In M. J. Cohen, Reconnecting with Nature: A restoration of the missing link in Western thinking, Chapter 11. Friday Harbor, WA: University of Global Education.

Davila, A., and Mora, M. (2007). Civic engagement and high school academic progress: an analysis using NELS data. Retrieved August 20, 2007, from The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) Web site: http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/WorkingPapers/WP52Mora.pdf

Dettmann,-Easler, D., Pease, J.L. (1999) Evaluating the Effectiveness of Residential Environmental Education Programs in Fostering Positive Attitudes Toward Wildlife. Journal of Environmental Education. 31(1), 1.

Dori, Y. J., and Herscovitz, O. (1999). Question-posing capability as an alternative evaluation method: analysis of an environmental case study. Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 36(4), 411-430.

Duffin, M., Phillips, M., Tremblay, G., et al. (2006). Project CO-SEED supplemental evaluation report: 2005-2006 Quantitative results, Beebe Environmental and Health Science Magnet School. Place-Based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC) Web site: http://www.peecworks.org/PEEC/PEEC_Reports/S01469109-01469165

Duffin, M., Phillips, M., Tremblay, G., et al. (2006). Project CO-SEED supplemental evaluation report: 2005-2006 Quantitative results, Gorham School District. Place-Based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC) Web site: http://www.peecworks.org/PEEC/PEEC_Reports/S010DFF34-014690A4

Duffin, M., Powers, A., Tremblay, G., et al. (2004). Place-based education evaluation collaborative (PEEC) report on cross-program research and other program evaluation activities, 2003-2004. Place-Based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC) Web site: http://www.peecworks.org/PEEC/PEEC_Reports/S0019440A

Emekauwa, E. (2004). The star with my name: The Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative and the impact of place-based education on native student achievement. Washington, D.C.: Rural School and Community Trust. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 484828)

Emekauwa, E. (2004). They remember what they touch: The impact of place-based learning in East Feliciana parish. Rural School and Community Trust Web site: http://www.promiseofplace.org/pdf/EastFelicianaParish2004.pdf

Ernst, J., and Monroe, M. (2004). The effects of environment-based education on students' critical thinking skills and disposition toward critical thinking. Environmental Education Research, 10(4), 507-522.

Ernst, J., and Monroe, M. (2004). The effects of environment-based education on students' critical thinking skills and disposition toward critical thinking. Environmental Education Research, 14(4), 507-522.

Evans, et al. (2005). The neighborhood nestwatch program: participant outcomes of a citizen- science ecological research project. Conservation Biology, 19(3), 589-594.

Ferguson, L., Angell T., and Tudor, M. (2001). Better test scores through environmental education? Clearing Magazine, 110 (Fall), 20-22.

Fischer, T. L., and Attah, E. B. (2001). City kids in the wilderness: a pilot test of outward bound for foster care group home youth. Journal of Experiential Education, 24(2), 109-117.

Ford, P., and Payne, P. (1986). The effects of two outdoor education programs on knowledges and attitudes of selected six graders. Bradford Papers Annual, 1, 11-18.

Garcia-Obregon, Z., Trevino, J., Uribe-Moreno, S., and Zuniga, S. (2000). The effectiveness of a school based service-learning program "community connection" at a South Texas middle school. Unpublished. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 449338)

Garst, B., Scheider, I., and Baker, D. (2001). Outdoor adventure program participation impacts on adolescent self-perception. Journal of Experiential Education, 24(1), 41-49.

Glenn, J. L. (2000). Environment-based education: creating high performance schools and students. Washington, D.C.: National Environmental Education and Training Foundation. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 451033)

Glenn, J.L. (2000). Environment-based education: creating high performance schools and students. Washington, D.C.: National Environmental Education and Training Foundation. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 451033)

Governor's Council on Environmental Education. (2004). Environmental education in Washington: status report 2004. Unpublished.

Grassi, E., Hanley, D., and Liston, D. (2004). Service-learning: an innovative approach for second language learners. Journal of Experiential Education, 27(1), 87-110.

Gucker, P. (2001). Camp teaches life lessons: a director's commentary on camp's lasting educational value. Camping Magazine, 74(5), 25-28.

Hattie, J., Marsh H. W., Neill, J. T., and Richards, G. E. (1997). Adventure education and outward bound: Out of class experiences that make a lasting difference. Review of Educational Research, 67(1), 43-87.

Henderson, D. G., Fisher, D. L., and Fraser, B.J. (1998). Learning environment, student attitudes and effects of students' sex and other science study in environmental science classes. San Diego, CA: Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 420509)
Isenson, B., and Moore, F. (2003). Washington Environmental Education Model Schools and Creating Model Links: environmental education and school improvement: a look at enduring changes. In Governor's Council on Environmental Education, Environmental education in Washington: status report 2004 (Appendix E). Unpublished.

Hoody, L.L., Lieberman, G.A. (1998). Closing the Achievement Gap: Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning. State Education and Environmental Roundtable.

Kaly, P., and Heesacker, M. (2003). Effects of a ship-based adventure program on adolescent self-esteem and ego-identity development. Journal of Experiential Education, 26(2), 97- 104.

Kaneshiro MD, MHA, K. (2014). Screen time and children. Retrieved February 2015: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/patientinstructions/000355.htm

Kearney, A. R. (2009). IslandWood evaluation project: Assessment of student outcomes from IslandWood's School Overnight Program. Bainbridge Island, WA: IslandWood.

Retrieved February 2015 from
http://meera.snre.umich.edu/sites/all/files/Kearney_Islandwood_Evaluation_Project_Execu
tive_Summary.pdf

Koliba, C. J., Campbell, E. K., and Shapiro C. (2006). The practice of service-learning in local school-community contexts. Educational Policy, 20(5), 683-717.

Larson, B. A. (2007). Adventure camp programs, self-consent, and their effects on behavioral problem adolescents. Journal of Experiential Education, 29(3), 313-330.

Lewicki, J. (2000). 100 days of learning in place: How a small school utilized "place based" learning to master state academic standards. Washington, D.C.: Rural School and Community Trust. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 459023)

Lieberman, G. A., and Hoody, L. L. (1998). Closing the achievement gap: using the environment as an integrating context for learning, executive summary. San Diego, CA: State Education and Environment Roundtable (SEER). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 428942)

Lieberman, G., Hoody, L., and Lieberman, G. M. (2000). California student assessment project: the effect of environment-based education on student achievement. State Education and Environment Roundtable (SEER) Web site: http://www.seer.org/pages/csap.pdf

Lieberman, G., Hoody, L., and Lieberman, G. M. (2005). California student assessment project,
phase two: the effects of environment-based education on student achievement. State Education and Environment Roundtable (SEER) Web site: http://www.seer.org/pages/research/CSAPII2005.pdf

Lindemann-Matthies, P. (2002). The influence of an educational program on children's perception of biodiversity. Journal of Environmental Education, 33, 22-31.

Louv, R. (2013) A Momentous Week for the Children & Nature Movement: Big Pediatric and Public Health News. Retrieved Fenruary 2015: http://blog.childrenandnature.org/2013/11/07/momentus-week-for-children-nature-movement/

Loveland, E. (2003). Achieving academic goals through place-based learning: students in five states show how to do it. Rural Roots, 4(1), 1, 6-11.

McDavitt, D. S. (1994). Teaching for understanding: Attaining higher order and increased achievement through experiential instruction. Unpublished. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 374093)

McNamara, K. (2000). Outcomes associated with service involvement among disengaged youth. Journal of Drug Education, 30(2), 229-245.
Model Links: Environmental Education and School Improvement. (1999). What's Changing In Model Links Schools? 1995-1998 Progress Report. Olympia, WA: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Mogensen, F., and Nielsen, K. (2001). Students' knowledge about environmental matters and their belief in their own action possibilities - A Danish study. Journal of Environmental Education, 33(1), 33-35.

Moote, G. T. Jr., and Wodarski, J. S. (1997). The acquisition of life skills through adventure- based activities and programs: a review of the literature. Adolescence, 32(125), 143-167.

Outdoor Industry Foundation (2010). Outdoor Foundation Special Report on Youth. Boulder, CO. Retrieved February 2015:
http://www.outdoorfoundation.org/research.youth.html

Palmberg, I. E., and Kuru, J. (2000). Outdoor activities as a basis for environmental responsibility. Journal of Environmental Education, 31(4), 32-36.

Parrish, D. M., Phillips, G., Levine, R., Hikawa, H., Gaertner, M., Agosta, N., and Doyal, D. (2005). Effects of outdoor education programs for children in California. Retrieved February 2015, from American Institutes for Research Web site:
http://www.air.org/news/documents/Outdoorschoolreport.pdf

Patterson, D. (1995). The effects of outward bound on a group of middle school students. Unpublished. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 391822)

Poudel, D. D., Vincent, L. M., Anzalone, C., Huner, J., Wollard, D., Clement, T., DeRamus, A., and Blakewood, G. (2005). Hands-on activities and challenge tests in agricultural and environmental education. Journal of Environmental Education, 36(4), 10-22.

Powers, A. L. (2004). An evaluation of four place-based education programs. Journal of Environmental Education, 35(4), 17-32.

Randall, J. (2001). Enhancing high school students writing skills with Florida biodiversity education. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida.

Scales, P.C., Roehlkepartai, E. C., Neal, M., Kielsmeier, J. C., and Benson, P. L. (2006). Reducing academic achievement gaps: the role of community service and service-learning. Journal of Experiential Education, 29(1), 38-60.

Secker, C. V. (2004). Bay Schools Project. Year three summative evaluation. State Education and Environment Roundtable (SEER) Web site: http://www.seer.org/pages/research/BaySchools2004.pdf

Seever, M. (1991). Knotts Environmental Science Magnet Elementary School: 1988-1989, 1989-1990, 1990-199 summative evaluation. Kansas City, MO: Kansas City School District. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED 350158)

Seever, M. (1991). East Environmental Science Magnet High School: 1990-1991. Formative evaluation. Kansas City, MO: Kansas City School District. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED 350156)

Seever, M. (1991). Nowlin Environmental Science Magnet Middle School: 1990-1991. Formative evaluation. Kansas City, MO: Kansas City School District. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED 350157)

Seever, M. (1991). Trailwoods Environmental Science Magnet Elementary School. Formative evaluation. Kansas City, MO: Kansas City School District. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 350159)

Sheard, M., and Golby, J. (2006). The efficacy of an outdoor adventure education curriculum on selected aspects of positive psychological development. Journal of Experiential Education, 29(2), 187-209.

Siemer, W. F., and Knuth, B. A. (2001). Effects of fishing education programs on antecedents of responsible behavior. Journal of Environmental Education, 32(4), 23-29.

Smith, T. (1995). An experiential adventure school for adolescents. In B. Horwood (Ed.), Experience and the Curriculum (pp. 217-234). Boulder, CO: Association for Experiential Education.

State Education and Environment Roundtable (SEER). (2005). California Student Assessment Project, Phase Two: The Effects of Environment-based Education on Student Achievement. Poway, CA.

Stern, M.J., Powell, R.B., and Ardoin, N.M. (2008). What Difference Does it Make? Assessing Outcomes From Participation in Residential Environmental Education Program. The Journal of Environmental Education. 39(4), 31-43. Retrieved February 2015: http://www.academia.edu/3120253/What_Difference_Does_It_Make_Assessing_Outcomes_From_Participation_in_a_Residential_Environmental_Education_Program

Strage, A. (2004). Long-term academic benefits of service-learning: When and where do they manifest themselves? College Student Journal, 38(2), 257.
Using environment-based education to advance learning skills and character development. (2001). Rock Spring, GA: North American Association for Environmental Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 458145)

Tandon et. al. (2012). Home environment relationships with children's physical activity, sedentary time, and screen time by socioeconomic status. International Journal of Behavior Nutrition and Physical Activity. 9(88), 1-9/

Taylor et al. (2001). Coping with ADD: The Surprising Connection to Green Play Setting. Environment and Behavior. 33(1), 54-77. Retrieved February 2015: http://www.attitudematters.org/documents/Coping%20with%20ADD%20-%20Green%20Play%20Settings.pdf

Uhls, Michikyan et. al. (2014). Five days at outdoor education camp without screens improves preteen skills with nonverbal emotion cues. Computers in Human Behavior. 39(1), 387-392. Retrieved February 2015: http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563214003227

Volk, T. L., and Cheak, M. J. (2003). The effects of an environmental education program on students, parents, and community. Journal of Environmental Education, 34(4), 12-25.

Wang, W. (2000). Service-learning: Is it good for you? New Orleans, LA: Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 442439)

Wheeler, G. and Thumlert, C. (2007). Environmental Education Report. Olympia, WA: OSPI.

Workman, A. (2005). Effects of an integrated environmental education curriculum on the standardized assessment scores of elementary students. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Duluth, MN: University of Minnesota.

Yap, K. O. (1998). A summative evaluation of Model Links: Final report. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Zint, M., Kraemer, A., Northway, H., Lim. M. (2002). Evaluation of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Conservation Education Programs. Conservation Biology. 16(3), 641-649. Retrieved February 2015: http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/75333/j.1523-1739.2002.00546.x.pdf?sequence

Summer	PD	No School	Full Time	Half Time	Break	Make Up

Breakdown

Breakdown	Dates	Days	Hours
Quarter 1	Aug. 4 – Oct. 9	40	277.3
Quarter 2	Oct. 13 – Dec. 18	40	249.9
Semester 1	**Aug. 5 – Dec. 18**	**80**	**527.2**
Quarter 3	Jan. 13 – Mar. 31	38	263.9
Quarter 4	Apr. 1 – Jun. 5	40	278.6
Semester 2	**Jan. 13 – Jun. 9**	**78**	**542.5**
Year	Aug. 5 – Jun. 9	158	1069.7

Teacher Schedule	7:30 AM – 5:00 PM	Tuesday – Friday	Jul. 29 – Jun. 5
Student Schedule	7:45 AM – 4:30 PM	Tuesday – Friday	Aug. 5 – Jun. 5

Important Dates	Dates	Notes
Teacher PD	Jul. 29	
Student Start	Aug. 5	
ATLAS Interim 1	Sep. 23 – Sep. 26	
Fall Break	Nov. 3 – Nov. 4	
Thanksgiving	Nov. 24 – Nov. 27	
Winter Break	Dec. 22 – Jan. 9	
Teacher PD	Jan. 8 – Jan. 9	
ATLAS Interim 2	Jan. 27 – Jan. 30	
Spring Break	Mar. 17 – Mar. 27	
ATLAS Summative	Apr. 21 – Apr. 24	
Last Day	Jun. 5	

Notes

July 2026

M	T	W	T	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

August 2026

M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
10	11	12	13	14
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
17	18	19	20	21
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
24	25	26	27	28
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
31				

September 2026

M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
7	8	9	10	11
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
14	15	16	17	18
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
21	22	23	24	25
	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
28	29	30		
	7.35	7.35		

October 2026

M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
			7.35	7.35
5	6	7	8	9
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
12	13	14	15	16
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
19	20	21	22	23
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
26	27	28	29	30
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35

November 2026

M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
	Fall Break		7.35	7.35
9	10	11	12	13
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
16	17	18	19	20
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
23	24	25	26	27
	Thanksgiving			
30				

December 2026

M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
7	8	9	10	11
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
14	15	16	17	18
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
21	22	23	24	25
	Winter			
28	29	30	31	
	Winter			

January 2027

M	T	W	T	F
				1
				Winter
4	5	6	7	8
	Winter			
11	12	13	14	15
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
18	19	20	21	22
MLK	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
25	26	27	28	29
	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5

February 2027

M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
8	9	10	11	12
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
15	16	17	18	19
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
22	23	24	25	26
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35

March 2027

M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
8	9	10	11	12
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
15	16	17	18	19
		Spring Break		
22	23	24	25	26
		Spring Break		
29	30	31		
	7.35	7.35		

April 2027

M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
			7.35	7.35
5	6	7	8	9
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
12	13	14	15	16
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
19	20	21	22	23
	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
26	27	28	29	30
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35

May 2027

M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
10	11	12	13	14
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
17	18	19	20	21
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
24	25	26	27	28
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
31				

June 2027

M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35
7	8	9	10	11
	7.35	7.35	Make Up	
14	15	16	17	18
	Make Up			
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

Period	Time	Minute
1st	7:45 - 8:53	68
2nd	8:58 - 9:51	53
3rd	9:56 - 10:49	53
Lunch 1	10:54 - 11:39	45
4th	11:44 - 12:37	53
5th	12:42 - 1:35	53
6th	1:40 - 2:33	53
7th	2:37 - 3:30	53
8th	3:35 - 4:30	55
Dismiss	4:30 - 5:00	30
Teacher Times	7:30 - 5:00	9.5
Student Times	8:00 - 4:28	7.35

ARKANSAS CHILD FIND RESOURCE GUIDE

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
Special Education Unit

ARKANSAS CHILD FIND RESOURCE GUIDE

This guide was developed through the cooperative efforts of the Arkansas Department of Education, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education - Special Education Unit, the Child Find Advisory Council, and the Arkansas Special Education Resource Center, with funds provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as amended.

Prepared By

ARKANSAS SPECIAL EDUCATION CHILD FIND ADVISORY COUNCIL, published 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARKANSAS CHILD FIND PROCEDURAL GUIDE

PURPOSE

The purpose of this guide is to assist public agencies in complying with Federal and State Child Find requirements through locating and identifying all children and youth in the state from birth to 21 years of age who are possibly in need of early intervention or special education and related services. This effort is in response to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)[1], which requires that each state provide a free appropriate public education for all eligible children with disabilities (34 CFR 303.302 & 300.111).

Child Find is an ongoing cooperative effort that must involve state and local education agencies, parents, the community, professionals, related organizations, and private schools. This involvement is based on the premise that parents and public agency personnel, working cooperatively, can successfully locate and identify children in need of early intervention or special education and related services.

The collection and use of data to meet the requirements of Child Find are subject to the confidentiality requirements of IDEA.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

A. General Responsibility to Conduct Child Find

1. Each local educational agency, including charter schools, is responsible for ensuring that all children with disabilities from birth to twenty-one (21) years within its jurisdiction and in need of special education and related services are located, identified and evaluated, regardless of the severity of their disability, including:
   a. children with disabilities attending private schools
   b. highly mobile children with disabilities, including migrant children, children experiencing homelessness, and wards of the state
   c. children who are suspected of having a disability and need special education, even though they are advancing from grade to grade

2. The responsibility of the local educational agency to conduct child find activities extends to locating, identifying and evaluating all private school children with disabilities who attend private schools, including religious schools, who reside in the jurisdiction of the local educational agency. The activities undertaken to carry out this responsibility must be comparable to activities undertaken for children with disabilities in public schools.

3. Before any major location, identification or evaluation activity (child find), a notice to parents must be published or announced in newspapers or other media with local circulation adequate to notify parents throughout the LEA's jurisdiction of the activity.

SECTION II: PLANNING THE LOCAL CHILD FIND PROGRAM

A. Development of Plan; Document of Effort Requirements

1. Each local educational agency must develop and maintain a written Child Find Plan outlining the systematic and continuous efforts the local educational agency will undertake to meet its responsibilities as described in the above section.
2. At a minimum, any Child Find Plan must set forth annual child find activities including, but not limited to:
   a. initiation of a campaign of public awareness and
   b. procedures for the conduct of routine school screening.
3. The local educational agency shall maintain a written record of the Child Find Plan and documentation shall be of annual child find activities. Records and documents shall be available for review by staff of the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE).
4. It is the responsibility of the local educational agency to maintain a record of all children with disabilities receiving special education and related services from the local educational agency.

SECTION III: RECOMMENDED CHILD FIND PROCEDURES

The recommended child find procedures described herein are designed to help the public agencies, either cooperatively and/or individually to (1) locate, evaluate and identify children birth to twenty-one (21) years with disabilities; (2) collect, maintain, and report data; and (3) maintain a process for coordination and collaboration between various agency programs. A guide is presented to assist in planning and implementing the Child Find Program.

A. Establish Child Find Planning Committee (Optional)

A Child Find Planning Committee may be established to facilitate child find activities. Interagency commitment is necessary to prevent duplication of effort. Members could include but are not limited to representatives of:

1. Parents
2. School Districts, including Charter Schools
3. Education Service Cooperatives
4. Early Intervention Programs
5. Private Schools
6. Medical Providers
7. Advocacy Organizations
8. Other Related Agencies
9. Additional Resource Personnel as needed

The LEA will be responsible for the ongoing development, implementation and evaluation of all activities in their respective areas and will ensure coordination within the Child Find Planning Committee. The size of this committee may vary, but should be of a size that allows for effective planning.

B. Developing a Child Find Plan

Each Local Education Agency, including Cooperatives who provide early childhood services, are required to have a written child find plan. The local

plan must state the systems in place for child find, and how the process is ongoing. These plans must be available for ADE review when requested.

The plan must include the following:

1. School District boundaries;
2. before major identification, location, or identification activity a notice to parents must be announced to parents in newspapers or other local media;
3. procedures for conducting school screening; and
4. before child find begins notice to parents published or announced in newspapers or other media.

PLANNING THE LOCAL CHILD FIND PROGRAM

1. **Establish a local child find interagency committee (optional).**
   a. Identify target groups and or agencies to make up committee membership.
   b. Define the geographic boundaries.
   c. Select and invite individuals to represent targeted groups or agencies.
2. **Provide orientation training to child find planning committee (optional).**
   a. Distribute Child Find Procedural Guide to committee members.
   b. Review purpose and general responsibilities to conduct child find.
   c. Identify general responsibilities for targeted groups and/or agencies.
   d. Elect chairperson(s) for Child Find Planning Committee activities.
3. **Develop a written plan that includes:**
   a. School District boundaries;
   b. before major identification, location, or identification activity a notice to parents must be announced to parents in newspapers or other local media;
   c. procedures for conducting school screening; and
   d. before child find begins notice to parents published or announced in newspapers or other media.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

1. Define specific responsibilities for public awareness.
   a. Identify awareness activities for:
      i. Schools
      ii. Parents/guardians
      iii. Target groups

      iv.   Agencies

      v.   Civic groups

      vi.   Communities

b. Outline media/activities.

c. How child find activities are announced in newspapers, radio, social media, and other media.

d. A description of the public awareness campaign done by the district.

e. Evaluate awareness campaign.

PUBLICITY

1. Suggested strategies for publicity.
   a. Utilize child find materials from ASERC.
   b. Contact with local newspaper; radio; television/ Cable.
   c. Speak to groups and civic groups and organizations.
   d. Provide information and training for:
      i.   school personnel
      ii.   target groups
      iii.   Agencies
      iv.   communities

SCREENING

1. Identify screening activities.
   a. Identify who and where screening will take place.
   b. Determine timelines.
   c. Organize community screening programs.
   d. Determine instruments to be used:
      i.   Standardized achievement
      ii.   Grade cards
      iii.   Inventories

      iv.   Observation

      v.   Hearing screening

      vi.   Vision screening

      vii.   Speech/Language

      viii.   Developmental

      ix.   Behavioral

      x.   Cognitive

e. Maintain data on number screened and referred and number screened and not referred.

f. Evaluate effectiveness of screening program.

IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION

1. **Inform target groups of referral procedures.**
   a. Designate person(s) to receive referrals.
   b. Provide information to LEA to assist in arranging for initiation of due process.
   c. Conduct individual evaluations as appropriate as outlined in the Procedural Requirements and Program Standards ADE 2018.
   d. Maintain data on numbers identified, evaluated and placed and the number of students evaluated and not placed.
   e. Evaluate the effectiveness of identification and evaluation activities.

CHILDREN IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS

1. **Identify all private schools within the geographic area including religious schools**
   a. Establish contact representative in each private school.
   b. Consult with representatives of private schools on how to carry out the location, identification and evaluation of children suspected of having a disability that are attending the private school.
   c. Implement identification procedures in each private school as required under Section 14 of the Procedural Requirements and

Program Standards Manual ADE 2000.

    d. Maintain documentation of the number of students:
- i. screened
- ii. evaluated
- iii. determined to have a disability under IDEA - Established Individual Service Plans (ISP)

HIGHLY MOBILE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (SUCH AS MIGRANT AND HOMELESS CHILDREN)

1. Identify district personnel responsible for homeless, migrant and highly mobile
   a. Coordinate with district personnel responsible for homeless, migrant and highly mobile families in the district.
   b. Insure public awareness campaign includes: shelters, motels and other locations where individuals might reside when homeless, migrant and highly mobile, etc.
   c. Maintain data on the number of children located that are homeless, migrant and highly mobile within the geographic area.
   d. Insure that location, identification and evaluation procedures are implemented in accordance with Procedural Requirements and Program Standards ADE 2000.
   e. Maintain data on number screened, referred, evaluated and determined to have a disability under IDEA.
   f. Evaluate the effectiveness.

CHILDREN WHO ARE SUSPECTED OF HAVING A DISABILITY AND NEED SPECIAL EDUCATION EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE ADVANCING FROM GRADE TO GRADE

1. Establish a pre-referral committee.

a. Utilize referral committee to review
   i. group norm NRT and CRT scores to match grades
   ii. documented teacher concerns
   iii. teacher observations
b. Identify students suspected of having a disability but still advancing from grade to grade.
c. Make appropriate referrals and evaluations to determine need for special education/ interventions.
d. Evaluate committee's effectiveness by documenting:
   i. number of students reviewed
   ii. number of students referred for evaluation
   iii. number of students placed for services
   iv. number of repeat referrals

Child Find Plan (Example)

The following example is provided to assist public agencies in complying with Federal and State Child Find requirements.

CHILD FIND PLAN FOR:

Program Name

Program Year

I. Child Find Planning Committee Membership:

Agencies Represented:

Parent:

School District, including Charter Schools:

Education Service Cooperatives:

Early Intervention Programs:

Private Schools:

Medical Providers:

Advocacy:

Other Related Agencies:

Others as Necessary:

II. This child find plan covers the geographic boundaries of:

PLANNING THE LOCAL CHILD FIND PROGRAM   **Yes / No**

DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLETED ACTIVITIES:

PUBLIC AWARENESS   **Yes / No**

DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLETED ACTIVITIES:

PUBLICITY   **Yes / No**

DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLETED ACTIVITIES:

SCREENING   **Yes / No**

DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLETED ACTIVITIES:

IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION   **Yes / No**

DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLETED ACTIVITIES:

CHILDREN IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS   **Yes / No**

DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLETED ACTIVITIES:

HIGHLY MOBILE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES
(SUCH AS MIGRANT AND HOMELESS CHILDREN)   **Yes / No**

DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLETED ACTIVITIES:

**CHILDREN WHO ARE SUSPECTED OF HAVING A DISABILITY
AND NEED SPECIAL EDUCATION EVEN THOUGH
THEY ARE ADVANCING FROM GRADE TO GRADE** Yes / No

DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLETED ACTIVITIES:

[1]Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reference 34 CFR 303.302 & 300.111

Dyslexia Resource Guide

December 2017

Additional resource documents will be added as available.

For questions or concerns, please email: vicki.king@ade.arkansas.gov

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Richard K. Wagner, Ph.D., is the Robert O. Lawton Distinguished Research Professor of Psychology and the W. Russell and Eugenia Morcom Chair at Florida State University. He also is a co-founder and current Associate Director of the Florida Center for Reading Research. He earned a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology from Yale University in 1985. He previously earned a Master's Degree in School Psychology from the University of Akron. His major area of research interest is dyslexia and the normal acquisition of reading. He currently is the principal investigator of a Multidisciplinary Learning Disability Center funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

Jeanne Wanzek, Ph.D., is an associate professor at Florida State University and on the research faculty at the Florida Center for Reading Research. She is a former special educator and elementary teacher. Dr. Wanzek conducts research examining effective reading instruction and intervention. Her focus is on prevention and remediation for students with reading difficulties and disabilities. She has worked with several elementary and secondary schools conducting research to improve core classroom instruction and reading intervention implementation. In addition, she has consulted with several schools and districts across the country on the implementation effective reading instruction.

Purpose of the
Arkansas Dyslexia Resource Guide

The purpose of the Arkansas Dyslexia Resource Guide is to provide school districts, public schools, and teachers with guidance to meet Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-601 *et seq*. This guide will clarify the "Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing How to Meet the Needs of Children with Dyslexia" related to the assessment, identification, and services for these students. The Dyslexia Resource Guide will be developed and updated by a committee of ten representatives; they have experience working in the field of dyslexia intervention appointed by the Commissioner of Education from the following organizations:

    i)   The Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA);

    ii)   The Arkansas Department of Education, Learning Services (ADE);

    iii)   The Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE);

    iv)   The Arkansas Education Association (AEA);

    v)   The Arkansas School Boards Association (ASBA);

    vi)   The Arkansas School Psychology Association (ASPA);

    vii)   An Education Service Cooperative Administrator (ESC); and

    viii) Three professionals who have worked in a public school and are knowledgeable in and have expertise in dyslexia screening and interventions.

Since Arkansas is a local-control state, school districts have considerable autonomy in making decisions regarding the screeners, diagnostic tools, and instructional programs to use. However, the department is charged with defining the dyslexia therapy training program. Information in this regard is included in this guide.

Introduction

Dyslexia refers to a learning disability that affects reading and writing. What dyslexia is, what causes it, and what can be done about it are commonly misunderstood topics. For example, a commonly held belief is that dyslexia results in seeing things reversed. When in fact, dyslexia is not due to a problem with vision, but rather a problem within language.

Although much remains to be learned about dyslexia, remarkable progress has been made in our understanding as a result of decades of research. The goal of this guide is to provide information about dyslexia that is intended to be helpful to educators, parents, and students.

Section I
Defining Dyslexia

It is important to acknowledge that students may struggle for many reasons when learning to read, including lack of motivation and interest, weak preparation from the preschool home environment, weak English language skills, or low general intellectual ability (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). In fact, the family and socio-cultural conditions associated with poverty actually contribute to a broader and more pervasive array of reading difficulties in school-aged children than do the neurological conditions associated with dyslexia. Students with dyslexia represent a *subgroup* of all the students in school who experience difficulties learning to read.

Dyslexia is defined in Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-602 as a learning disability that is neurological in origin, characterized by difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition, poor spelling and decoding abilities that typically result from the phonological component of language. These characteristics are often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities. This definition is borrowed from the most widely accepted current definition of dyslexia that is used by the International Dyslexia Association:

> Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

It is useful to consider each of the elements of this definition:

__Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin.__
Dyslexia is a term used to refer to a specific type of learning disability. It is important to understand that students can be diagnosed with a specific learning disability as defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-V), but not automatically qualify as having a disability as defined in Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), and the Arkansas special education rules and regulations, which govern the provision of special education services to students with disabilities. These regulations specify that each school district is responsible for ensuring that all children with disabilities within its jurisdiction who are in need of special education and related services are identified, located, and evaluated. The regulations make clear that having a disability, in and of itself, does not make a child eligible for special education services. The child must also have a need for special education and related services arising from that disability. The impact of the disability on the child must be significant enough that it adversely affects the student's access to general education curriculum, and the child's ability to make meaningful educational progress.

The statement that dyslexia is neurological in origin implies that the problem is not simply one of poor instruction or effort on the part of the student. Individuals with dyslexia struggle to read well despite adequate instruction and effort. Dyslexia tends to run in families; a child from a family with a history of dyslexia will not necessarily have dyslexia but inherits a greater risk for reading problems than does a child from a family without a family history of dyslexia. Brain imaging studies show differences in brain activity when individuals with dyslexia are given reading-related tasks compared to the brain activity shown by normal readers. Although it is tempting to view differences in brain activity as the cause of dyslexia, these differences are just as likely or even more likely to be a consequence of the reading problem rather than the cause of it. The reason for saying this is that when individuals with dyslexia respond

positively to intervention, their brain activity "normalizes" and becomes comparable to that of normal readers.

Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. A common feature of dyslexia is difficulty with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. Although students with dyslexia can show a variety of subtle or not-so-subtle language problems prior to entry in school (Catts & Kahmi, 2005), their problems become very noticeable once they begin learning to read. They have extreme difficulties acquiring accurate and fluent phonemic decoding skills (phonics), and this interferes with their ability to read text accurately or to read independently. Students with dyslexia struggle to acquire both knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and skill in using this knowledge to "decode" unfamiliar words in text. In first grade, their difficulties with accurate word identification quickly begin to interfere with the development of text reading fluency. Difficulties decoding unfamiliar words in text interfere with the development of fluency because, to become a fluent reader in the primary grades, students must learn to recognize large numbers of words automatically, or at a single glance. Students learn to recognize individual words "by sight" only after they accurately read them several times (Ehri, 2002). Thus, the initial difficulties that students with dyslexia have in becoming accurate and independent readers interfere with the development of their "sight word vocabularies," and they quickly fall behind their peers in the development of reading fluency.

These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. The discovery that students with dyslexia experience difficulties processing the phonological features of language was important in establishing the foundations of the current scientific understanding of dyslexia (Liberman, Shankweiler, & Liberman, 1989). The phonological processing problems of students with dyslexia are usually not severe enough to interfere with the acquisition of speech, but they sometimes produce delays

in language development, and they significantly interfere with the development of phonemic awareness and phonics skills for reading. Spoken words are composed of strings of phonemes, with a phoneme being the smallest unit of sound in a word that makes a difference to its meaning. Thus, the word *cat* has three phonemes, /c/-/a/-/t/. If the first phoneme is changed to /b/, it makes the word *bat*, or if the second phoneme is changed to /i/, it makes the word *bit*. When students first begin to learn to read, they must become aware of these individual bits of sound within syllables, so they can learn how our writing system represents words in print. The letters in printed words correspond roughly to the phonemes in spoken words. Once a child understands this fact, and begins to learn some of the more common letter/sound correspondences, he/she becomes able to "sound out" simple unfamiliar words in print. Skill in using phonemic analysis to identify words that have not been seen before in print (and beginning readers encounter these words in their reading almost every day) is one of the foundational skills required in learning to read text independently (Share & Stanovich, 1995). Because of their phonological processing difficulties, students with dyslexia experience difficulties acquiring phonemic awareness, which is followed by the difficulties learning letter sounds and phonemic decoding skills that have already been described. Phonological processing skills are only moderately correlated with general intelligence, so it is possible to have average, or above average general intellectual ability and still experience the kind of reading difficulties observed in students with dyslexia. A student can also have below average general intellectual skills and have the same kind of phonological processing disabilities. Dyslexia is *not caused* by low general intellectual ability, but rather by special difficulties processing the phonological features of language, that can coexist with above average, average, or below average general intellectual ability. Phonological processing abilities required for acquisition of early reading skills are normally distributed in the population, just like musical talent, athletic ability, or most other human abilities. It is possible to have extremely weak phonological processing skills or to be only mildly impaired in this area. It is also possible to have above average skills in the phonological domain.

If students have extreme phonological processing weaknesses, it is very difficult for them to acquire early reading skills, while students with mild difficulties in this area often require only a moderate amount of extra instruction to become good readers (Wagner & Torgesen, 1987).

Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. One of the most serious consequences of early difficulties becoming an accurate, confident, fluent, and independent reader is that students read less. For example, a study from 1988 indicated that students reading at the 50th percentile (average) in 5th grade read about 600,000 words in and out of school during the school year. In contrast, students reading at the 10th percentile read about 50,000 words during the same period of time (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988). Large differences in reading practice emerge as early as the beginning of first grade (Allington, 1984). In addition to directly affecting the development of reading fluency, these practice differences have a significant impact on the development of other cognitive skills and knowledge, such as vocabulary, reading comprehension strategies, and conceptual knowledge (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). This latter type of knowledge and skill, in turn, is important for comprehension of texts in upper elementary, middle, and high school (Rand, 2002). Of course, other "secondary consequences" to the child's self-esteem and interest in school can be just as important as the effect on intellectual skills in determining ultimate school success.

Section II
Early Indicators and Characteristics of Dyslexia

Characteristics of students with dyslexia follow from how it is defined. Students with dyslexia are likely to perform poorly on measures of phonological processing, decoding nonwords, and developing an adequate pool of sight words.

Beginning with phonological processing, measures of phonological awareness tend to be most predictive of success at early reading. Common phonological awareness tasks include elision (saying a word after dropping a sound), blending, and identifying sounds in words. Phonological memory can also be affected, and phonological memory tasks can be particularly useful for young children who sometimes find phonological awareness tasks too cognitively complex to understand. Common phonological memory tasks include digit span and nonword repetition. Finally, learning to read involves pairing pronunciations with visual symbols. Rapid naming tasks measure the extent to which children have been able to link pronunciations with symbols. Examples of rapid naming tasks include quickly naming objects, colors, digits, or letters.

Turning to reading, difficulty in learning the names and sounds of letters is an early indicator of dyslexia. Perhaps the most central characteristics of dyslexia are problems in word-level reading. Difficulties are found in both accuracy and speed or efficiency at decoding nonwords and sight words. Difficulty with reading words results in slow and error-prone oral reading fluency. Spelling and writing problems are common. Reading comprehension difficulties are also common, but are considered to be largely a secondary problem caused by the primary problem of difficulty in fluently reading the words on the page.

Children likely to have difficulties learning to read can be identified as early as preschool or kindergarten, but it is frequently not possible to differentiate in preschool or kindergarten between students who have dyslexia and students who are at risk for reading problems for other reasons. For example, the clearest early indicators of

dyslexia in kindergarten are difficulties acquiring phonemic awareness, learning letter/sound correspondences, and learning to decode print using phonemic decoding strategies (Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2001). Unfortunately, many children of poverty, or those with limited exposure to Standard English in their homes, also manifest these same types of difficulties in kindergarten. An accurate diagnosis of dyslexia in preschool or kindergarten is more likely when these problems occur in students who: 1) have strong abilities in other areas of language such as vocabulary; 2) come from homes that provide a language and print rich preschool environment; and, 3) have a first or second-degree relative who experienced severe early reading difficulties. However, inherent phonological processing difficulties can also occur in children of poverty who come to school with limited vocabularies and knowledge of print. Although the phonological weaknesses of these students most likely result from a lack of certain kinds of language experience in the home, they may also be the result of biologically based, inherent phonological processing weaknesses.

Section III
Dyslexia Intervention and Response to Intervention (RTI)

If the initial, level I, or level II dyslexia screening indicates that a student has characteristics of dyslexia, the Response to Intervention (RTI) process shall be used (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-603 (c)(1)). Dyslexia intervention services fall under the RTI framework. If dyslexia screening indicates characteristics of dyslexia exist, then the student shall be provided dyslexia intervention services (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-603 (c)(2)(A)).

Response to Intervention (RTI) is designed to ensure all students receive effective, evidence-based instruction to meet their learning needs. The RTI process combines prevention and intervention with ongoing assessment in a school-wide system to identify a student's instructional needs and appropriate learning supports.

Students exhibiting the characteristics of dyslexia are to receive dyslexia intervention. For a student with an IEP, dyslexia intervention may be delivered in the general education setting, the special education setting, or in a combination of the two. Regardless of the setting, the person delivering the dyslexia intervention must be a trained dyslexia interventionist delivering the program with fidelity. Additional information about special education and dyslexia can be found in Section XII.

A student exhibiting the characteristics of dyslexia does not have to progress through the various tiers of RTI before receiving dyslexia intervention services. Dyslexia intervention is small group instruction delivered by a trained dyslexia interventionist using the school's selected dyslexia intervention program or programs. Progress monitoring is a part of RTI and should be frequent and ongoing. The data should be used to monitor a student's progress on both the content covered during the intervention lessons and the student's progress toward meeting grade level standards. The data will drive decisions regarding details such as frequency, length, duration, intensity of sessions.

Information specific to RTI can be found on the Arkansas Department of Education website under RTI Arkansas.

http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/learning-services/curriculum-and-instruction/rti

Section IV
Initial Screening

Early identification of students at risk for reading difficulties is critical in developing the appropriate instructional plan. "The best solution to the problem of reading failure is to allocate resources for early identification and prevention." (Torgesen, 2000). Initial screening is the first step in identifying the students who are at risk for learning difficulties. Initial screening measures consist of short, informal probe(s) given to all students to identify those at risk or at some risk for not meeting grade-level standards. The initial screening of students shall be performed with fidelity and include without limitation (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-603):

1. Phonological and phonemic awareness;
2. Sound symbol recognition;
3. Alphabet knowledge;
4. Decoding skills;
5. Rapid naming; and
6. Encoding skills.

Who should be screened? According to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-603, a school district shall screen the following:

1. Each student in kindergarten through grade two (K-2);
2. Kindergarten through grade 2 (K-2) students who transfer to a new school and have not been screened;
3. Kindergarten through grade 2 (K-2) students who transfer from another state and cannot present documentation that the student has had similar screening;
4. A student in grade three or higher experiencing difficulty, as noted by a classroom teacher.

Exemptions:

1. Students with an existing dyslexia diagnosis.
2. Students with a sensory impairment such as blindness or a hearing impairment. See Appendix A: Glossary for more information.

The screening components may not be appropriate for students with severe cognitive limitations. It is recommended that school staff work closely with district administrators to determine if the screening is appropriate for each student. Careful consideration must be given to any decision to exclude a student from screening.

A school district shall screen each student in kindergarten through grade two (K- 2) and others required by the Arkansas Department of Education rule using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) or an equivalent screener. Additional screening assessments will need to be administered to measure components that are not measured by DIBELS or the equivalent screener.

Personnel administering the screener should be trained in the screening tools. School resources and enrollment will influence individual district decisions about who should give and score the screening tools. Because the data will be used to help guide instruction, classroom teachers should participate in screening, scoring, and progress monitoring.

Beginning the fall of 2017, Arkansas public schools will use Istation, NWEA, or Renaissance STAR as their K-2 assessment to meet the requirements of Act 930 of 2017. The purpose of the K-2 assessment is to provide data pertaining to a student's performance levels in reading and mathematics, **not** to meet the requirements of A.C.A. § 6-41-603. However, some products may have subtests or tools that provide information for components required by the dyslexia law. The Educational Service Cooperative (ESC) Dyslexia Specialists can provide support in identifying the strengths and limitations of specific assessment tools. If your school is not affiliated with an ESC, contact the Arkansas Department of Education Dyslexia Specialist.

The performance criteria (i.e. cut-points, benchmarks) should be used to determine if the student is unlikely to achieve reading goals without receiving additional targeted intensive support. While results of the initial screening will likely identify struggling learners, they may not provide all of the information needed to develop an instructional plan, including appropriate interventions. Additional information is needed to pinpoint areas of basic early reading skills that need acceleration. This additional information would be gathered through the Level I Dyslexia Screener.

If the screener under subdivision (a)(1) of the law shows that a student is at risk, or at some risk then a level I dyslexia screener shall be administered (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-603). The level I dyslexia screener is described in Section V of the guide.

Initial Screening Tools	
Required Component	**Possible Screening Tools**
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness - the ability to recognize and manipulate the sound system in spoken language	DIBELS: First Sound Fluency (FSF) (K) DIBELS: Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) (K) AIMSWEB: Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (K) Istation ISIP: Phonemic Awareness (K-1) NWEA Skills Checklist: Phonological Awareness & Phoneme Identification (K) NWEA Skills Checklist: Manipulation of Sounds (K-2) Core Literacy Library: Phoneme Segmentation Test (K-12)
Alphabet Knowledge - the ability to automatically recognize and name the 26 lowercase and 26 uppercase letters with ease and accuracy.	DIBELS: Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) (K-1) AIMSWEB: Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) (K-1) Lakeshore: Alphabet Letter Identification (K-1) NWEA Skills Checklist: Letter Identification (K-2)
Sound Symbol Recognition -to automatically produce sound(s) or grapheme names (grade level letters or letter clusters) during recognition, production, and/or writing tasks.	DIBELS: Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) Correct Letter Sounds (CLS) (K-2) AIMSWEB: Letter Sound Fluency (K-1) Scholastic: CORE Phonics Survey (K-8) Istation ISIP: Letter Knowledge (K-1) NWEA Skills Checklist: Phonics: Matching Letters to Sounds & Decode: Consonant Blends and Digraphs (K-2)
Decoding Skills - to translate words, word parts, or nonwords into their corresponding pronunciation.	DIBELS: Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) Whole Words Read (WWR)(K-2) DIBELS: Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) (1-6) AIMSWEB: Nonsense Word Fluency (K-1) FCRR: Oral Reading Fluency Passages (7-12) Ultimate Phonics Reading Test (K-12)
Rapid Naming - the ability to quickly name aloud a series of familiar items	Arkansas Rapid Naming Screener (AR-RAN)(K-2 based on times)(3-12 based on observed behaviors)
Encoding	Word Journeys: Kindergarten Inventory of Spelling (KIDS) (K)

- to translate spoken language into print.	Word Journeys: Developmental Spelling Analysis (DSA) Words Their Way: Primary Spelling Inventory (K-3) Words Their Way: Elementary Spelling Inventory (1-6) Words Their Way: Upper-Level Spelling Inventory (upper elementary, middle, high school, postsecondary) Istation ISIP: Spelling (1-2)

This list of initial screening tools is to be used as a resource for school districts to determine which screener or screeners will provide the most beneficial data for each subcomponent of literacy at each grade level. The Dyslexia Resource Guide Committee is in no way endorsing any of the screeners. The list is in no way all inclusive or to be considered as "approved" screeners.

Screening Options

If a student in K-2 indicates a deficit area on the initial screener, or if a teacher notices a student in grades 3-8 experiencing difficulty, additional screening is required. The additional screening, level I dyslexia screening or level II dyslexia screening, looks more in-depth at the individual components of reading and spelling to determine if the characteristics of dyslexia are present. For K-2 students, a level I screening using curriculum-based measures and/or informal diagnostic inventories or checklists for the required six areas of foundational literacy skills may be sufficient to determine if the child is demonstrating the characteristics of dyslexia.

Bypassing a level I dyslexia screening and proceeding to a level II dyslexia screening for older students could have many benefits. For older students, grades 3 and up, it may be more difficult to find age and grade appropriate curriculum based measures and informal diagnostic inventories or checklists for an accurate identification. Proceeding to a level II dyslexia screening using standardized norm referenced assessments allows a comparison of the student's performance on the individual components to other students the same age and grade. Administering a level II dyslexia screening for an older student, is more efficient use of the student's time and the assessment administrator's time. The level II dyslexia screening data, can provide solid justification for outlining an appropriate 504 service and accommodation plan.

Section V
Level I Dyslexia Screening

If the (initial) screener under subdivision (a)(1) of section 6-41-603 shows that a student is **at risk, or at some risk**, then a level I dyslexia screener shall be administered (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-603 (3)(A)). The level I dyslexia screening of a student shall be performed with fidelity and include the components listed under subdivision (a)(2) of this section (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-603 (3)). The level I dyslexia screening process shall include documentation of the components of literacy to include but not limited to the following:

1. Phonological and phonemic awareness;
2. Sound symbol recognition;
3. Alphabet knowledge;
4. Decoding skills;
5. Rapid naming; and
6. Encoding skills.

The level I dyslexia screening is a process of gathering additional information that should include progress monitoring data, work samples, formative literacy assessments, parent interviews, teacher questionnaires, early indicator checklists (Appendix D) and additional age and grade appropriate dyslexia screening tools for the six areas. The determination of existing characteristics of dyslexia should be based on multiple sources of data.

A school-based decision-making team should meet to review student records and progress, inform parents of concerns, and obtain parental consent when additional assessments are needed to determine if characteristics of dyslexia exist.

Both Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-604(a) and Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-605(a) indicate a determination that a student is exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia and the need for

dyslexia intervention services can be made through a level I dyslexia screening or a level II dyslexia screening.

The Luke Waites Center for Dyslexia and Learning Disorders at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children created the *Characteristic Profile of Dyslexia* to aid in school-based identification of dyslexia. This profile provides five questions to consider when identifying student with characteristics of dyslexia. The questions are

1. Does the student demonstrate one or more of the primary reading characteristics of dyslexia in addition to a spelling deficit?

2. Are the reading and spelling difficulties the result of a phonological processing deficit?

3. Are the reading, spelling, and phonological processing deficits unexpected? Does the student demonstrate cognitive ability to support age-level academic learning?

4. Are there secondary characteristics of dyslexia evident in reading comprehension and written expression?

5. Does the student have strengths that could be assets? Are there coexisting deficits that may complicate identification and the response to intervention and may deserve further assessment and intervention?

The school-based decision-making team may use these five key questions to determine if the student needs dyslexia intervention services. The information gleaned from these questions reflects components of the definition of dyslexia as expressed in Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-602. If the level I dyslexia screening conducted by the school district indicates a student exhibits characteristics of dyslexia (first three questions answered with a "yes"), the student shall be considered to be exhibiting the

characteristics of dyslexia and should be provided intervention services using a dyslexia program delivered with fidelity.

If a student's performance on an initial screener, level I screening, or level II dyslexia screening under § 6-41-603 indicates a need for dyslexia intervention services, the student's parent or legal guardian shall be:

(1) Notified of the results of the dyslexia evaluation; and

(2) Provided with information and resource material, including without limitation:

(A) The characteristics of dyslexia;

(B) Appropriate classroom interventions and accommodations for students with dyslexia; and

(C) The right of the parent or legal guardian to have the student receive an independent comprehensive dyslexia evaluation by a:

(i) Licensed psychological examiner;

(ii) School psychology specialist;

(iii) Licensed speech-language pathologist;

(iv) Certified dyslexia testing specialist; or

(v) Dyslexia therapist. (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-604 (a))

Additional information about the independent comprehensive evaluation can be found in Section VII.

Level I Screening Tools	
Required Component	**Possible Screening Tools**
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	• CORE Literacy Library: Phonological Awareness Tests (See manual) • Phonological Awareness Skills Screener (PASS) (K-2 & struggling learners) • Phonological Awareness Skills Test (PAST)(Kilpatrick) (PreK - Adult)
Alphabet Knowledge	• Alphabet knowledge is the one component that has a ceiling or mastery level.
Sound Symbol Recognition	• College Station TX, Texas A&M: Quick Phonics Screener (K-6) • Scholastic: CORE Phonics Survey (K-8) • Houghton Mifflin: Phonics/Decoding Screening Test (1-6)
Decoding Skills	• Assessing Multiple Measures: CORE Phonics Survey (K-12) • Really Great Reading: Diagnostic Decoding Surveys (1, 2-12)
Rapid Naming	• Analysis of errors from initial screener
Encoding	• Unedited writing samples and unmemorized dictated spelling

This list of level I dyslexia screening tools is to be used as a resource for school districts to determine which screener or screeners will provide the most beneficial data for each subcomponent of literacy at each grade level. The Dyslexia Resource Guide Committee is in no way endorsing any of the screeners. The list is in no way all inclusive or to be considered as "approved" screeners.

Section VI
Level II Dyslexia Screening

The level II dyslexia screening is a more detailed process for identifying a pattern of strengths and weaknesses documenting the characteristics of dyslexia. The determination of existing characteristics may be based on performance criteria (i.e. cut-points, benchmarks) of the chosen assessments to be used as the level II dyslexia screening. Norm-referenced, diagnostic assessments designed to measure the underlying cause, characteristics, and outcomes should be administered to identify the characteristics of dyslexia. The specific skills to be tested include phonological awareness, rapid naming, word reading, decoding, fluency, spelling, and reading comprehension. Examples of screening tools may be found in Appendix G.

When reporting results of norm-referenced tests, standard scores should be used. Criterion-referenced and group achievement tests scores may be informative as historical or secondary information but are considered weaker dyslexia identification tools. Individual subtest scores should be used rather than composite or cluster scores because a skill is only as strong as the weakest subskill. For example, consider the Elision and the Blending subtest scores on the CTOPP-2 rather than the Phonological Awareness composite score.

The Luke Waites Center for Dyslexia and Learning Disorders at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children created the *Characteristic Profile of Dyslexia* to aid in school-based identification of dyslexia. This profile provides five questions to consider when identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia. The questions are

1. Does the student demonstrate one or more of the primary reading characteristics of dyslexia in addition to a spelling deficit?

2. Are the reading and spelling difficulties the result of a phonological processing deficit?

3. Are the reading, spelling, and phonological processing deficits unexpected? Does the student demonstrate cognitive ability to support age level academic learning?

4. Are there secondary characteristics of dyslexia evident in reading comprehension and written expression?

5. Does the student have strengths that could be assets? Are there coexisting deficits that may complicate identification and the response to intervention and may deserve further assessment and intervention?

The school-based decision making team may use these five key questions to determine if the student needs dyslexia intervention services. The information gleaned from these questions reflects components of the definition of dyslexia as expressed in Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-602. If the level II dyslexia screening conducted by the school district indicates a student exhibits characteristics of dyslexia (first three questions answered with a "yes"), the student shall be considered to have met the typical profile of a student with dyslexia and should be provided intervention services (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-603) using a dyslexia program delivered with fidelity.

If it is determined that the student has functional difficulties in the academic environment due to characteristics of dyslexia, the necessary accommodations or equipment for the student shall be provided under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-603) as they existed on February 1, 2013, if qualified under the applicable federal law. In other words, having a learning problem does not automatically qualify a student for accommodations/equipment under Section 504. The impairment must substantially limit one or more major life activities in order to be considered a disability under Section 504. The determination of substantial limitation must be made on a case-by-case basis with respect to each individual student. The Section 504 regulatory provision at 34 C.F.R. 104.35 (c)

requires that a group of knowledgeable persons draw upon information from a variety of sources in making this determination.

Section VII
Independent Comprehensive Dyslexia Evaluation

A dyslexia diagnosis is not required for a school to provide dyslexia intervention services, however a parent or legal guardian may choose to have an independent comprehensive dyslexia evaluation for the student. Parents are responsible for selecting the qualified individual to perform the comprehensive dyslexia evaluation and must cover the cost. The school district shall consider the diagnosis and provide the student with interventions determined to be appropriate by the school district (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-604). Schools should consider all sources of information when determining appropriate services for students. If services are warranted, then interventions will be delivered by a dyslexia interventionist at the school district.

This evaluation must be conducted by Licensed Psychological Examiner, School Psychology Specialist, Licensed Speech Language Pathologist, Certified Dyslexia Testing Specialist, or Dyslexia Therapist (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-604 (a)(2)(C)).

This professional should have a knowledge and background in psychology, reading, language education, dyslexia and other related disorders. A thorough working knowledge of how individuals learn to read and why some individuals struggle, and how to plan appropriate interventions is a must. Whether an individual is qualified to conduct an evaluation or provide a diagnosis is dependent upon their licensure.

Section VIII
Instructional Approaches for Students with Dyslexia

Supplemental, intensive reading interventions for students with dyslexia should be individualized and focused on the student's area(s) of primary difficulty. Instruction for students with dyslexia includes a multisensory approach that includes reading, spelling, and writing as appropriate. Components of effective dyslexia intervention include instruction in

- phonemic awareness,
- graphophonemic knowledge,
- the structure of the English language,
- linguistics, language patterns,
- and strategies for decoding, encoding, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension.

Effective interventions also consider the instructional delivery of the intervention. Instructional delivery considerations include

- individualization of the content and supports provided,
- extended time in small group instruction,
- explicit, direct, and systematic instruction,
- multisensory inputs, and
- a focus on meaning-based instruction.

These intensive interventions differ from core instruction in that they are targeted towards the specific skills and components of instruction that are preventing students from making sufficient reading progress. In addition, the instructional delivery provides higher levels of support needed to help students accelerate their reading growth; however, no one remedial reading method works for all dyslexic students.

Students with characteristics of dyslexia should receive an appropriate, specialized dyslexia instructional program that

- is delivered by a professional who has completed training in a specific dyslexia program (Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-41-602; 6-41-605);

- provides systematic, research-based instruction (Ark. Code Ann. §6-41-602);

- includes instruction that is multisensory addressing two or more sensory pathways during instruction or practice (Ark. Code Ann. §6-41-602); and

- provides instruction in the essential components of reading in a small-group (see definition in Appendix A) or individual setting that maintains fidelity of the program that includes phonemic awareness, graphophonemic knowledge, structure of the English language, linguistic instruction, and strategies for decoding, encoding, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-602).

Instructional Delivery

Dyslexia interventionists should provide explicit, direct, systematic and cumulative instruction that is individualized to support learning and focused on meaning. Additional intervention considerations include multisensory instruction to meet student needs.

The Arkansas Department of Education does not approve specific dyslexia programs. It is the responsibility of school district instructional leaders to select a dyslexia program that meets the requirements defined in Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-602. A sample of a Dyslexia Program Review Form is included in Appendix H.

Section IX
Dyslexia Interventionist

Dyslexia interventionist means a school district or public school employee that is trained in a dyslexia program.

No later than the 2015-2016 academic year, a school district shall have individuals to serve as dyslexia interventionists. Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-607 (d) School districts may utilize the following personnel who have been trained as dyslexia interventionists: a dyslexia therapist, dyslexia specialist, reading interventionist, certified teacher, tutor or paraprofessional under the supervision of a licensed teacher. The licensed teacher who is supervising the tutor or paraprofessional must be trained in the dyslexia program(s) the district is using.

"Dyslexia therapist" is a professional who has completed training and obtained certification in dyslexia therapy from a dyslexia therapy program defined by the Department of Education.

A "dyslexia specialist" is a professional at each education service cooperative or school district who has expertise and is working towards an endorsement or certification in providing training for phonological and phonemic awareness, sound and symbol relationships, alphabet knowledge, decoding skills, rapid naming skills, and encoding skills. A dyslexia specialist shall be fluent in the Response to Intervention (RTI) process and provide training in administering screening, analyzing and interpreting screening data, and determining appropriate interventions that are systematic, multisensory, and evidence-based. Education service cooperatives must have a dyslexia specialist, but this position is not required for school districts. The ADE will design and facilitate the program of study (professional development) for regional educational service cooperative dyslexia specialists.

Section X
Professional Awareness

Professional awareness is key to early identification. Early interventions for students with dyslexia are dependent on informed and knowledgeable teachers, interventionists, and therapists. The law requires that no later than the 2014-2015 school year, each teacher shall receive professional awareness on:

1. The characteristics of dyslexia; and
2. Evidence-based interventions and accommodations for dyslexia (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-608).

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) has approved a course offered through ArkansasIDEAS online professional development portal (http://www.arkansasideas.org). This course, *Dyslexia: A Three Part Professional Development*, meets the requirements of the law.

Alternatively, the law allows for professional awareness to be provided through education service cooperatives or at another venue approved by ADE (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-608). The teacher should receive written documentation when completing any approved dyslexia professional awareness.

No later than the 2015-16 school year, the Department of Education shall collaborate with the Department of Higher Education to ensure that all teacher education programs at state-supported institutions of higher education provide dyslexia professional awareness of the

1. Characteristics of dyslexia; and
2. Evidence-based interventions and accommodations for dyslexia (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-609).

Section XI
Reporting By School Districts

The superintendent of a school district annually shall report the results of the school district screening required under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-603.

To meet this requirement school personnel will utilize APSCN eSchoolPlus. A check mark placed in the field "Receives Dyslexia Intervention" indicates the student was screened, demonstrated one or more of the characteristics of dyslexia, and is receiving small group dyslexia intervention services from a trained dyslexia interventionist using the district's dyslexia intervention program.

Data reporters

Data reporters will flag students receiving dyslexia intervention services through APSCN eSchoolPlus. The information about who to flag will need to be gathered from building level dyslexia interventionists or building level contacts prior to the end of the school year. The individual students can be marked in eSchoolPlus at any time throughout the school year, but the recommendation is that a student is flagged as soon as they start receiving intervention. The data is collected during cycle 7 (June) of each school year. Corrections to the data cannot be made after the data has been pulled.

The menu path to the reporting screen is: Student Center>Medical>Dyslexia screen. The field to update on the Dyslexia screen is "Receives Dyslexia Intervention." A check mark placed in the field "Receives Dyslexia Intervention" indicates the student was screened, demonstrated one or more of the characteristics of dyslexia, and is receiving small group dyslexia intervention services from a trained dyslexia interventionist using the district's dyslexia intervention program.

In order to access the dyslexia screen, a user will need the following security resources: reg-maint (read-write) and med-maint-dental (read only). This combination of resources will not allow access to the information within the Medical Center folder.

Required Information to Report on the Website or in Writing

Act 1039 of 2017 amended the provisions of Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-606 to include an additional reporting requirement. Before July 15, a public school district shall report on the website of the public school district or in writing to the parents of each student in the public school district the following information:

1. The dyslexia intervention programs used during the previous school year that were specifically responsive to assisting students with dyslexia;
2. The number of students during the previous school year who received dyslexia intervention; and
3. The total number of students identified with dyslexia during the previous school year (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-606 (b)).

Sample website posting:

Act 1039 of 2017 Reporting By the School District (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-606 (b))

Dyslexia Program

During the **20XX-20XX** school year, **Anywhere Public School District** used the evidenced-based **XYZ Dyslexia Intervention Program** in small group intervention to address the deficit areas of students identified as exhibiting the characteristics of dyslexia.

Number of Students Who Received Dyslexia Intervention

During the **20XX-20XX** school year, **## students** attending **Anywhere Public School District received dyslexia intervention services** from a trained dyslexia interventionist.

Total Number of Students Identified as Exhibiting the Characteristics of Dyslexia During the **20XX-20XX** school year, **## students** attending **Anywhere Public School District were identified as exhibiting the characteristics of dyslexia.**

Section XII
Special Education and Dyslexia

A student suspected of having dyslexia or related disorders who is unable to make adequate academic progress may be referred to special education for evaluation and possible identification as a child with a disability within the meaning of IDEA 2004. IDEA 2004 regulations related to specific learning disability (SLD) (34 C.F.R. §300.8(c)(10)(i)) define SLD as a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. IDEA 2004 regulations (34 §CFR 300.309(a)(1)) specifically designate the following areas for the determination of SLD: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading fluency skill, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and/or mathematics problem solving.

New Referrals

Although dyslexia is not considered one of the 13 eligible disability categories listed in the IDEA 2004 regulations (34 C.F.R. §300.8(c)), a student suspected of having dyslexia or related disorders who is unable to make adequate academic progress may be referred to special education for evaluation and possible identification as a child with a specific learning disability. It should be noted that the referral committee would make the decision as to whether or not an evaluation for special education was warranted and what assessments were needed based on the child's suspected disability. If the referral committee decided against an evaluation for special education, the district would still be required by Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-601 *et seq.* to screen the student for dyslexia if such screening had not already been conducted.

IDEA 2004 regulations related to assessment (34 C.F.R. §300.304(c)(4))
indicate that a student should be assessed in all areas related to the suspected
disability. If a student is evaluated for special education and related services,
according to the Arkansas Special Education Eligibility Criteria and Program
Guidelines for Children with Disabilities Ages 3-21, Part I Section I, there are three
allowable methods for identifying a student as having a Specific Learning Disability:

1. Establishing a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and
   achievement;

2. Using a process based on a child's response to scientific, research-based
   intervention;

3. Using other alternative research-based procedures (such as Patterns of
   Strengths and Weaknesses).

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) Guidance

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) issued a
Dear Colleague letter on October 23, 2015, to state and local educational agencies.
This letter focuses on the "unique educational needs of children with dyslexia,
dyscalculia, and dysgraphia, which are conditions that could qualify a child as a child
with a specific learning disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
(IDEA)." OSERs clarifies in the letter that "there is nothing in the IDEA that would
prohibit the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia in IDEA evaluation,
eligibility determinations, or IEP documents." State education agencies and local
education agencies are encouraged to "consider situations where it would be
appropriate to use the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia to describe and
address the child's unique, identified needs through evaluation, eligibility, and IEP
documents." Further, States are encouraged to "review their policies, procedures, and
practices to ensure that they do not prohibit the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia
and dysgraphia in evaluations, eligibility, and IEP documents."

OSERS provides further clarification, however, that "regardless of whether a child has dyslexia or any other condition explicitly included in this definition of 'specific learning disability', or has a condition such as dyscalculia or dysgraphia not listed expressly in the definition, the LEA must conduct an evaluation in accordance with 34 CFR §§300.304-300.311 to determine whether that child meets the criteria for specific learning disability or any of the other disabilities listed in 34 CFR §300.8, which implements IDEAs definition of a 'child with a disability'."

Finally, States are encouraged to "remind their LEAs of the importance of addressing the unique educational needs of children with specific learning disabilities resulting from dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia during IEP Team meetings and other meetings with parents under IDEA."

The ADE joins OSERS in encouraging LEAs to consider the use of these terms, when appropriate, to describe and address a child's unique needs in evaluation, eligibility, and IEP documents. The ADE further encourages LEAs to review their policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that they do not prohibit the use of dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia in special education due process paperwork. Finally, the ADE encourages addressing the unique educational needs of children with specific learning disabilities resulting from dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia during IEP Team meetings and other meetings with parents under IDEA.

Under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-601 et seq., LEAs are required to provide dyslexia intervention services to all students who exhibit the characteristics of dyslexia, including students with IEPs. For students with IEPs, the IEP committee should determine, based on the student's individual needs, the setting where appropriately trained personnel will provide dyslexia intervention. The intervention may be delivered in the general education setting, the special education setting, or in a combination of the two.

Students with existing IEP's

A student who qualifies for special education services is not exempt from dyslexia screening or dyslexia intervention services. According to Acts 1294 and 1268, any student exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia should be provided dyslexia intervention services by a trained dyslexia interventionist in the district's chosen dyslexia program or programs. Rather than starting with initial dyslexia screening, the committee should review existing formal and informal evaluation data to determine if the student exhibits the characteristics of dyslexia. The committee may determine that additional assessments are needed.

Students who qualify for special education have an individual education program (IEP) developed by the IEP committee. The IEP should be developed to address the student's individual needs, including any needs relative to dyslexia. If a student with a disability exhibits the characteristics of dyslexia, the IEP committee would determine whether the student needs special education services in this area, if the student's needs can be met through the district's general education dyslexia intervention program, or if a combination of the two are needed.

Use of IDEA funds for dyslexia services

IDEA Part B funds can be used for dyslexia intervention delivered through the IEP. Additionally, IDEA specifies that a local educational agency (LEA) **may** use up to 15% of its IDEA Part B entitlement for early intervention services for any child in kindergarten through grade 12 who is not currently identified as needing special education or related services but who needs additional academic and behavioral supports to succeed in a general education environment. These funds are to be used as supplementary funds and should not be used to supplant local, state, or other federal program dollars.

Appendix A
Glossary

Accommodation - a change that helps a student overcome or work around a disability. For example, allowing a student who has trouble writing to give his answers orally is an example of an accommodation. The student is still expected to know the same material and answer the same questions as fully as the other students, but he doesn't have to write his answers to show that he knows the information.

Alphabet knowledge - the ability to automatically recognize and name the 26 lowercase and 26 uppercase letters with ease and accuracy.

Characteristics - strengths and weaknesses in the various components of literacy associated with dyslexia. The characteristics are included in the definition of dyslexia as poor decoding, poor word recognition, poor fluency, and poor spelling.

Comprehension - understanding the intended meaning of language.

Core Instruction - the curriculum and instructional practices that are provided to all students in the general education setting.

Cut-point - a score on the scale of a screening tool or a progress monitoring tool. Educators use the cut point to determine whether the student has demonstrated adequate response, whether to administer additional assessments, whether to make an instructional change, and whether to move the student to more or less intensive services.

Decoding - to translate words, word parts, or nonwords into their corresponding pronunciation.

Diagnostic Assessment - assessments used to measure current skills and knowledge, often for the purpose of educational planning.

Differentiated Instruction - varying educational practices to meet the needs of different students.

Dyslexia - a specific learning disability characterized by difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition, poor spelling and decoding abilities that typically result from the phonological component of language, and are often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities.

Elision - the ability to identify the remaining word when a specified sound is deleted.
Encoding - to translate spoken language into print.
Evaluation - procedures used to make judgments or appraisals.
Explicit, Direct Instruction - the overt teaching and modeling of the steps and processes needed to learn and apply new knowledge. Explicit, direct instruction targets the specific needs of the students without presuming prior skills or knowledge.

Fidelity - means the intervention is done as the author of the program intended.

Fluency - the ability to read the words in text effortlessly and efficiently (automaticity) with meaningful expression that enhances the meaning of the text (prosody).

Grapheme - a letter or letter cluster that represents an individual phoneme (i, i-e, igh, ch, tch...).

Graphophonemic Knowledge - refers to the letter - sound plan of English, including knowledge of the relationship between letters and sounds.

Indicator - a sign that shows or suggests the condition of something. Indicators of dyslexia are the early warning signs that indicate a child might have dyslexia. Indicators of dyslexia may differ at different ages.

Individualized Instruction - instruction that is designed to meet the specific needs of the student in a small group setting. Individualized instruction is intensive and highly concentrated instruction that focuses on the student's area(s) of primary difficulty and the instructional delivery necessary to assist students in accelerating their learning, maximizing student engagement in the process of learning.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - the law that outlines rights and regulations for students with disabilities in the U.S. who require special education.

Intervention - activities designed to improve or remediate performance in a given area.

Learning disabilities - a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations.

Linguistic Instruction - instruction aimed toward improving student proficiency and fluency with the patterns of language so that words and sentences are carriers of meaning.

Meaning-based Instruction - instruction that is focused on purposeful reading and writing tasks with an emphasis on comprehension and composition.

Morphological Awareness - awareness of the semantically meaningful units and structure of words.

Multisensory Instruction - instruction that incorporates the simultaneous use of two or more sensory pathways (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile) during teacher presentations and student practice.

Norm-referenced Test - an assessment that provides an estimate of the student's performance compared to other students in the population of the same age or grade.

Orthographic Knowledge - information in memory of how to represent spoken language in a written form.

Phonemic Awareness - enables a student to detect, segment, blend, and manipulate sounds in spoken language

Phonics - a systematic process for teaching sound-symbol relationships and their use in reading and spelling words.

Phonological Awareness - the ability to recognize and manipulate the sound system in spoken language; encompasses the entire continuum of skills related to the awareness of the phonological structure of language.

Progress Monitoring - efficient, frequent, dynamic assessment of targeted skills to examine student growth and examine effectiveness of instruction.

Rapid Naming - or rapid automatized naming (RAN) is the ability to quickly name aloud a series of familiar items (colors, objects, letters, or numbers). Variations in rapid naming time in children provide a strong predictor of their later ability to read. For more information:
https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/evaluations/types-of-tests/rapid-automatized-naming-tests-what-you-need-to-know

Research-based Instruction - instruction that is based on the findings of scientific research.

Response to Intervention - a multi-tiered decision-making process for providing effective instruction and intervention based on students' performance and progress.

Screening Assessment - an efficient assessment given to all students to identify students who are at risk for not meeting grade-level standards.

Sensory impairment - a vision or hearing impairment, or a combination of both, that cannot be corrected to a degree that the student can receive educational benefit from print and/or auditory information.

Small-group - A typical classroom reading group will include a maximum of 5-6 students. If a student exhibiting the characteristics of dyslexia hasn't been successful in the typical small reading group, he or she will likely need a smaller group for the dyslexia intervention. The group size for dyslexia intervention begins with the program guidelines, but should also take into consideration the severity of the reading deficiency and may need to be adjusted based on the individual student's progress monitoring data.

Sound Symbol Recognition - to automatically produce sound(s) or grapheme names (grade level letters or letter clusters) during recognition, production, and/or writing tasks.

Strategy-based Instruction - providing instruction in the step-by-step processes needed for students to independently complete complex tasks.

Structure of the English Language - English language structure consists of morphology (understanding the meaningful roots and affixes that make up words in the language), semantics (understanding how language carries meaning), syntax (understanding the conventions and rules for structuring meaningful sentences), and pragmatics (understanding how language conveys meaning in specific situations)

Systematic Instruction - sequential, cumulative instruction that follows a logical plan and progresses from easiest to most complex with careful pacing to ensure students successfully master each step in the process. Systematic instruction includes scaffolded support for accomplishing each learning step by breaking down complex skills into manageable learning steps and providing temporary supports to control the level of difficulty as students gain mastery.

Vocabulary - words understood and used when listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Word Recognition - the ability of a reader to recognize written words correctly and effortlessly.

Appendix B
References

Allington, R. L. (1984). Content coverage and contextual reading in reading groups. *Journal of Reading Behavior, 16*, 85-96.

Anderson, R. C., Wilson, P. T., & Fielding, L. G. (1988). Growth in reading and how children spend their time outside of school. *Reading Research Quarterly, 23*, 285-303.

Catts, H., & Kahmi, A. (2005) (Eds.) *The connections between language and reading disabilities.* Mahway, NJ: Erlbaum.

Cunningham, A.E. & Stanovich, K.E. (1998). What reading does for the mind. *American Educator, 22,* 8-15.

Ehri, L.C. (2002). Phases of acquisition in learning to read words and implications for teaching. In R. Stainthorp and P. Tomlinson (Eds.) *Learning and teaching reading.* London: British Journal of Educational Psychology Monograph Series II.

Fletcher, J.M., Denton, C., & Francis, D.J. (2005). Validity of alternative approaches for the identification of LD: Operationalizing unexpected underachievement. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 38*, 545-552.

Fletcher, J. M., Lyon, G. R., Fuchs, L. S., & Barnes, M. A. (2006). *Learning disabilities.* New York, NY: Guilford.

Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C.M., Dimino, J., Santoro, L., Linan- Thompson, S., and Tilly, W.D. (2008). *Assisting students struggling with reading: Response to Intervention and multi-tier intervention for reading in the primary grades. A practice guide.* (NCEE 2009-4045). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Gibbs, Denise P., (2004). *Leading the Dyslexia Challenge: An Action Plan for Schoolwide Identification and Intervention.* Horshum, PA: LRP Publications.

Good, R.H., Kaminski, R.A. (Eds.). (2002). *Dynamic Indicators of Early Basic Literacy Skills-Sixth Edition.* Eugene, OR: Institute for Development of Educational Achievement.

Good, R.H., Kaminski, R.A., Cummings, K., Dufour-Martel, C., Peterson, K., Powell-Smith, K., et al. (2011). *DIBELS Next.* Longmont, CO: Sopris West Educational Services.

Hogan, T. P., Catts, H. W., & Little, T. D. (2005). The relationship between phonological awareness and reading: implications for the assessment of phonological awareness. Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 36, 285-293.

International Reading Association (2010). *Response to Intervention: Guiding Principles for Educators.* Newark, DE: Author.

Kolenovsky, Gladys. "School-Based Identification of Dyslexia in Texas: The Very Basics." Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children. Dallas, Texas. 1 July 2014.

Liberman, I.Y., Shankweiler, D., & Liberman, A.M. (1989). The alphabetic principle and
learning to read. In Shankweiler, D. & Liberman, I.Y. (Eds.), *Phonology and reading disability: Solving the reading puzzle* (pp.1-33). Ann Arbor, MI: U. of Michigan Press.

Liederman, J., Kantrowitz, L., & Flannery, K. (2005). Male vulnerability to reading disability is not likely to be a myth: A call for new data. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *38*, 109–129.

National Center on Response to Intervention (March 2010). *Essential Components of RTI – A Closer Look at Response to Intervention*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Response to Intervention.

Quinn, J. M., & Wagner, R. K. (in press). Gender differences in reading impairment and in the identification of impaired readers: Results from a large-scale study of at-risk readers. *Journal of Learning Disabilities. Psychological Bulletin, 131,* 592-617.

RAND. (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward an R&D program in reading comprehension.* Santa Monica, CA: Author.

Rayner, K., Foorman, B.R., Perfetti, C.A., Pesetsky, D., & Seidenberg, M.S. 2001. How psychological science informs the teaching of reading. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 2:* 31-73.

Rutter, M., Caspi, A., Fergusson, D., Horwood, J. L., Goodman, R., et al. (2004). Sex differences in developmental reading disability: New findings from four epidemiological studies. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 291,* 2007–2012.

Share, D.L., & Stanovich, K.E. (1995). Cognitive processes in early reading development: A model of acquisition and individual differences. *Issues in Education: Contributions from Educational Psychology, 1,* 1-35.

Shaywitz, S. (2003). *Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Snow, C.E., Burns, M.S. & Griffin, P. (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Torgesen, J. K. (2000). Individual differences in response to early interventions in reading: The lingering problem of treatment resisters. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 15*(1), 55–64.

Wagner, R.K., & Torgesen, J.K. (1987). The nature of phonological processing and its causal role in the acquisition of reading skills. *Psychological Bulletin, 101,* 192-212.

Appendix C
Definition of Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. - Adopted by IDA: November 2002

Characteristics of Dyslexia

Underlying Cause:

- Deficit in the phonological processing (Phonological awareness, phonological memory, and\or rapid naming)

Characteristics:

- Difficulty reading real words in isolation
- Difficulty accurately decoding nonsense or unfamiliar words
- Poor reading fluency (rate, accuracy, labored)
- Poor spelling

Outcomes:

- Difficulty with reading comprehension
- Reduced reading experience that limits vocabulary and background knowledge

Appendix D
Early Indicator Checklist

Family History:

    ❑ Other family members experienced learning problems

        Father, Mother, Sibling(s)

Oral Language:

    ❑ Difficulty understanding verbal directions

    ❑ Difficulty understanding stories read to him/her

    ❑ Difficulty correctly pronouncing phonemes or syllables of words in sequence; persistent baby talk (busgetti for spaghetti, mawn lower for lawn mower, fibe for five)

    ❑ Substitutes words with the same meaning for words in the text he/she can't pronounce, such as "car" for "automobile."

    ❑ Difficulty acquiring new vocabulary

    ❑ Difficulty finding the right words

    ❑ Unable to find the exact word; Speech that is not fluent; Pauses, hesitations when speaking; Lots of "um"s

    ❑ Imprecise language, such as vague references to "stuff" or "things" instead of the proper name of an object

    ❑ Unable to find the exact word; confusing words that sound alike: saying "tornado" instead of "volcano," substituting "lotion" for "ocean," or "humanity" for "humidity"

    ❑ Difficulty speaking in grammatically correct sentences

    ❑ Difficulty explaining ideas or elaborating on thoughts

Phonological Awareness:

    ❑ Difficulty recognizing or producing rhyming words

    ❑ Difficulty isolating sounds in the beginning, final, and/ or medial position

    ❑ Difficulty segmenting individual sounds in a word

    ❑ Difficulty blending sounds into a word

Alphabet:

- ❑ Difficulty learning or recalling the names of letters
- ❑ Difficulty learning or recalling the sounds of letters

Decoding and Word Recognition:

- ❑ Difficulty sounding out unfamiliar or nonsense words
- ❑ Difficulty reading words in isolation (lists)
- ❑ May confuse small words - at - to, said - and, does - goes

Fluency:

- ❑ Difficulty with reading accuracy in context
- ❑ Difficulty reading grade level text at expected rate
- ❑ Difficulty with reading with expression

Spelling:

- ❑ Difficulty memorizing words for spelling tests
- ❑ Difficulty spelling words in context, even after spelling them correctly on a spelling test
- ❑ Difficulty spelling words phonetically

Comprehension:

- ❑ Difficulty with reading comprehension, but not when read to
- ❑ Better understanding of words in context than words isolated in lists

Written Expression:

- ❑ Difficulty constructing sentences
- ❑ Difficulty organizing grade appropriate written compositions
- ❑ Difficulty producing sufficient written output
- ❑ Written expression does not match verbal expression (Content, organization, vocabulary)

Handwriting:

- ❑ Slow with handwriting tasks
- ❑ Overall poor quality/illegible handwriting on written assignment
- ❑ Awkward, fist-like, or tight pencil grip

Cognitive/Academic Ability:

- ❑ The student appears to have intellectual ability equal to or above grade level peers.
- ❑ The student has grade level math calculation skills.
- ❑ The student appears to have grade level math reasoning skills
- ❑ The student has grade level listening comprehension skills.
- ❑ The student has reading difficulties that are unexpected compared to other abilities.
- ❑ The student requires many repetitions to learn something new.
- ❑ Compensates by memorizing stories or words but cannot keep up as demands increase
- ❑ Strength in thinking skills: conceptualization, reason, imagination, abstraction
- ❑ Strength in areas not dependent on reading, such as math, computers, and visual arts, or excellence in more conceptual

Social/Emotional/Behavioral:

- ❑ Shows frustration and anxiety, as he realizes he is lagging behind his peers
- ❑ Exhibits health or behavior problems, emotional difficulties or wants to avoid school
- ❑ Avoids reading aloud

Attention:

- ❑ Difficulty attending to tasks involving print.
- ❑ Difficulty organizing time and materials
- ❑ Is easily distracted
- ❑ Does many things too quickly
- ❑ Is often overactive or fidgety
- ❑ Is inconsistent with production of classwork and homework on written assignments

Student's Academic Development:

- ❑ English is a second language.
- ❑ The student was retained in _____ grade.
- ❑ The student has been/is in special programs. (Special Education, Tiered Interventions, etc.)

Suggested work samples to include:

- ❑ The student's most recent spelling test.
- ❑ A Sample of the student's unedited writing (journal entry, creative story, etc.)
- ❑ The student's most recent progress report or report card.
- ❑ A copy of most recent literacy screeners.

Adapted from Teacher Questionnaire for Dyslexia, Texas Scottish Rite

Appendix E
Accommodations

Listed below are some accommodations to be considered for a student exhibiting the characteristics of dyslexia. Specific accommodations should be selected based on individual student needs.

<u>Reading</u>

- Allow audio books and/or text-to-speech software

- Utilize outlines, summaries

- Preview questions and vocabulary

- Allow shared reading or buddy reading

<u>Writing</u>

- Grade for content rather than spelling

- Allow students to dictate work to an adult

- Substitute alternative projects for written reports

- Utilize speech-to-text software

- Reduce written work

- Minimize copying

- Accept oral responses, reports, and presentations

<u>Testing</u>

- Provide extra time

- Review directions orally

- Read tests orally

- Allow dictated responses

<u>Homework</u>

- Reduce reading and writing requirements

- Limit time spent on homework

- Provide extra time

<u>Instruction</u>

- Break tasks into small steps

- Give directions in small steps

- Give examples and model behavior

- Emphasize daily review

- Provide copies of lecture notes

<u>Classroom</u>

- Post schedules and maintain routines

- Chart assignments on a calendar

- Use color-coding to organize materials and information

- Incorporate multisensory activities

- Coordinate preferential seating
    - Avoid requiring student to read aloud in front of a group.

APPLYING FOR ACCOMMODATIONS ON COLLEGE ENTRANCE TESTS

The application process for individuals planning to enter college can be a daunting experience. For individuals with disabilities who are requesting testing accommodations, this can be even more challenging, as it often requires assembling necessary documentation, completing additional paperwork, and anticipating deadlines. This IDA Fact Sheet gives a broad overview of the process in order to assist individuals who are requesting test accommodations on high stakes tests such as the SAT and ACT. It provides guidance about what forms to submit, how to provide sufficient disability documentation, and how to gather supplemental information if needed to support accommodation requests. Keep in mind that each testing agency sets its own requirements for requesting accommodations.

The Application Process

- Test takers should read the test information on the program's website. Many tests are administered on computer and incorporate functions such as a built-in calculator, clock, etc. Additionally, most testing agencies provide supplemental information or a handbook for test takers with disabilities.
- The testing agency website will give specific information about how to apply for accommodations. This should be read carefully to determine which accommodations are necessary (e.g., additional testing time, or breaks, separate room, a reader, etc.).
- Special Services and/or counseling staff in the student's high school or district may be able to assist in completing the application and acquiring the required documentation.

- Early submission of applications is important, as it's not unusual for testing agencies to request additional scores, updated testing, or clarification, which can cause delays. This is particularly true during peak application periods.
- Once the agency receives an application for accommodations, it may be two months before the applicant is notified. If additional testing or an appeal is needed, all this must be accomplished and submitted at least 60 days in advance of the test date.
- Since most testing agencies no longer "flag" scores obtained under non-standard conditions, it is important to request accommodations that are needed.

Documentation

- Typically, all documentation should be sent in one complete packet. This pertains to supporting documentation (IEP, transcripts, letters re: past accommodations).
- Testing agencies often require current documentation according to their individual "recency" criteria. For example, many testing agencies request documentation for learning disabilities to be dated within the last three to five years to reflect the test taker's need for specific accommodations. Test takers should review the documentation guidelines posted on the website.
- Often, a current, comprehensive evaluation is needed, as an adult version of some tests may be required. For example, most testing agencies will not accept a handwritten prescription-pad note from a doctor. Documentation should be

complete, dated, signed, in English, and on official letterhead. Disability documentation should address all of the following:

- o The existence of an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, as compared to most people in the general population
- o A diagnosis of the disability and the current impact of impairment and how it limits the student's ability to take the test under standard conditions
- o A rationale for why the requested accommodations are necessary and appropriate. For example, if extra time is requested, the evaluation must say how much extended time should be provided and on what basis.
- o The accommodations that are requested should generally match those provided in the past.

- Some accommodations may not require prior approval, such as braces or crutches, eyeglasses, insulin pump, etc. Lockers that can be accessed during breaks are typically provided for storage of food, water, and/or medication, if applicable.

- If sufficient disability documentation is unavailable or outdated, it may take up to nine months in advance to find a qualified professional with a qualified professional with experience and expertise in diagnosing and documenting the disability in question. That evaluator will need relevant historical information, including:

  - o Letters documenting a history of accommodations in school, such as IEPs or 504 plans, or proof of accommodations on statewide assessments.
  - o A description of tutoring or coaching services provided in the past.

- o A comprehensive evaluation report for diagnosis of the disability and accommodation determination.

- Additionally, school records from elementary and high school as well as teacher comments will help support a history of a disability. High school transcripts may provide good evidence if they showed the impact of the disability on grades (e.g., dropped classes, withdrawals, incompletes, or failing grades). It is not always the case that accommodations in the past will automatically continue. An ongoing need for accommodations can be described in a personal statement.

- Many colleges and universities with strong school psychology programs perform evaluations at a reduced fee if a private evaluation is not feasible.

Types of Decision Letters

There are three basic types of decision letters that the testing agency sends:

1. **Approval**—This type of letter will list the accommodations that have been approved.
   - o Once accommodations have been approved, directions on the approval letter regarding how to schedule the test and other pertinent information.
   - o Be aware that extra time may be needed to schedule the test after approval for accommodations. For example, extra time may be needed to secure a reader or scribe.
2. **Request for Additional Information**— This type of letter is not a denial of the request. It specifies that the agency needs more information to complete the review.

3. **Denial**—If the testing agency finds the documentation insufficient to support the accommodation request, this letter will explain the decision and will include options for requesting further review.
   - o Appeal Process**:** Each testing agency has established a procedure to allow an appeal of its decision. The information on how to appeal a decision is typically stated in the denial letter or on the agency's website. When the requested information is submitted, the request will be reconsidered.

Preparing for the Test

Whether or not an accommodation request is approved, it is important for the student to become familiar with the upcoming test.

- Most testing agencies have a wide range of practice materials at no or low cost available to test takers.
- Areas of particular focus are the test format, the types of questions used, and the test directions for each type of question. This can reduce the amount of time spent familiarizing oneself with instructions on the test day. Alternate-format practice materials can be requested if this is one of the desired accommodations.
- The sample test questions can be practiced with and without the requested accommodations. The goal is to increase the number of questions correctly completed within the time limit. As you practice, try to increase the number of questions you can complete correctly within the time limit.
- Test sites differ, so it is a good idea to check out the location in advance.

Resources

- **AHEAD** (Association on Higher Education and Disability) This is a professional association committed to full participation of persons with disabilities in postsecondary education. www.ahead.org
- ***Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities*** www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html
- ***Rights and Responsibilities of College Students with LD*** (Learning Disabilities Association of America) https://ldaamerica.org/rights-and-responsibilities-of-college-students-with-learning-disabilities-ld/
- **Educational Testing Service** http://www.ets.org/disabilities
- **ACT Test** website http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration/accommodations.html

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) thanks Loring Brinckerhoff, Ph.D., Nancy Cushen White, Ed.D., BCET, CALT-QI, and Diana Sauter, Ph.D., for their assistance in the preparation of this fact sheet.

Appendix F

Parent Resource: Questions to ask a Diagnostician

When you call, ask:

1. How long have you been testing children for dyslexia?
2. Where did you get trained to do this?
3. What does the term Dyslexia mean to you?
4. Will you use the term Dyslexia in your report? Why or why not?
5. What are some of the tests you will use?
6. What do you charge for testing a child?
7. What is the process like? How long will it take?
8. Will you meet with us when the testing is done and explain the results?
9. Will you be able to refer us to an appropriate and qualified interventionist with experience in performing an evidenced-based program for dyslexia?
10. How do you know the interventionist is qualified?
11. Will you provide a written report as part of your fee? What will be in that report?
12. If my child has dyslexia, will your recommendations section be written with legal terminology that will make it easy to get a 504 Plan?
13. (If the child is in high school) Will your report include recommendations for accommodations for high stakes testing such as extra time for the ACT?
14. Will your report include recommendations for accommodations such as assistive technology to help access reading and writing materials?
15. Will you meet with my child's teacher(s) and explain the results? Is that included in your fee? If not, what would you charge?
16. Can you provide me with a list of references -- parents who have hired you to test their child?

Appendix G
Assembling a Battery for the Level 2: Dyslexia Screener

The Dyslexia Resource Guide cannot be considered a substitute for reading and understanding the manual of a test you are administering.

UNDERLYING CAUSE

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

CTOPP-2 (Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing-2) Phonological Awareness Composite - Elision, Blending Words and Phoneme Isolation or Sound Matching subtests make up this composite
PAT-2 (Phonological Awareness Test-2) - first six subtests
KTEA-3 (Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement - 3rd edition)
WRMT-III (Woodcock Reading Mastery Test III) - Phonological Awareness
WJ-IV (Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Oral Language-4th edition) - Segmentation and Sound Blending

RAPID NAMING

CTOPP-2 - Rapid Naming Composite
KTEA-3 - Rapid Automatized Naming, Letter Naming Facility, Object Naming Facility
WRMT-III - Rapid Automatic Naming
WJ-IV Tests of Oral Language - Rapid Picture Naming
RAN/RAS (Rapid Automatized Naming and Rapid Alternating Stimulus)

LETTER KNOWLEDGE

PAT-2 - Graphemes
WRMT-III - Letter Identification
WJ-IV (Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement-4th edition) - Spelling of Sounds (Phoneme knowledge)
WIST (Word Identification and Spelling Test) – Sound-symbol knowledge

CHARACTERISTICS

DECODING

PAT-2 - Decoding
KTEA-3 - Nonsense Word Decoding
WIAT-III (Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-3rd edition) - Pseudoword Decoding
WJ-IV Ach - Word Attack
WRMT-III - Word Attack

WORD RECOGNITION

KTEA-3 - Letter & Word Recognition
WIAT-III - Word Reading
WJ-IV Ach - Letter-Word Identification
WRAT-4 (Wide Range Achievement Test-4th edition) - Reading
WRMT-III - Word Identification
WIST – Word identification

FLUENCY

Oral Reading Accuracy
GORT-5 (Gray Oral Reading Test-5th edition) - Accuracy score

Oral Reading Rate
GORT-5 - Rate score

Oral Reading Fluency (Rate and Accuracy as a Composite only)
KTEA-3 Word Recognition Fluency, Associational Fluency, Silent Reading Fluency
TOWRE-2 (Test of Word Reading Efficiency- 2nd edition) - Sight Word Efficiency, Phonemic Decoding Efficiency, and Total Word Reading Efficiency
WIAT-III - Oral Reading Fluency
WJ-IV Ach - Oral Reading Fluency, Sentence Reading Fluency
WRMT-III - Oral Reading Fluency

SPELLING

KTEA-3 – Spelling, Orthographic Processing Cluster - Spelling, Letter Naming Facility, and Word Recognition Fluency
TWS-5 (Test of Written Spelling-5th edition) - Spelling
WIAT-III - Spelling
WJ-IV Ach - Spelling and Spelling of Sounds (spelling nonsense words)
WRAT-4 - Spelling
WIST – Spelling

OUTCOMES

READING COMPREHENSION

GATES (Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests) - Silent reading comprehension
GORT-5 - Oral reading comprehension
GSRT (Gray Silent Reading Tests) - Reading comprehension
KTEA-3 - Reading Comprehension
WIAT-III - Reading comprehension
WJ-IV Ach - Passage Comprehension
WRAT-4 - Sentence Comprehension
WRMT-III - Passage Comprehension

WRITTEN EXPRESSION

KTEA-3 Written Expression
TOWL-3 (Test of Written Language-3rd edition) - Overall writing quotient
WIAT-III - Written Expression
WJ-IV Ach - Writing Samples

Adapted from the Characteristic Profile of Dyslexia – Revised 7/2014, Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children

Appendix H
Dyslexia Program Review Form

Program:_____ Author(s):_____

Date of Publication:_____ Intended Age/Grade Range:_____

Length of Program:_____ Group Size:____ Frequency/Duration of Sessions:_____

Information   Sources:_____

School:_____ Reviewer:_____ Date:_____

Training Requirements:_____ Training Cost:_____

Cost of Materials:_____

Principles of Instruction (How)

Explicit, Direct Instruction
- ❑ Nothing assumed, everything is directly taught
- ❑ Skill or strategy is made clear
- ❑ Modeling, Guided practice, Corrective feedback, Independent Practice

Systematic, Sequential, Cumulative
- ❑ Introductions follow a logical order of the language
- ❑ Begins with easiest, and progresses to more difficult
- ❑ New concept based on previously learned concept
- ❑ Systematic review to strengthen memory

Multisensory
- ❑ Teaching is done using all learning pathways in the brain: (VAKT)
- ❑ Simultaneous in order to enhance memory and learning

Research-Based
- ❑ Instructional techniques that are grounded in research

Small Group Instruction
- ❑ Recommended size of small group _____

Content (What)

Look for lessons that explicitly teach:

Phonemic Awareness
- ❑ Detect
- ❑ Segment
- ❑ Blend
- ❑ Manipulate sounds

Graphophonemic Knowledge
- ❑ Specific sequence of letter-sound introductions
  - ❑ Consonants
  - ❑ Vowels
  - ❑ Consonant digraphs, trigraphs

- ❑ Vowel digraphs, trigraphs, quadrigraphs
  - ❑ Diphthongs
  - ❑ Combinations

Structure of the English Language
- ❑ Syllable types
  - ❑ Closed
  - ❑ Open
  - ❑ Vowel-Consonant-e
  - ❑ Vowel teams
  - ❑ Vowel r
  - ❑ Final Stable Syllables (Consonant le)

- ❑ Syllable division patterns
  - ❑ VCCV
  - ❑ VCV
  - ❑ VCCCV
  - ❑ VV

- ❑ Morphology
  - ❑ Base words
  - ❑ Prefixes
  - ❑ Suffixes
  - ❑ Latin Roots
  - ❑ Greek Combining Forms

Linguistic Instruction
- ❏ Language Form:
    - ❏ Phonology (sounds)
    - ❏ Morphology (meaning)
    - ❏ Syntax (grammar)

- ❏ Language Content: Semantics (vocabulary)

- ❏ Language Use: Pragmatics (conversational rules)

Strategies for:
- ❏ Decoding
- ❏ Word recognition
- ❏ Comprehension
- ❏ Encoding (spelling)
- ❏ Fluency

Appendix I
Record of Modifications to this Document

Since its original release, the Dyslexia Resource Guide has been modified on several occasions. The following list provides a running record of those modifications:

- Appendix I – Revised March 2021
- Sections III, IV, V, XI – Revised December 2017
- Appendix A: Glossary – Revised December 2017
- Section VI: Level II Dyslexia Screening – Revised January 2016
- Appendix G: Assembling a Test Battery for a Level 2 Dyslexia Screener – Revised January 2016
- Appendix H: Programs, Training, and Resources – Removed November 2015
- Section XI: Reporting by School Districts – Revised October 2015
- Section XII: Special Education and Dyslexia – Revised October 2015

Arkansas Outdoor Academy Leadership Structure Outline

AOA Board of Directors

Role:
Serves as the school's governing authority, providing strategic oversight to ensure the mission of outdoor learning, environmental stewardship, and career readiness is fulfilled. Holds the leadership team accountable for performance, compliance, and long-term sustainability.

Executive Leadership Team

Expedition Leader (Superintendent)

Role:
Provides overarching leadership and strategic vision. Coordinates with the Board, develops partnerships, and ensures alignment across all departments.

Direct Reports:

- Base Camp Coordinator (Principal)
- Base Camp Team (Support Staff)
- External Partners

Base Camp Coordinator (Principal)

Role:
Oversees daily school operations and instructional leadership. Ensures alignment of curriculum, staff development, and school climate with the school's mission.

Direct Reports:

- Assistant Principals (Summit Guide & Camp Director)
- Navigators (Teachers)

Summit Guide: Curriculum & Counseling (Assistant Principal)

Responsibilities:

- Oversees all academic programs with a focus on outdoor learning and career-aligned curriculum.
- Supports experiential learning initiatives and project-based instruction.
- Coordinates school counseling, academic testing, and career readiness.

Direct Reports:

- Camp Counselors (School Counselors)
- Testing Navigator
- Internship Coordinator (as applicable)

Camp Director: Behavior & School Culture (Assistant Principal)

Responsibilities:

- Manages positive behavior systems and school culture.
- Serves as primary liaison for families and community partnerships.
- Leads public outreach, events, and media presence.

Direct Reports:

- Safety Scout (CSSO)
- Welcome Rangers (Front Desk Staff)
- Community/Family Engagement Coordinator (if applicable)

Summit Guide and Counseling Director roles.

Responsibilities:

- Designs and implements emotional wellness, mental health, and resilience-building programs.
- Facilitates college and career readiness, internships, and student transitions.

Direct Reports:

- Camp Counselors
- Mental Health Specialists
- Internship Coordinator

Finance Oversight

Finance Manager

Responsibilities:

- Manages budget, payroll, and compliance with financial policies.
- Supports strategic resource allocation and financial transparency.

Direct Reports:

- Finance & Accounting Staff

Collaborative Structures

Advisory Committee

Role:
 Supports curricular innovation, field-based learning, and career pathway alignment through input from industry, education, and conservation leaders.

Expedition Leadership Team

Members:

- Expedition Leader
- Base Camp Coordinator
- Summit Guide
- Camp Director

Functions:

- Align schoolwide strategy and leadership initiatives
- Monitor school climate, data, and program impact
- Coordinate community partnerships and whole-school events

Advisory Committee Guide for Arkansas Outdoor Academy Partnership

Purpose of the Advisory Committee

The advisory committee will:

- Provide guidance and expertise to align AOA programs with industry trends and community needs.
- Foster partnerships to enhance the curriculum, internships, and career pathways.
- Advocate for AOA's mission and promote its offerings locally and nationally.

Roles and Responsibilities

Advisory Committee Members

Chairperson
- Leads and facilitates all committee meetings
- Ensures the agenda is followed and meeting objectives are met
- Serves as the primary point of contact between the committee and administration

Vice Chairperson
- Assists the chairperson in their duties
- Leads meetings in the absence of the chairperson
- Supports the coordination of committee activities

Committee Members
- Attend and actively participate in all meetings
- Provide input and feedback on agenda items
- Engage with the school community to gather insights and perspectives
- Support the implementation of committee recommendations

Key Focus Areas

Curriculum Development

- Provide feedback on pathway-specific modules:
    - **Outdoor Conservation Sciences**: Align content with careers in wildlife management, forestry, and ecological monitoring.
    - **Outdoor First Responders**: Validate emergency response scenarios and certifications like Wilderness First Responder (WFR).

- **Outdoor Tourism and Recreation**: Ensure training in sustainable tourism, hospitality, and trail design meets industry needs.

Partnerships

- Strengthen relationships with:
  - Arkansas State Parks and the Department of Parks and Tourism.
  - Conservation organizations
  - Industry leaders for internships, job placements, and certifications.

Student Support

- Advocate for student leadership development through workshops and mentorship programs.
- Assist in the design of field-based learning experiences, ensuring 50% of learning occurs outdoors.

Meeting Structure

Frequency

- Quarterly meetings (additional sessions as needed).

Agenda Outline

1. **Welcome & Updates**: Chairperson and AOA leadership provide updates on progress.
2. **Curriculum Review**: Evaluate recent course modules and student feedback.
3. **Partnership Development**: Discuss new opportunities and review existing collaborations.
4. **Action Plan**: Assign responsibilities and set deadlines for initiatives.
5. **Open Forum**: Address member questions or concerns.
6. **Closing**: Summarize decisions and outline next steps.

Operational Guidelines

Decision-Making

- Decisions will be made by consensus, with the Chairperson mediating unresolved issues.

Communication

- Members will use a shared platform for document collaboration and updates.

- Meeting minutes and action items will be distributed within a week of each meeting.

Evaluation

- Annually assess the group's impact on AOA's goals using metrics like:
  - Number of partnerships established.
  - Student enrollment in pathways.
  - Certification and internship completion rates.

Long-Term Vision

Year 1–5 Goals

- Develop scalable programs aligned with AOA's five-year curriculum plan.
- Achieve state/national recognition by contributing to sustainable tourism and conservation education.
- Support AOA graduates in securing industry certifications and employment opportunities.

Beyond Year 5

- Expand partnerships to include national organizations.
- Advocate for AOA's curriculum as a model for outdoor education nationwide

Arkansas Outdoor Academy Organizational Chart

AOA Board of Directors

Expedition Leader/Superintendent

Base Camp Team/ SUPPORT STAFF

Base Camp Coordinator/Principal

Summit Guide/Curriculum & Counseling

Camp Director/Behavior and School Culture

Camp Counselors

Navigators(Teachers)

Safety Scout/CSSO

Testing Navigator

Welcome Rangers/Front Desk
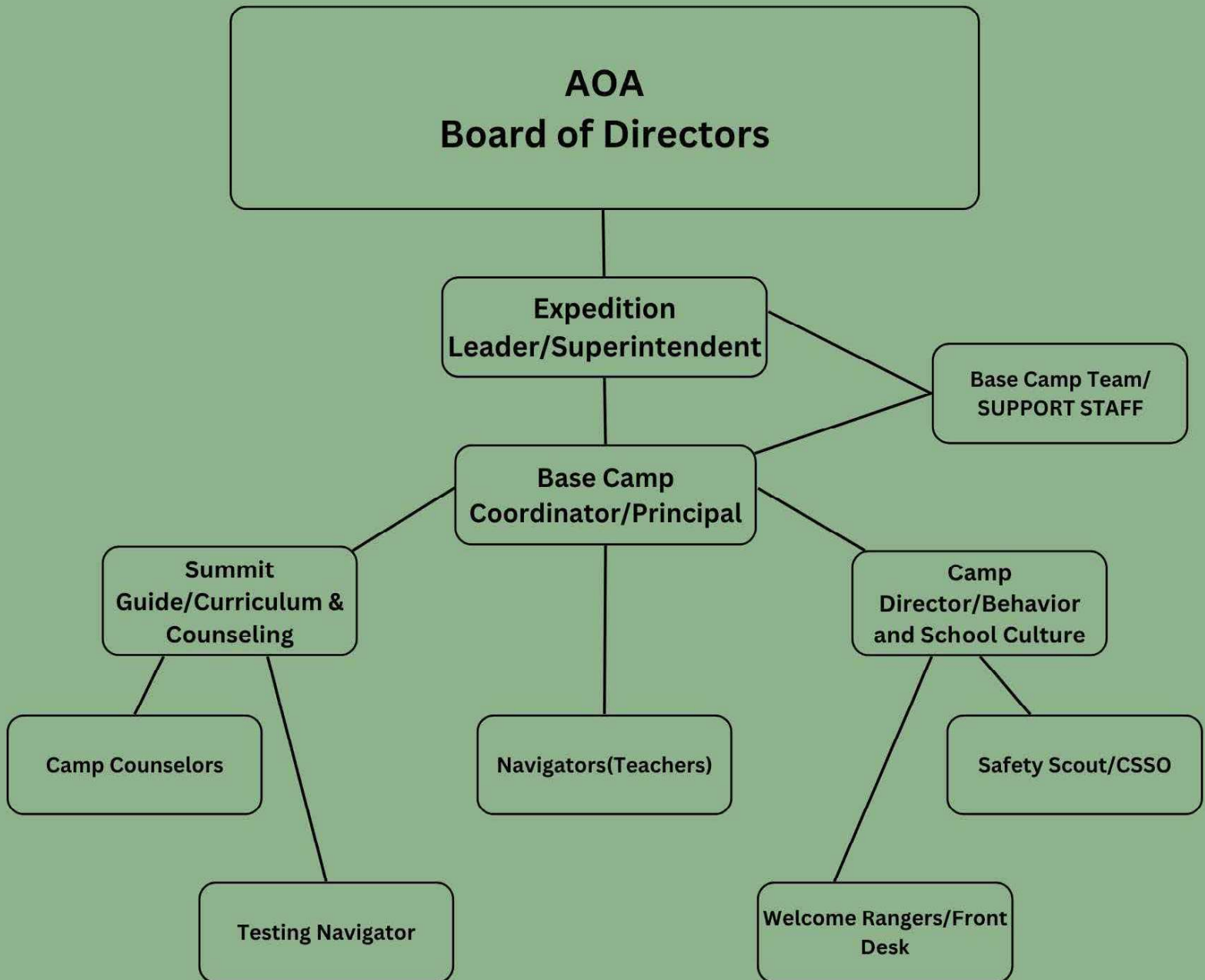
WAIVERS

Complete the following tables indicating all sections of Title 6 of the Arkansas Code Annotated, the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education rules, and the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts from which the public charter school seeks to be exempted to meet the goals of the school.

==Please use the wavier list provided below.== This list includes the appropriate waiver topic and citations to the applicable Arkansas Code Section, Rules, and Standards to fully effectuate the requested waiver.

<u>Each of your waiver requests must include a rationale. Failure to provide a rationale will result in your application being marked as incomplete.</u>

Waiver #1 Topic	Teacher Licensure
Arkansas Code Annotated	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-309
Standard for Accreditation	Standard 1-C: Qualified Personnel
ADE Rules	ADE Rule 1.03 – Licensure Exceptions
Rationale for Waiver	Allows hiring outdoor experts (e.g., park rangers, ecotourism leaders) with real-world experience

Waiver #2 Topic	Class Size & Teaching Load
Arkansas Code Annotated	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-812, 6-17-111
Standard for Accreditation	Standard 1-A: Class Size Flexibility
ADE Rules	ADE Rule 10.02 – Teaching Load & Class Size
Rationale for Waiver	Enables mixed-age, cohort-based outdoor learning and expeditionary instruction

Waiver #3 Topic	School Calendar & Instruction Time
Arkansas Code Annotated	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-10-106, 6-16-102
Standard for Accreditation	Standard 2-D: Instructional Time
ADE Rules	ADE Rule 14.03 – Calendar & Days
Rationale for Waiver	Facilitates block or seasonal schedules that support immersive outdoor programs

Waiver #4 Topic	Personnel Policy (Planning Time, Pay)
Arkansas Code Annotated	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-201, 6-17-114, 6-17-117
Standard for Accreditation	Standard 4-B: Personnel Policies
ADE Rules	ADE Rule 3.06 – Planning, Duty-Free Time
Rationale for Waiver	Allows creation of part-time or seasonal instructional roles tied to industry schedules

Waiver #5 Topic	Counseling & Library Media Specialist
Arkansas Code Annotated	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-18-1005, 6-25-103
Standard for Accreditation	Standard 3-C: Library/Media Services
ADE Rules	ADE Rule 16.02 – Counseling Requirements
Rationale for Waiver	Replaces traditional library/media with mobile tech, field guides, and digital learning tools

Waiver #6 Topic	Bus Color & Community Shuttle Model
Arkansas Code Annotated	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-19-107
Standard for Accreditation	Standard 5-A: Safe & Equitable Transportation Access
ADE Rules	ADE Transportation Rules – Bus Color & Safety Standards
Rationale for Waiver	Allows use of AOA-branded buses operating only on two limited routes with five designated community stops each; not used for traditional home pickup routes

Waiver #7 Topic	
Arkansas Code Annotated	
Standard for Accreditation	
ADE Rules	
Rationale for Waiver	

Waiver #8 Topic	
Arkansas Code Annotated	
Standard for Accreditation	
ADE Rules	
Rationale for Waiver	

Waiver #9 Topic	
Arkansas Code Annotated	
Standard for Accreditation	
ADE Rules	
Rationale for Waiver	

Waiver #10 Topic	
Arkansas Code Annotated	
Standard for Accreditation	
ADE Rules	
Rationale for Waiver	

Waiver Topic Names with Arkansas Code Annotated, Standards, and DESE Rules (when applicable)

178 Instructional Days – standard only	Acquisition of Commodities	Adopt School Calendar	Alternative Learning Environment (ALE)	Arkansas History
Standard 1-A.4.1	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-21-303	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-10-106	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-15-1005(b)(5) 6-18-503(a)(1)(C)(i) 6-48-102 6-48-103 DESE Rules Governing Student Special Needs Funding – Section 4 Standard 2-I.1	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-16-124(a)(2) 6-17-418 6-17-703 Standard 1-A.1.2.8
Attendance Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-213(a)(2)	**Board of Directors** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-13-608 6-13-611 6-13-612(c) 6-13-613 6-13-615 6-13-616(a) 6-13-617 6-13-618 6-13-619(a), (c), (d)(1)(A), (d)(4) 6-13-620(5) 6-13-622(b) 6-13-630 6-13-631 6-13-634 6-13-635 6-13-1303 6-14-101, et seq.	**Body Mass Index (BMI) Assessment** DESE Rules Governing Nutrition and Physical Activity and Body Mass Index for Age Assessment Protocols in Arkansas Public Schools, Section 5.02.5, 12.00	**Class Size & Teaching Load** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-812 Standard 1-A.5 (Class Size) Standard 1-A.6 (Teaching Load) DESE Rules Governing Class Size and Teaching Load	**Classified Employee Minimum Salary** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-2201, et seq. 6-17-2403
Clock Hours Standard 1-A.2	**Comprehensive School Counseling Program & School Counselor** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-18-2002(2)(A) 6-18-2003(a)(2)(A) Standard 4-E.1, 4-E.2	**Credit for College Courses** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-223	**Curriculum – Advanced Placement Courses** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-16-1203(a) 6-16-1204(a), (c), and (d)	**Curriculum – Career & Technical Education** Standard 1-A.1.2.7 (5-8) 1-A.1.3.9 (9-12)

			DESE Rules Governing Grading and Course Credit – Sections 4-1.00 & 6.00 Standard 1-A.1.3-10	
Curriculum – Concurrent Credit Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-16-1203(b) 6-16-1204(b) and (e) DESE Rules Governing Grading and Course Credit – Sections 5.00	**Curriculum – CPR** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-143 Standard 1-C.2.5 Under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-401(b) this is NOT waivable unless the charter is fully virtual.	**Curriculum – Fine Arts** Standard 1-A.1.1.5 (K-4) 1-A.1.2.5 (5-8) 1-A.1.3.6 (9-12)	**Curriculum – Foreign Language 9-12** Standard 1-A.1.3.5	**Curriculum – Visual Art or Music** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-16-130(a) – elementary 6-16-130(b) – grades 7-8 and some 6th grade DESE Rules Governing Visual Art and Music Standard 1-A.1.1.5, 1-A.1.2.5, & 1-A.1.3.6
Eye and Vision Screening Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-18-1501 6-18-1502 DESE Rules Governing Eye & Vision Screening Report in Arkansas Public Schools	**Financial Management – Business Manager** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2302(b) DESE Rule Governing the Arkansas Fiscal Assessment and Accountability Program – Section 12	**Flag Display** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-16-105 6-16-106	**Flexible Schedule** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-102, except (a)(5)	**Food Services** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-18-705 (breakfast program) 6-20-701, et seq. (school lunch program) DESE Rules Governing Nutrition and Physical Activity and Body Mass Index for Age Assessment Protocols in Arkansas Public Schools Standard 3-D.1
Gifted and Talented Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-20-2208(c)(6) 6-42-109 DESE Rules Governing Gifted and Talented Program Approval Standards Standard 2-G.1	**Grading Scale** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-902(a) DESE Rules Governing Grading and Course Credit – Section 2-2.01	**Health Services – School Nurse** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-706	**Health and Safety Services** Standard 2-E.1, 2-E.2	**Instructional Day (includes delay/early release of school and recess)** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-16-102 6-10-126 – Delay or early release of school due to emergency circumstances Standards 1-A.4.2 1-A.4.3 (Recess)

Instructional Materials	Leased Academic Facilities	Library Media Services – includes standard for balance of instructional materials	Library Media Specialist	Maintain School Facilities
Ark. Code Ann. § 6-21-413 DESE Rules Governing Instructional Materials – Sections 5.01, 5.01.2	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-21-117(2)-(5) Standard 6-A.1, 6-A.2	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-25-103 Standard 2-D.1	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-25-104 Standard 4-F.1, 4-F.2	Standard 6-A.1
Parent & Family Engagement Plan Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1701, et seq. DESE Rules Governing Parental Involvement Plans and Family and Community Engagement Standard 5-A.1	**Period of Silence** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-10-115	**Personnel Policies – Classified Employees Personnel Policies** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-2301(c) 6-17-2301(c)(1) & (d)(2) 6-17-2302 6-17-2303 6-17-2304 6-17-2305	**Personnel Policies – Committee on Personnel Policies** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-203 6-17-205 6-17-209	**Personnel Policies – Daily Planning Period** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-114
Personnel Policies – Duty-Free Lunch Period Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-111	**Personnel Policies – Employment of Licensed Personnel** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-301	**Personnel Policies – Grievance Procedure** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-208 6-17-210	**Personnel Policies – Non-instructional Duties** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-117	**Personnel Policies – Personnel Policies Incorporated into Teacher Contracts** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-204
Personnel Policies – Public School Employees' Fair Hearing Act Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-1701, et seq.	**Personnel Policies – Requirements** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-201(a) & (c)	**Personnel Policies – Right to Join Professional Organization** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-202	**Personnel Policies – School Employees' Minimum Sick Leave** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-1301, et seq.	**Personnel Policies – Teachers' Minimum Sick Leave** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-1201, et seq.
Personnel Policies – Teachers' Fair Dismissal Act Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-1501, et seq.	**Personnel Policies – Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS)** Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-2801, et seq. DESE Rules Governing Educator Support and Development	**Personnel Policies – Use of Personal Leave** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-211	**Personnel Policies – Website Requirements** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-11-129 DESE Rules Governing Documents Posted to School District and Education Service Cooperative Websites – Sections 5&6	**Physical Education** Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-132 DESE Rules Governing Nutrition and Physical Activity and Body Mass Index for Age Assessment Protocols in Arkansas Public Schools – Sections 7.01, 7.01.1, 7.01.1.1, 7.01.1.2, 7.01.3, 7.09 Standards 1-A.1.1.6, 1-A.1.2.6, & 1-A.1.3.8

Pledge of Allegiance	Principal	Professional Development	Report Cards	Required Instruction K-4
Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-108	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-302 Standards 4-C.1, 4-C.2	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-703 6-17-704 6-17-705 DESE Rules Governing Professional Development Standard 4-G.1	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-903(a)(2)	Standard 1-A.1.1
Required Instruction 5-8	Required Instruction 9-12	Salaries and Compensation	School Calendar – School Start Date	School Counselor
Standard 1-A.1.2	Standard 1-A.1.3	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-807 6-17-812 6-17-908 6-17-2401 et seq. 6-21-303(b)	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-10-106	Standard 4-E.1 & 4-E.2
School Property and Supplies – Rules	School Safety Policies & Procedures	Statewide Assessment System	Written Student Discipline Procedures	Superintendent
Ark. Code Ann. § 6-21-303(b)	Standard 6-A.2	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2907 Under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-401(b) this is NOT waivable.	Ark. Code Ann. 6-18-503(b)(2) DESE Rules Governing Student Discipline and School Safety, 4.11	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-13-109 6-17-427 DESE Rules Governing the Superintendent Mentoring Program Standard 4-B.1, 4-B.2
Teacher Excellence & Support System (TESS)	Teacher Licensure	Teachers' Salaries – 12-mo. Contract for Vocational Agri Teachers	Tornado & Earthquake Safety Drills	Transportation
Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-2801, et seq. DESE Rules Governing Educator Support and Development	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-15-1004 6-17-309 6-17-401 6-17-418 6-17-902 6-17-908 6-17-919 DESE Rules Governing Educator Licensure – Section 7 Standard 4-D.1	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-802	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-10-121 Under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-401(b) this is NOT waivable unless the charter is fully virtual.	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-19-101, et seq.

Waiver Justification Chart

Outdoor-Focused, LEARNS-Aligned Charter Model

Waiver	Statutory Reference	Standard for Accreditation	ADE Rules	LEARNS Act Alignment	Innovative Application	Certified Teacher Partnership
Teacher Licensure	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-309	Standard 1-C: Qualified Personnel	ADE Rule 1.03 – Licensure Exceptions	Expands access to career-ready instruction through professionals in high-wage, high-growth fields (LEARNS §4(c))	Allows hiring outdoor experts (e.g., park rangers, ecotourism leaders) with real-world experience	Professionals collaborate with certified educators to align with LEARNS standards and ensure academic rigor
Class Size & Teaching Load	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-812, 6-17-111	Standard 1-A: Class Size Flexibility	ADE Rule 10.02 – Teaching Load & Class Size	Supports flexible and interdisciplinary environments (LEARNS §7)	Enables mixed-age, cohort-based outdoor learning and expeditionary instruction	Licensed teachers guide content delivery and assessment across all learning cohorts
School Calendar & Instruction Time	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-10-106, 6-16-102	Standard 2-D: Instructional Time	ADE Rule 14.03 – Calendar & Days	Promotes scheduling innovation for internships and fieldwork (LEARNS §5)	Facilitates block or seasonal schedules that support immersive outdoor programs	Curriculum aligned to state standards through certified instructional planning
Personnel Policy (Planning Time, Pay)	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-201, 6-17-114, 6-17-117	Standard 4-B: Personnel Policies	ADE Rule 3.06 – Planning, Duty-Free Time	Encourages alternative roles to recruit	Allows creation of part-time or seasonal	Certified teachers oversee and support

				industry professionals (LEARNS §3)	instructional roles tied to industry schedules	consistent instructional quality
Counseling & Library Media Specialist	Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-18-1005, 6-25-103	Standard 3-C: Library/Media Services	ADE Rule 16.02 – Counseling Requirements	LEARNS fosters customized guidance and modern resources (LEARNS §2 & §6)	Replaces traditional library/media with mobile tech, field guides, and digital learning tools	Certified counselors ensure students meet all academic planning and SEL needs
Bus Color & Community Shuttle Model	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-19-107	Standard 5-A: Safe & Equitable Transportation Access	ADE Transportation Rules – Bus Color & Safety Standards	Supports place-based learning with a limited, centralized shuttle system rather than full home-to-school routes; increases operational efficiency and community visibility (LEARNS §5)	Allows use of AOA-branded buses operating only on two limited routes with five designated community stops each; not used for traditional home pickup routes	Drivers and routes will comply with safety standards; equipment, markings, and oversight remain intact despite color branding

	A				B				C				D				E				F		
Step	Salary	$ Increase	% Increase	Step	Salary	$ Increase	% Increase	Step	Salary	$ Increase	% Increase	Step	Salary	$ Increase	% Increase	Step	Salary	$ Increase	% Increase	Step	Salary	$ Increase	% Increase
0	$50,000.00	N/A	N/A	0	$53,000.00	N/A	N/A	0	$57,000.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1	$50,905.00	$905.00	1.81%	1	$53,959.30	$959.30	1.81%	1	$58,031.70	$1,031.70	1.81%	1	$60,000.00			1	$75,000.00	N/A	N/A	1	$80,000.00	N/A	N/A
2	$51,826.38	$921.38	1.81%	2	$54,935.96	$976.66	1.81%	2	$59,082.07	$1,050.37	1.81%	2	$61,086.00	$1,086.00	1.81%	2	$76,357.50	$1,357.50	1.81%	2	$81,448.00	$1,448.00	1.81%
3	$52,764.44	$938.06	1.81%	3	$55,930.30	$994.34	1.81%	3	$60,151.46	$1,069.39	1.81%	3	$62,191.66	$1,105.66	1.81%	3	$77,739.57	$1,382.07	1.81%	3	$82,922.21	$1,474.21	1.81%
4	$54,219.47	$1,455.04	2.76%	4	$57,442.64	$1,512.34	2.70%	4	$61,740.20	$1,588.74	2.64%	4	$63,317.33	$1,125.67	1.81%	4	$79,146.66	$1,407.09	1.81%	4	$84,423.10	$1,500.89	1.81%
5	$55,200.85	$981.37	1.81%	5	$58,482.35	$1,039.71	1.81%	5	$62,857.70	$1,117.50	1.81%	5	$64,963.37	$1,646.04	2.60%	5	$81,079.21	$1,932.55	2.44%	5	$86,451.16	$2,028.06	2.40%
6	$56,199.98	$999.14	1.81%	6	$59,540.89	$1,058.53	1.81%	6	$63,995.42	$1,137.72	1.81%	6	$66,139.21	$1,175.84	1.81%	6	$82,546.75	$1,467.53	1.81%	6	$88,015.92	$1,564.77	1.81%
7	$57,217.20	$1,017.22	1.81%	7	$60,618.58	$1,077.69	1.81%	7	$65,153.74	$1,158.32	1.81%	7	$67,336.33	$1,197.12	1.81%	7	$84,040.84	$1,494.10	1.81%	7	$89,609.01	$1,593.09	1.81%
8	$58,252.83	$1,035.63	1.81%	8	$61,715.77	$1,097.20	1.81%	8	$66,333.02	$1,179.28	1.81%	8	$68,555.11	$1,218.79	1.81%	8	$85,561.98	$1,521.14	1.81%	8	$91,230.94	$1,621.92	1.81%
9	$59,807.21	$1,554.38	2.67%	9	$63,332.83	$1,617.06	2.62%	9	$68,033.65	$1,700.63	2.56%	9	$69,795.96	$1,240.85	1.81%	9	$87,110.65	$1,548.67	1.81%	9	$92,882.22	$1,651.28	1.81%
10	$60,889.72	$1,082.51	1.81%	10	$64,479.15	$1,146.32	1.81%	10	$69,265.06	$1,231.41	1.81%	10	$71,559.27	$1,763.31	2.53%	10	$89,187.36	$2,076.70	2.38%	10	$95,063.38	$2,181.17	2.35%
11	$61,991.82	$1,102.10	1.81%	11	$65,646.22	$1,167.07	1.81%	11	$70,518.76	$1,253.70	1.81%	11	$72,854.49	$1,295.22	1.81%								
12	$63,113.88	$1,122.05	1.81%	12	$66,834.42	$1,188.20	1.81%	12	$71,795.15	$1,276.39	1.81%	12	$74,173.16	$1,318.67	1.81%								
13	$64,256.24	$1,142.36	1.81%	13	$68,044.12	$1,209.70	1.81%	13	$73,094.64	$1,299.49	1.81%	13	$75,515.69	$1,342.53	1.81%								
14	$65,919.27	$1,663.04	2.59%	14	$69,775.72	$1,731.60	2.54%	14	$74,917.65	$1,823.01	2.49%	14	$76,882.52	$1,366.83	1.81%								
15	$67,112.41	$1,193.14	1.81%	15	$71,038.66	$1,262.94	1.81%	15	$76,273.66	$1,356.01	1.81%	15	$78,774.10	$1,891.57	2.46%								
16	$68,327.15	$1,214.73	1.81%	16	$72,324.46	$1,285.80	1.81%	16	$77,654.21	$1,380.55	1.81%	16	$80,199.91	$1,425.81	1.81%								
17	$69,563.87	$1,236.72	1.81%	17	$73,633.54	$1,309.07	1.81%	17	$79,059.76	$1,405.54	1.81%	17	$81,651.53	$1,451.62	1.81%								
18	$70,822.98	$1,259.11	1.81%	18	$74,966.30	$1,332.77	1.81%	18	$80,490.74	$1,430.98	1.81%	18	$83,129.42	$1,477.89	1.81%								
19	$72,604.87	$1,781.90	2.52%	19	$76,823.19	$1,856.89	2.48%	19	$82,447.62	$1,956.88	2.43%	19	$84,634.06	$1,504.64	1.81%								
20	$73,919.02	$1,314.15	1.81%	20	$78,213.69	$1,390.50	1.81%	20	$83,939.92	$1,492.30	1.81%	20	$86,665.94	$2,031.88	2.40%								

A	Teacher (BA), SpEd Teacher (+Stipend), Nurse
B	Teacher (MA), SpEd Teacher (+Stipend)
C	Teacher (PhD), SpEd Teacher (+Stipend)
D	Counselor
E	Assistant Principal
F	Principal

Arkansas Outdoor Academy

		Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3
	6	75	75	75
	7	75	75	75
	8	75	75	75
	9	75	75	75
	10		75	75
	11			75
	12			
Total Enrollment		300	375	450
Funding per student				
Foundation Funding		$8,100	$8,343	$8,593
ELL Funding		$375	$386	$398
Professional Development Funding		$37.50	$37.50	$37.50
Enhanced Student Achievement Funding		$1,103	$1,136	$1,170
NSLA Funding/Lunch		$1,130	$1,164	$1,199
Title I,II, III, and IV Funding		$33	$107	$110
Foundation Funding		$2,430,000	$3,128,625	$3,866,981
ELL Funding		$18,750	$19,313	$19,892
Professional Development Funding		$11,250	$14,063	$16,875
Enhanced Student Achievement Funding		$330,900	$426,034	$526,578
NSLA Funding/Lunch		$339,000	$436,463	$539,468
Title I,II, III, and IV Funding		$10,000	$40,000	$49,500
Total revenue		$3,139,900	$4,064,496	$5,019,293
Salaries & Benefits		$1,630,000	$2,098,625	$2,593,901
Facilities (building)		$285,182	$451,609	$623,472
Utilites		$75,000	$77,250	$79,568
Technology		$75,000	$96,563	$119,351
Professional services		$285,000	$285,000	$285,000
Professional Development		$11,250	$14,063	$16,875
Health Services		$5,000	$5,150	$5,305
Transportation		$50,000	$64,375	$79,568
Outdoor Programs/Gear		$100,000	$125,000	$150,000
Special Education		$200,000	$250,000	$300,000
Classroom Instruction/Curriculum		$102,500	$128,125	$153,750
Food Services		$250,000	$312,500	$375,000
Total Expenses		$3,068,932	$3,908,259	$4,781,788

Net Income	$70,968	$156,237	$237,504

Ratio Analysis

Net Income Available for Debt Service	$356,150	$607,846	$860,976
Debt Service coverage Ratio	1.25	1.35	1.38
Debt Burden	9%	11%	12%
Salary Burden	52%	52%	52%

Service Category	Estimated Annual Cost	Notes
Legal Services	15000	Board counsel, compliance, contract review
Audit & Accounting	70000	Annual audit, payroll services
HR & Staffing Services	25000	Recruitment, benefits, HR compliance
IT Support & Network Services	40000	Help desk, network maintenance
Curriculum & Instructional Design	30000	Curriculum design and assessments
Facilities & Operations Consulting	0	Lease negotiation, operations setup
Grant Management & Development	10000	Grant writing and development strategy
Marketing & Communications	25000	Branding, outreach, website
Translation & SPED/504 Consulting	20000	Special education, translation compliance
Insurance	50000	
Total	285000	

Position	Number of Staff (Min)	Number of Staff (Max)	Founders Stipend	Starting Salary for Certified	Contracted School Days
Principal	1	1	1,000 after year one	All Teaching Staff starting 50,000	153-160
Assistant Principal	2	2	1,000 each year up to 5 to 10 years if budget allows	**Bachelors**	
Counselor		1		50,000 year 1 (year 2+ additional money TBD)	
Administrative Assistant		1	**SPED Stipend:**	**Master's**	
Superintendent	1	1	2,000	53,000 year 1 (year 2+ additional money TBD)	
IT Support		1		**Non-certified teachers working towards certification**	
Nurse	1	1		Max 3 years to recieve cerification	
Accountant		1			
SPED Teacher	1	1		**Classified Salary**	
Paraprofessional		2		Accountant/Finance	60,000
ELA Teacher	3	4		HR	Contracted ?
Math Teacher	3	4		Paraprofessional	30,000
Science Teacher	3	4		Nurse	50,000
Social Studies	3	4		IT Specialist	60,000
Art Teacher	1	1		Office Manager/PR(Social Media)	50,000
Music Teacher	1	1		Front Office/Attendance Secretary	$20 per hour
Physical Education Teacher	1	1		Facilities Coordinator	60,000
Human Resources		1		Counselor	60,000
Foreign Language	1	1		Principal	80,000
				Assistant Principal	75,000
				Superintendent	85,000

Estimated Budget for AOA Year 1

Superindendent	1		$85,000.00	
Principal	1		$80,000.00	
Assistant Principal	2		$150,000.00	
Counselor		60000		
Facilities Coordinator		50000		
IT Support		50000		
Nurse	1		$50,000.00	
Accountant		60000		
SPED Teacher	0.5		$55,000.00	
Paraprofessional		30000		
ELA Teacher	3		$165,600.00	
Math Teacher	3		$165,600.00	
Science Teacher	3		$165,600.00	
Social Studies	3		$165,600.00	
Art Teacher	0.5		$55,200.00	
Music Teacher	0.5		$55,200.00	
Physical Education Teacher	0.5		$55,200.00	
Human Resources		60000		
Foreign Language	1		$55,200.00	
Office Manager/PR(Social Media)	1		$60,000.00	
Administrative Assistant				
Facilities (building)			$285,182.00	
Utliites			$75,000.00	
Technology			$75,000.00	
Professional Development			$11,250.00	
Health Services			$5,000.00	
Transportation			$50,000.00	
Outdoor Programs/Gear			$100,000.00	
Special Education			$200,000.00	
Classroom Instruction/Curriculum			$102,500.00	
Food Services			$250,000.00	
Total			$2,933,260.00	

Possible State Funding Per Pupil

Per student		300		
$8100 (Foundation)		2,430,000		
$375 (ELL) (50 students)		18750		
$37.50 (PD)		11250		
$1103 (Enhanced Student Achieving)		330,900		
$1130 (NSLA Funding/Lunch)		339,000		
Title I,II, III, and IV Funding		10000		
		3,139,900		
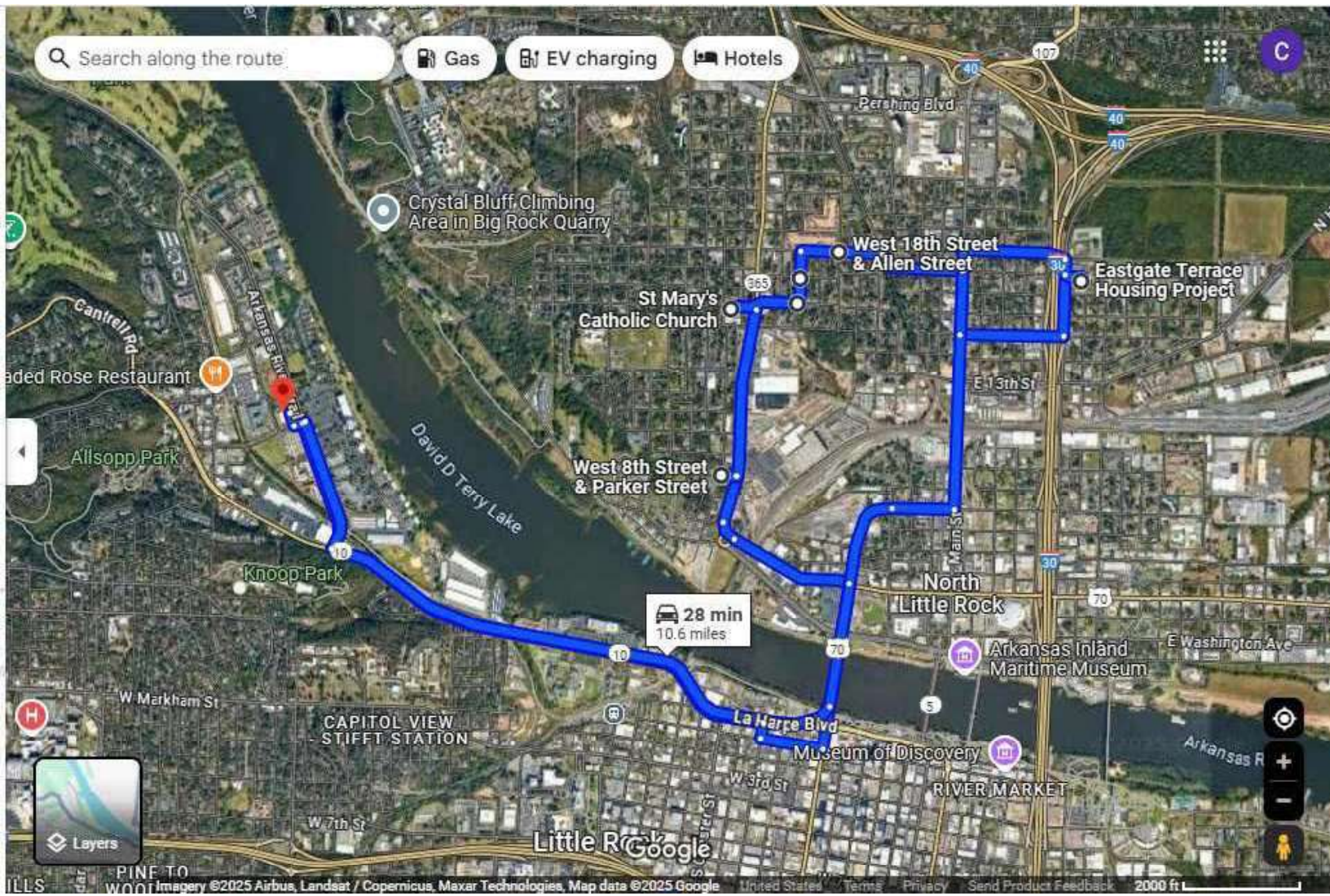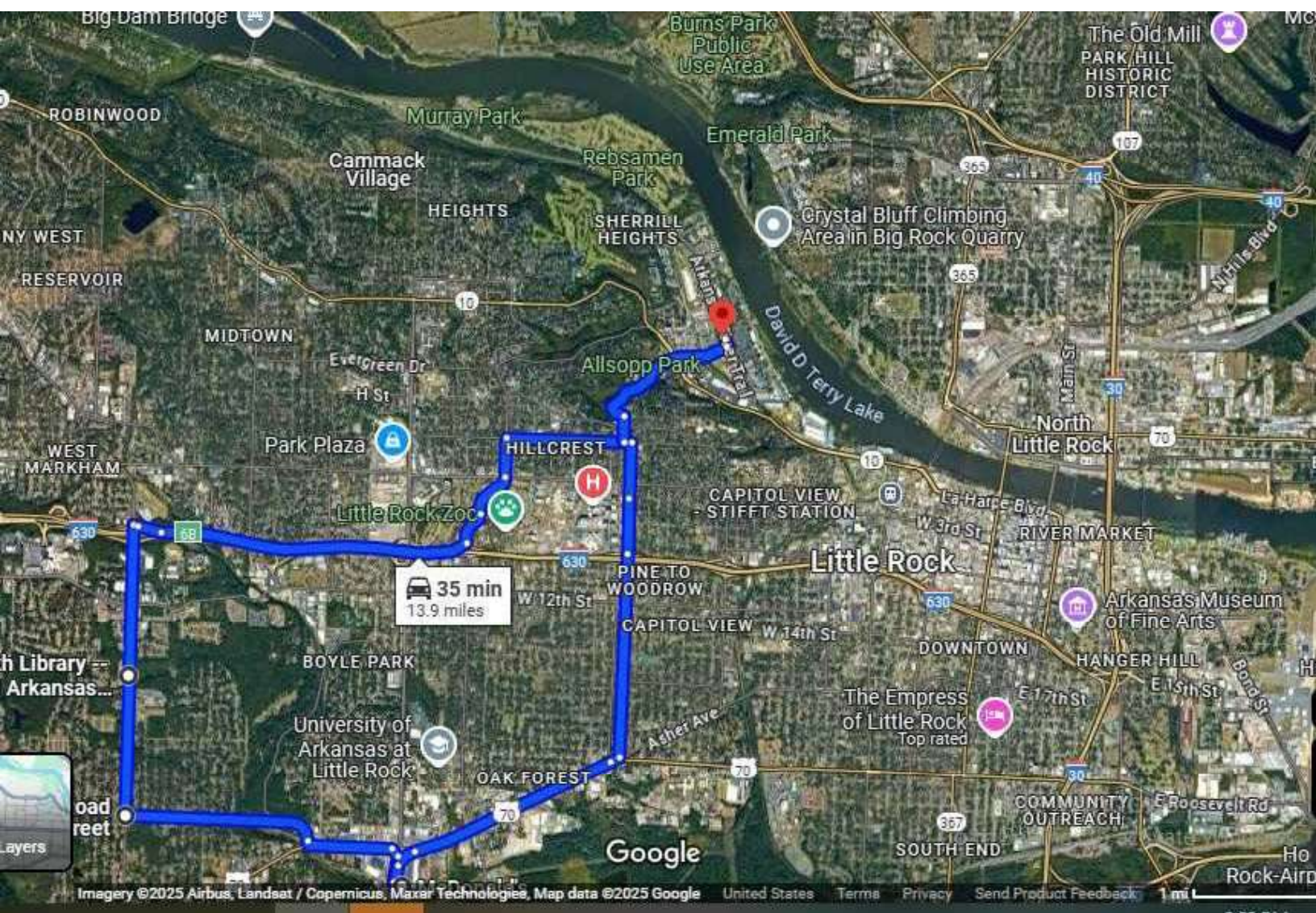
Outdoor Learning Costs and Considerations

Equipment & Materials for Outdoor Instruction

To deliver a high-quality, outdoor-integrated curriculum, AOA will invest in durable materials suitable for all seasons and learning activities.

- Fieldwork Kits (measuring tapes, clipboards, GPS units, hand lenses, weather sensors)
  - Estimated startup: $500–$1,000 per kit/classroom
- Outdoor Science & STEM Materials (soil/water testing kits, microscopes, solar panels)
  - Estimated annual replenishment: $3,000–$7,500
- Gear for Teachers & Students (tarps, waterproof clipboards, storage tubs, rain gear loaners)
  - Estimated startup: $7,500–$10,000

Staff Training and Safety

Outdoor learning demands additional training in supervision, risk mitigation, and environmental education:

- Professional Development in Outdoor Instruction
  - Annual budget: $5,000–$8,000 for team trainings, certifications (Project WILD, Leave No Trace, CPR/First Aid)
- Risk Management Protocols
  - Weather monitoring systems
  - Emergency action plans for outdoor excursions

Seasonal and Climate Considerations

AOA is located in a region with hot summers, wet springs, and mild winters. Planning ensures that outdoor instruction remains safe and effective year-round:

- Schedule Adjustments: Mornings used for outdoor activities in warmer months; indoor rotations during storms or extreme heat.
- Shelter Access: Every outdoor space will be within a 2–3 minute walk from indoor shelter or covered area.
- Clothing Equity: Loaner gear (jackets, boots, hats) available to ensure all students can participate regardless of economic background.

Transportation for Off-Site Outdoor Learning

AOA will engage students in off-campus fieldwork and environmental projects beginning Year 1. Costs include:

- Entry Fees & Permits (state parks, outdoor labs, public land use)
  - Estimated annual cost: $2,000–$4,000

AOA will pursue partnerships with state and local agencies (e.g., Arkansas Game & Fish, Audubon Society) to reduce costs through fee waivers or collaborative programming.

Maintenance & Sustainability

To maintain quality and safety over time:

- Annual Inspections & Repairs: Outdoor structures and equipment will undergo formal review each summer.
  - Maintenance Reserve: $5,000 annually
- Student Stewardship Model: Environmental service and site maintenance are built into student projects, reducing labor costs and reinforcing ownership of the learning environment.

Contingency Plan: Under-Enrollment, Delayed Funding & Reserve Fund Strategy

Arkansas Outdoor Academy

To ensure uninterrupted operations and fiscal resilience in its early years, Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) has adopted a contingency plan that addresses risks associated with under-enrollment and delayed state or federal funding, anchored by a dedicated reserve fund strategy.

1. Foundational Budgeting Assumptions

- AOA's annual budgets are built using minimum enrollment projections (not anticipated or maximum enrollment).
- No essential functions (e.g., salaries, facilities, academic programming) rely on variable income such as grants, donations, or fundraising.
- Budgets include only guaranteed revenue sources, such as state foundation funding, SPED allocations, and transportation reimbursements.

2. Reserve Fund Strategy

To prepare for funding interruptions or unexpected costs, AOA will maintain a designated Operating Reserve Fund with the following specifications:

A. Reserve Fund Purpose

- Ensure continuity of operations during temporary revenue disruptions.
- Support emergency responses to events such as delayed payments, facility issues, or economic downturns.
- Provide a cushion for enrollment-related funding shortfalls in the early years of operation.

B. Reserve Fund Target

- Maintain 5%–10% of the total annual operating budget in unrestricted reserves at all times.
- In Year 1, this reserve will be funded through start-up capital and will grow as annual revenue increases.

C. Fund Use Policy

- Reserve funds may be used only with Board approval, except in critical emergencies requiring immediate action by the Superintendent with retroactive board reporting.
- Permissible uses include:
    - Payroll during revenue delays
    - Facility repairs or safety-related needs
    - Utility costs or essential vendor payments
    - Costs associated with short-term enrollment drops

D. Replenishment Plan

- Any drawdown from the reserve fund will trigger a Board-approved replenishment timeline, typically within 6–12 months.
- Replenishment may occur through:
    - Budget reallocations
    - Year-end savings
    - Carryforward from unspent funds

3. Under-Enrollment Contingency Actions

If student enrollment falls below minimum budget targets (e.g., <200 students in Year 1):

A. Tiered Staffing Implementation

- Only essential instructional and support staff will be hired initially.
- Elective teachers, paraprofessionals, and non-core positions will be hired in phases as enrollment levels are confirmed.

B. Discretionary Spending Adjustments

- Delay or cancel optional purchases (e.g., non-essential technology, enrichment programs, extra-curriculars).
- Re-negotiate vendor contracts based on actual student numbers (e.g., food service, transportation).

C. Scenario-Based Budgeting

- Leadership will develop alternative budget scenarios ("Plan A/B") by July each year.
- If enrollment falls short by the first 10-day count, a modified budget will be presented to the board for approval.

4. Delayed Funding Contingency Actions

If disbursement of public funds is delayed:

A. Reserve Fund Utilization

- The Operating Reserve Fund will be the first line of protection, covering all critical costs without borrowing or disruption.

B. Spending Freeze

- Temporary halt on non-essential expenditures (PD, travel, new contracts, supplies) until funding is received.

C. Short-Term Liquidity Access

- AOA will establish a line of credit or revolving loan agreement with a community financial institution.
    - Used only if reserve levels are inadequate or timing requires liquidity beyond 60 days.
    - Terms will be reviewed annually by the Finance Committee.

5. Oversight & Transparency

- Monthly finance committee meetings will review cash flow, enrollment trends, and fund balance.
- Quarterly reporting to the Board includes reserve levels, contingency actions (if triggered), and budget-to-actuals.
- Annual independent audit will verify reserve compliance and fiscal health.
- Reserve fund levels and usage will be posted in public financial summaries in accordance with Ark. Code Ann. §6-23-306.

Student Services and Special Populations

Arkansas Outdoor Academy (AOA) is committed to identifying, evaluating, and appropriately placing students with disabilities in the most inclusive and effective learning environments. The school will ensure that all special education (SPED) services are delivered in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Arkansas Department of Education guidelines. AOA's educational model integrates inclusive practices into both indoor and outdoor learning spaces, ensuring that students with exceptional needs have full access to meaningful instruction and support.

Staffing Structure for Student Support Services

In Year 1, AOA will staff a dedicated and scalable student services team, including:

- **Full-Time Special Education Coordinator**
  Oversees compliance, evaluations, IEP development, service delivery, and acts as the primary liaison with families and agencies.
- **SPED Teacher**
  Provide both push-in and pull-out services, co-plan with general education staff, and support outdoor and indoor instruction.
- **ELL/ESL Specialist**
  Delivers structured English language development and sheltered instruction aligned to WIDA standards.
- **Part-Time Gifted & Talented Liaison**
  Coordinates differentiation for advanced learners and Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs).
- **Paraprofessionals**
  Support Tier 2/3 interventions, mobility assistance, and behavioral/sensory needs, indoors and outdoors.
- **Counselors and Mental Health Staff**
  Deliver trauma-informed, behavioral coaching, and family support services.

Identification and Evaluation Process

AOA will implement a proactive Child Find system to locate, identify, and evaluate all students who may have a disability:

- Universal Screenings conducted at enrollment and periodically during the year using academic, behavioral, and SEL benchmarks.

- Referral Process that allows teachers, parents, or staff to initiate formal SPED evaluations at any time.
- Early Childhood Collaboration with local agencies to support smooth transitions for students entering from early intervention programs.
- Multilingual Family Communication to ensure access and understanding for all families throughout the process.

Evaluation Timeline & Procedure

All evaluations will follow state-mandated timelines and incorporate multiple data sources:

- **Within 10 days of a signed referral:** Evaluation plan developed
- **Within 60 calendar days**: Full comprehensive evaluation completed
- **Within 30 days**: IEP meeting held if student is found eligible

Evaluations will be multidisciplinary and culturally responsive, incorporating classroom data, standardized assessments, outdoor learning observations, and family input.

Eligibility Determination & IEP Development

For each student found eligible for special education services:

- A personalized Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed that addresses both academic and functional needs.
- Supports will reflect the dual nature of AOA's setting, including:

    - Outdoor-specific accommodations, such as mobility tools, sensory stations, or adaptive materials
    - Instructional supports, such as visual aids, chunking, and alternate formats
    - Related services (speech, OT/PT, counseling) integrated into the natural learning environment where appropriate

IEPs will be designed by a Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team and reviewed annually.

Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

AOA will ensure that all students with disabilities are placed in the least restrictive environment appropriate for their individual needs:

- **General Education with Accommodations**: Most students will learn alongside their peers in both classroom and outdoor settings.

- **Push-In Services**: SPED staff will provide support directly within general education and field-based instruction.
- **Pull-Out Services**: Used when students have therapy services or other needed supports they are required to have.
- **Specialized Outdoor Instruction**: Nature-based therapy or adaptive field learning for students needing structured environments.

MTSS & SPED Referrals

AOA's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is designed to address academic and behavioral challenges early and systematically. However:

- MTSS will never be used to delay or deny a special education referral.
- Staff will be trained to recognize when a student's needs warrant evaluation, regardless of current Tier level.
- Referrals may be initiated by educators, parents, or service providers at any time and will follow IDEA timelines independently of MTSS.

Related Services: Delivery & Compliance

AOA will coordinate with licensed providers and regional education cooperatives to ensure full delivery of required services:

- **Speech-Language Therapy**: Delivered by certified SLPs both indoors and in structured outdoor settings.
- **Occupational/Physical Therapy (OT/PT)**: Delivered weekly on-site, with adaptations for outdoor implementation when appropriate.
- **Mental Health Counseling**: Offered by certified professionals through both IEP services and MTSS tiered supports.

All related services will be tracked using a SPED management platform (e.g., eSchool), with ongoing documentation of:

- Service minutes
- Goal progress
- Communication logs

Annual IEP reviews and triennial reevaluations will ensure compliance and appropriate placement.

Supports for Students with Complex Needs

AOA is fully committed to serving students with significant academic, behavioral, or physical needs. The school will:

- Develop Individualized Risk or Safety Plans as needed
  Ensure access to ADA-compliant trails, sensory zones, shaded and quiet regulation areas
- Provide 1:1 or 2:1 staffing ratios when determined necessary by the IEP team
- Offer daily check-ins, behavioral coaching, and SEL support
- Engage families and care teams in the development of Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs), Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs), or medical care plans

All students will be supported in ways that maintain their dignity, access, and ability to participate fully in AOA's outdoor, hands-on curriculum.

Family Engagement and Procedural Safeguards

AOA believes that families are essential partners in the success of students with disabilities. As such:

- Parents will be included at every stage of the identification, evaluation, and placement process
- All procedural safeguards will be provided in the family's preferred language
- AOA will offer training workshops and advocacy resources to support informed family participation
- The SPED Coordinator will serve as the central liaison for concerns, mediation, or due process if needed

Compliance Oversight

To maintain high levels of compliance and accountability:

- The SPED Coordinator will lead monthly compliance checks, internal audits, and data reviews
- The governing board will receive regular updates on service delivery, evaluations, and any disputes

All records will be maintained in secure digital systems and regularly reviewed for fidelity