



Act 1240 Digital Learning Waiver Request

Status: **Reviewed**

Nevada School District (5008000)

School Year 2021-2022

! New Digital Learning Waiver requests can not be created after May 1st. Existing drafts and revisions will continue to be reviewed.

Applications will be reviewed in the order received. Incomplete applications will be returned to the district.

A notification letter will be sent to the superintendent at the email address listed above upon approval by the Arkansas State Board of Education.

NOTE: The approved application must then be posted on the district website - State Required Information.

District:

LEA #: 5008000

Superintendent: Richard McAfee

Email: rick.mcafee@nevadasd.net

Phone: (870) 871-2418

Duration Requested (not to exceed five years): 5 Years
(School year 2021-2022 to 2026-2027)

The proposed waiver(s) will apply to the following schools:

LEA(s)	Grades/Courses	Interaction	Delivery	Platforms
5008014 - Nevada High School	7-12	Asynchronous	Virtual (Online) / Remote (Distance)	LMS CMS



Waivers

Waiver Topic	Standard for Accreditation	Division Rules	Arkansas Statutes	Indicate if the district is applying for the waiver and explain how the district waiver will be utilized.
Attendance			6-18-213(a)(2)	



Waiver Topic	Standard for Accreditation	Division Rules	Arkansas Statutes	Indicate if the district is applying for the waiver and explain how the district waiver will be utilized.
				<p>*This waiver would allow the district to create an attendance policy to monitor virtual students.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Virtual students will be considered present if they log on and complete all assignments on a daily basis. Students who fail to log on and submit assignments by the deadline for submission shall be considered absent for that day and the absence shall be unexcused. 2. Students who exceed the allowable number of excused absences shall be required to exit virtual learning and return to onsite classes. 3. Absences for virtual students will only be excused if a physician verifies in writing that the student was unable to complete assignments due to illness. Excuses must be original and signed by the physician. Photocopies or stamped signatures will not be accepted. 4. Virtual students shall adhere to the same attendance policies as on site students with regard to exemptions from semester exams.



Waiver Topic	Standard for Accreditation	Division Rules	Arkansas Statutes	Indicate if the district is applying for the waiver and explain how the district waiver will be utilized.
Class Size Number of students:	1-A.5	DESE Rules Governing Class Size and Teaching Load	6-17-812(a)(2)	A waiver for class size will not be needed. Virtual classes will have a limit not to exceed the rules governing class size.
Teaching Load Number of students:	1-A.5	DESE Rules Governing Class Size and Teaching Load	6-17-812	This waiver is not needed as 100% virtual instruction is considered “large group” instruction for 7-12. This waiver is not requested.
Teacher of Record provides virtual instruction to only students who are remote. Please note that 100% virtual (online) or remote (distance) classes are considered large group instruction courses as per DESE Rules for Distance and Digital Learning and teaching load would not apply as per DESE Rules Governing Class Size and Teaching Load.				
Six Hour Instructional Day (Waiver applies to virtual/remote students only)	1-A.4.2		6-16-102; 6-16-126	The district will need a six hour instructional day Waiver because school days or portions of days pertaining to virtual learners will have an instructional day less than 6 hours per day or 30 hours per week.
Clock Hours	1-A.2			The district will need Clock Hour Waiver because credit will be awarded on subject matter competency.



Waiver Topic	Standard for Accreditation	Division Rules	Arkansas Statutes	Indicate if the district is applying for the waiver and explain how the district waiver will be utilized.
Recess (Waiver applies to virtual/remote students only)	1-A.4.3	DESE Rules Governing Nutrition and Physical Activity Standards and Body Mass Index, Section 7.11	6-6-102(a)(5)	This waiver does not apply to 7-12. This waiver is not requested.

Digital Model

Please complete the following application with responses describing the school and district digital programming.

Interaction / Delivery

What are the ways teachers and students will interact with digital content (Synchronous or Asynchronous)? Please describe instructional expectations and participation for students.

7-12 Virtual Arkansas is a “high touch” virtual learning experience that harnesses the benefit of synchronous or “live” instruction married with aligned asynchronous courses. This allows for students and instructors to develop relationships, address needed “just-in-time” instruction, and flexibility with learning. At the High School level, students are provided the opportunity to attend two Zoom sessions per week, per content area, and request additional one to one Zoom sessions as needed. While Zoom sessions are not required, they are highly encouraged as empirical data has shown students who attend Zoom are shown to be more successful than students who do not attend Zoom. Students/teachers are also able to communicate 24/7 via the CANVAS LMS messaging or the SIS email system that is monitored by Virtual Arkansas. Students are expected to read and interact with messages in their courses on a daily basis during the school week. Nevada School District's virtual facilitator will monitor student progress and contact them via electronic mail or by phone to address concerns.



What delivery approach will the school or district utilize to meet the needs of both teachers and students (i.e., virtual (online) / remote (distance) or blended (hybrid)? Please explain.

All virtual students will be invited to participate in all field trips, academic competitions, and other special enrichment functions that occur in the brick and mortar. .

Grades 7-12 will utilize online virtual remote learning through Virtual Arkansas. Virtual Arkansas utilizes a synchronous and asynchronous approach or true blended model to online learning. Students will engage in their digital coursework through the CANVAS Learning Management System (LMS). Students will have opportunities to engage in synchronous learning through live scheduled Zoom meetings with their teacher. All learning will take place online.

Will teachers be dedicated to primarily remote instruction or serving in a dual role, teaching both remote and in-person learners?
Â *If teachers will serve in a dual role, describe whether it will be simultaneously, meaning remote and in-person at the same time with course/schedule specific considerations.

Grades 7-12 will be using Virtual Arkansas for its delivery of instruction for our 100% virtual students. Virtual Arkansas provides a fully certified Arkansas teacher of record while we provide the facilitator. Nevada School District employs 2 virtual facilitators who are certified teachers who also teach 1 on-site class. They will act as a liaison between the student and the teacher. Contact with the facilitator may be done via SIS email. Virtual Arkansas provides training and support for facilitators via the Facilitator Coordinator. This model is a true blended model with synchronous targeted instruction partnered with asynchronous course content and activities.

Describe the expectation for teacher instruction, interaction, and frequency with virtual students.

Grades 7-12
For students utilizing Virtual Arkansas courses, teachers actively monitor their courses, provide synchronous sessions and maintain regular communication via the LMS and SIS messaging systems. Each week teachers send a grade report to the student and parent/guardian, and initiate further contact with students demonstrating difficulties with course content. Students are highly encouraged but not required to attend all Zoom sessions. Teachers are continuously provided PD and support for providing engaging and relevant synchronous instruction.

If utilizing district waivers for **class size**, what supports will the district put in place to support the teacher and students? How will the district monitor and determine if the supports are adequate for teachers who exceed class size in digital learning settings?

No waivers for class size are being requested.



If utilizing district waivers for **teaching load**, what supports will the district put in place to support the teacher and students? How will the district monitor and determine if the supports are adequate for teachers who exceed teaching loads in digital learning settings?

7-12 Virtual Arkansas partners with schools to ensure student success. In cases where districts are using Virtual Arkansas, teacher training and support is solely the responsibility of Virtual Arkansas. Partnership with the schools regarding providing a facilitator and communication back and forth pertaining to students is an ongoing part of the support expected in this model (synchronous/asynchronous) of instruction.

Technology / Platforms

Identify the learning management system/content management system that schools and districts will use? (Canvas, Buzz, Google Classroom, etc.)

The Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) will be utilized through Virtual Arkansas (Grades 7-12).

Describe the digital content that will be available to students, including any digital curriculum and supports that are available to teachers. If the district is using a content management system (CMS), please specify grades levels and subjects that the CMS will address.

7-12 Virtual Arkansas courses are designed and written by subject matter experts (SME's) and who are Arkansas Certified teachers. Virtual Arkansas courses and content are designed and developed using the Arkansas State Standards, Quality Matters standards, and the National Standards of Quality of Online Courses as their foundation. This process includes an internal review of the courses by Quality Matters certified online course reviewers. Courses are designed to be fully ready for student interaction and teachers have all the content needed to effectively provide support and instruction to students.

What video communication software is required for any remote student? Please describe the video communication software the teacher will use to facilitate live conferences between two or more participants.

7-12 Students will be utilizing Zoom video conferencing software to participate in synchronous learning sessions with their teacher. The Zoom software is downloaded to the district provided device. The Virtual Arkansas teacher will utilize Zoom to facilitate synchronous sessions with students during scheduled Zoom sessions during the week. The Zoom link and Zoom schedule is placed in a common location within each course.

Describe the technology access (device and connectivity) that will be provided to each digital learning student to ensure each student receives a free public education.

Each 100% virtual student will be assigned a district device. Students who do not have reliable internet service may apply for a district-issued hotspot. Wi-Fi will be available on each campus in posted areas. Nevada School District will provide technical support to students who need assistance.



Student Supports

Describe the manner and frequency the district or school will use to monitor the wellness and safety (food security, physical, mental health, etc.) of students in a total remote setting. (This may be in-person, video communication, etc.). Identify supports available to assist students within the district.

7-12 Virtual Arkansas teachers are trained to employ actions and behaviors to ensure the physical and mental health of students. Virtual Arkansas uses a variety of methods of communication to do this and partners with schools to ensure students are cared for. When a situation arises where intervention is determined to be needed beyond what can be done virtually, Virtual Arkansas will contact the partnering school including the facilitator and counselor to step in to provide intervention. Virtual Arkansas teachers are trained to report any suspected maltreatment/abuse to the Department of Health Services. Additionally, Virtual Arkansas provides ongoing professional development to their teachers to support SEL strategies.

Describe the manner and frequency the district or school will use to monitor the academic and student engagement in a virtual setting. Describe the additional supports available for students struggling with engagement.

7-12 virtual facilitators have access to the Virtual Arkansas SIS and the CANVAS LMS to monitor students in real time. Virtual Arkansas teachers will initiate intervention when a teacher determines a student isn't actively engaging or successfully mastering the content. In cases where needed, Virtual Arkansas will involve the partnering school through the facilitator, first. Virtual Arkansas will contact administrators if the initial intervention is not successful. Since enrollment and continued enrollment is elective, students may be required to return to on-site instruction if student expectations, such as a quality internet connection, are not met. The District virtual facilitator will be the first contact for any matters related to school-supplied technology.

Describe the Academic Response to Intervention plan for remote (virtual) students, including additional supports and personnel.

7-12 Virtual Arkansas teachers have been trained to identify and intervene with immediacy when a student is determined to not be successful. They are trained to deliver Tier 1 and 2 interventions and, if those are not successful, reach out to the partnering school regarding additional Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions. Virtual Arkansas also has a PLC structure designed to address intervention with targeted intervention meetings that occur in the 4th and 7th weeks of the 9 weeks.



Describe the district or school's formative assessment plan to support student learning.

7-12 Virtual Arkansas courses have periodic formative assessments, checks for understanding, and pre-tests to determine students' mastery of learning throughout the modules of a course that are aligned to the summative module assessments. There are varied methods of assessment utilized both through the asynchronous course with open ended discussions/assessments, choice response activities, multiple choice, and hybrid assessments(open ended and multiple choice). Teachers also use weekly live Zoom meetings to do informal formative checks to ensure clarity for students on asynchronous learning tasks.

Describe how dyslexia screening and services will be provided to digital learning students.

7-12 Virtual Arkansas provides accessibility tools to support students with dyslexia including ReadSpeaker that will read any text in the course to students. Virtual Arkansas will provide the needed accommodations/modifications per the individual 504 plan uploaded into the SIS by partnering school. The district will ensure all requirements of the dyslexia law are met for on-site and remote learners.

Describe how Gifted and Talented supports and services will be provided to digital learning students.

Grades 7-12

All current Virtual Arkansas teachers have been trained with the GT Secondary Course Content training and have support for gifted learners provided within the course as well as a representation of those learning offerings for documentation for partnering schools. New hires will also be expected to attain this training if they do not already have it. Additionally, Virtual Arkansas provides student perception surveys sent out each semester asking for student feedback on their learning experience. A parent perceptions survey will be conducted as well. Teachers are also encouraged to do informal surveys with students regarding the course learning experience throughout the year.

Describe how English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL / ESL) supports and services will be provided to digital learning students.

7-12 Virtual Arkansas provides accessibility tools to support ESOL/ESL and will provide the needed accommodations/modifications per the individual LEP uploaded into the SIS by partnering schools. The district will ensure LPAC requirements for virtual learners.



Describe how all Special Education services and supports will be provided to digital learning students, including the process for special education evaluations and conferences.

Virtual Arkansas teachers will provide information for evaluations and conferences when requested. School district will upload the modification/accommodation sheet to the Student Information System (SIS) within the first 10 days of school or enrollment if enrollment occurs after school begins. Virtual Arkansas courses are designed in such a way that all applicable accommodations/modifications can be met in the course in conjunction with services provided by the partnering school.

Describe common and frequently used digital accommodations that the district or school has provided to general education teachers to assist students in digital learning classes.

Digital accommodations include but are not limited to: digital copies of notes, text to speech embedded in the learning platform, internet browser text reader, extended time on assignments, flexible assignments, and adaptive intervention resources.

Teacher Supports

Describe district and school supports to provide on-going digital content and instructional supports for teachers.

Grades 7-12 will be utilizing Virtual Arkansas as our digital content and digital instruction solution. Virtual Arkansas provides robust online teacher training and development for all new teachers entering the field of online teaching. All Virtual Arkansas teachers are provided both directed/scheduled and embedded professional development activities, book studies, and weekly collaborative teams. Virtual Arkansas provides a team of instructional and digital content experts for just-in-time support for all teachers. Virtual Arkansas also has a team of technology support specialists to assist with any technology issues.

Identify the daily or weekly amount of time teachers will need to develop and plan for instruction based on options selected and digital supports provided. How will the district support teachers with digital content and planning?

Grades 7-12 will be utilizing Virtual Arkansas for our digital content and digital instruction solution. Virtual Arkansas teachers will utilize curriculum developed by Arkansas subject matter experts (SME's) aligned to Arkansas standards. Schools will provide a facilitator or facilitators, depending upon the number of students, to aid Virtual Arkansas teachers as they provide instruction to the students. Virtual Arkansas will provide training to the partnering school's facilitator(s) and ongoing support to facilitator(s) through Virtual Arkansas' Facilitator Coordinator.

District Supports



Describe how the district will ensure equitable access to opportunities for success for digital learner's needs (poverty, homelessness, migrant, foster care, and military connected students) A link (URL) to the district equity plan may be acceptable if it meets this criteria.

The local school/district will provide all appropriate testing and support services for qualifying students. The virtual teachers will provide the appropriate testing data, classroom instructional services (as outlined by the appropriate documentation, ie, the IEP), and accommodations as necessary.

All students are expected to test (statewide summative assessments) onsite as per DESE guidance. Provide an overview of how the district may communicate to parents and test digital learning students at a district site.

Virtual Arkansas requires trained proctors for major assessments. Nevada School District 's plan for students to take proctored assessments includes: Students will contact one of Nevada's facilitators on behalf of Virtual Arkansas and schedule a day and time for the student to take any required proctored assessments on campus. The facilitator will attempt contact with parents (if student is a minor child) and notify them with as much advanced notice as possible to ensure the student will be able to be transported for on-site testing. If students and/or parents at any time refuse to comply with on-site testing, students will be required to return to on-site instruction full-time or withdraw from the district.

Provide a detailed explanation of how the district will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the digital option(s) and the fidelity of implementation as described within this application.

7-12 Virtual Arkansas provides the partnering school with access to the SIS and CANVAS LMS. Facilitators are trained to pull grades from the SIS weekly to monitor student progress. Additionally, parents can access student grades through the Canvas App. Teachers send weekly reports via the SIS messaging that is sent to both student and parent email.

We will use statewide summative assessment data to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the digital options. The district's digital facilitator will monitor student achievement on a daily basis to check for the timely completion of assignments/assessments. The facilitator will contact the students to determine the cause. No contact with student by the facilitator or failure of the student to correct the deficiencies will be reported to the principal and Virtual Arkansas. The digital facilitator will share student achievement data with the high school leadership team every four weeks.



Describe how the teacher(s) will engage families into the digital learning process. (District may link the District Engagement Plan if digital learning is included. The plan must address how the district will support parents/students with digital tools and resources)

7-12 Virtual Arkansas provides parent/guardian informational webinars throughout the school year for families of students in Virtual Arkansas courses. Virtual Arkansas teachers communicate course and grade updates weekly to parents/guardians with provided email addresses. Parents/guardians are also given access to the Parent Canvas App which allows them to monitor their students activity and grades within the course. Family engagement is highly valued and encouraged throughout the year by providing regular Virtual Arkansas updates, emails from teachers, just in time meetings at the local level, and up to date information on the Virtual Arkansas website, including the Virtual Arkansas Parent Guide.

The district uses an "all-call" system to inform parents/students of important information. We also communicate with parents using email, phone calls, or text messages using Remind 101. Parents and students are required to attend a meeting prior to the start of the regular school year to receive information/training. They will receive the district's digital instructional facilitator's contact information, a Chromebook and a hotspot, if needed. The digital instructional facilitator will contact students regarding their assignments weekly at a minimum. A student who is failing a course may be returned to on-site instruction at any time.

Provide the URL to evidence of the local school board's approval of the waiver request(s).

<https://www.nevadaschooldistrict.net/April%202021%20reg%20and%20special>

Provide a URL to evidence of stakeholder feedback regarding the waiver request(s) and the district communication plan regarding digital learning program(s).

<https://forms.gle/jxciYMr0YT56SjPi6> (Parent Survey); <https://docs.google.com/sq>

Policies

Please provide a link (URL) to the attendance policy for digital learning students.

https://www.nevadaschooldistrict.net/Digital_Virtual%20Learning%20Attendan

Please provide a link (URL) to the discipline policy for digital learning students.

7-12 Virtual Arkansas students are expected to adhere to our local district discipl

Please provide a link (URL) to the grading policy for digital learning students.

7-12 Virtual Arkansas provides a grading policy to the local school district and stu



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