



Act 1240 Digital Learning Waiver Request

Status: **Submitted to ADE DESE**

Fort Smith School District (6601000)

School Year 2021-2022

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 #: 6601000
Superintendent: Terrence Morawski
Email: tmorawsk@fortsmithschools.org
Phone: (479) 785-2501 Ext. 1201
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
6601014 - Albert Pike Elementary School 6601002 - Barling Elementary School 6601006 - Bonneville Elementary School 6601008 - Cavanaugh Elementary School 6601031 - Elmer H. Cook Elementary School 6601010 - Fairview Elementary School 6601011 - Howard Elementary School 6601020 - L. A. Chaffin Jr. High School 6601012 - Raymond F. Orr Elem. School 6601017 - Sunnymede Elementary School 6601019 - Trusty Elementary School 6601021 - William O. Darby Jr. High Sch.	K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Asynchronous Synchronous	Virtual (Online) / Remote (Distance)	LMS
6601001 - Ballman Elementary School 6601005 - Belle Point Alternative Center 6601007 - Carnall Elementary School 6601022 - Dora Kimmons Jr. High School 6601033 - Euper Lane Elementary School 6601030 - Harry C. Morrison Elementary School 6601029 - John P. Woods Elementary School 6601023 - Ramsey Junior High School 6601016 - Spradling Elementary School 6601018 - Sutton Elementary School 6601032 - Tilles Elementary School 6601003 - Beard Elementary School				



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)	Given the nature & intent of a self-paced learning environment, and given the perpetual availability of the online curriculum, FSPS will need the flexibility to enter attendance based on student engagement, synchronous and/or asynchronous, each day.
Class Size Number of students:	1-A.5	DESE Rules Governing Class Size and Teaching Load	6-17-812(a)(2)	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.
Teaching Load Number of students:	1-A.5	DESE Rules Governing Class Size and Teaching Load	6-17-812	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.
<p>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.</p>				



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.
Six Hour Instructional Day (Waiver applies to virtual/remote students only)	1-A.4.2		6-16-102; 6-16-126	<p>Students will have some control over time, place, and pace in the Pearson Connexus virtual option. The district and Pearson Connexus will work with students and parents to ensure engagement in the flexible environment. The instructional day 9will be measured through student engagement and mastery of content.</p>
Clock Hours	1-A.2			<p>Students will have some control over time, place, and pace in the Pearson Connexus virtual option. The district and Pearson Connexus will work with students and parents to ensure engagement in the flexible environment. The instructional day will be measured through student engagement and mastery of content.</p>



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)	FSPS understands the importance of Physical Activity and Nutrition. The district remains committed to providing K-5 students with opportunities through the virtual Health & PE course. This waiver supports the flexibility needed by the virtual option to meet its academic goals.

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.

Asynchronous: Self-paced through the Pearson Connexus platform. The expectation for students is satisfactory completion (70%/"C" average) on weekly activities or defined minimum amounts of time spent in the platform based on grade level:
 K-2: 20 hours per week
 3-5: 25 hours per week
 6-8: 30 hours per week
 K-8: Synchronous: K-8 Teachers will hold Live Lessons, small groups & inter via video-conference and be available for virtual office hours. Video recordings will be posted for asynchronous access to teacher instruction and tutorials. Student participation in some synchronous activities will be required while others will be optional but highly encouraged.



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.

The district will utilize a Virtual/Remote delivery approach. Content and activities, including other digital programs, will be available and accessed through the Pearson Connexus platform. Students will be required to attend at least one live session via Zoom each week in each core content course. Additional Zooms will be offered in all content areas and may be required in some cases based on student mastery of objectives. Live Zooms in elective/specialty courses will be offered one time per week. Recordings of live sessions will be posted for asynchronous access.

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.

Core teachers will be dedicated primarily to remote instruction. Elective/specialty teachers will be either be assigned to virtual as itinerants or contracted as part-time and will be primarily remote instruction outside of traditional school hours. Some high school credit courses will be available for 8th grade students and will be primarily self-paced through Pearson Connexus with part-time contracted teachers of record.

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

The district will utilize a Virtual/Remote delivery approach. Content and activities, including other digital programs, will be available and accessed through the Pearson Connexus platform. Students will be required to attend at least one live session via Zoom each week in each core content course. Additional Zooms will be offered in all content areas and may be required in some cases based on student mastery of objectives. Live Zooms in elective/specialty courses will be offered one time per week. Recordings of live sessions will be posted for asynchronous access. Small group sessions will be offered throughout the week in all core content areas. Attendance may be required for students who have demonstrated difficulty in mastering skills. Students who fail to attend required sessions and/or demonstrate mastery of skills may be removed from the Virtual Option.

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?

An educational team of administrators, counselors, curriculum specialists & interventionists will offer assistance based on identified needs of teachers and/or students. The district will also utilize district personnel & resources (interventionists, SPED, ELL, etc) to monitor the progress of students and make adjustments as needed.



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?

An educational team of administrators, counselors, curriculum specialists & interventionists will offer assistance based on identified needs of teachers and/or students. The district will also utilize district personnel & resources (interventionists, SPED, ELL, etc) to monitor the progress of students and make adjustments as needed.

Technology / Platforms

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

Pearson Connexus (Buzz)

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.

Pearson Connexus, an approved AR digital provider. Teachers will also integrate district/state-approved digital resources & tools.

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.

Zoom and/or Google Meet.

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 student will have a district-issued chromebook. Students who do not have reliable internet may apply for a district-provided hotspot. Wi-Fi is also available on each campus in posted areas.

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.

Students will continue to have access to grab and go meals at their local campuses daily. Counselors have developed and will implement a Comprehensive Counseling Plan to address any social-emotional, mental health or food safety needs. Teachers will receive training in what signs to watch for to ensure the wellness and safety of students. The district Homeless Coordinator and Student Services department will provide support to assist students and families in need. District Social Workers & Resource Officers will be available to conduct home visits and welfare checks.



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.

Teachers will monitor grades and attendance on a weekly basis. Coordinators & administrators will also monitor student progress, both academic & engagement, and assist in contacting students & families to identify barriers and solutions. District personnel will be available to contact students and families via email, phone, video-conference and home visits to promote engagement. An educational team of administrators, counselors, curriculum specialists & interventionists will offer assistance based on identified needs of teachers and/or students. The district will also utilize district personnel & resources (interventionists, SPED, ELL, etc) to monitor the progress of students and make adjustments as needed.

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

Teachers are trained to identify and intervene when students are not successful in the program. Teachers will monitor progress and provide small-group interventions each week through targeted Zoom sessions for small groups or individual students. District personnel, including Dyslexia Interventionists, Title I Instructional Specialists, Special Education teachers and ELL teachers, will provide additional interventions and resources as students demonstrate a need for Tier II and Tier III assistance. Teachers and administrators will review progress and engagement every 4 ½ weeks and conference with students and families who are struggling to make a plan for success and discuss solutions and alternatives.

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



LEA INSIGHTS

Pearson courses have periodic formative assessments, checks for understanding, and pre-tests to determine students' mastery of learning throughout the modules of the courses that are aligned to the summative module assessments. There are varied methods of assessment utilized with open-ended discussions/assessments, choice response activities, multiple-choice, hybrid assessments (open-ended and multiple choice), and project-based assessments.

Teachers also use live zoom sessions to do informal checks to ensure clarity for students on asynchronous learning tasks. The Istation can be used as a formative assessment for K-6th grade students. Students are able to access the assessment each month. Since it is our K-2 state assessment, parents will need to participate in a test security meeting and return a signed document before the September assessment is administered. The 2nd Istation state testing window is during the month of January.

Periodic formative assessments may be taken remotely once parents participate in a security testing meeting and return a signed document.

Virtual teachers will collaborate weekly to review progress, coordinate curriculum with state & district objectives and develop common formative assessments to guide instruction.



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

The district will provide dyslexia screening and intervention as needed for all students, no matter if they are on-site or fully virtual. Students in dyslexia screening grades will be brought to campus to conduct the screenings along with any other screeners that the district needs for each student. If a student is completely unable to come to campus, the dyslexia screener will be conducted virtually by our Dyslexia Interventionist. If a need for dyslexia screening is determined for a virtual student in non-screened grade levels, the local educational team and Dyslexia interventionist will schedule on-site screenings for those students, with virtual screenings also being available for students that cannot get to campus. Any virtual student qualifying for dyslexia services will receive services from a district dyslexia interventionist. Our local building 504 coordinators are responsible for submitting all individualized 504 plans for students to the FS Virtual Option administrator and/or 504 coordinator or their teachers to utilize all of the modifications for each student on a 504 plan, whether it be for dyslexia or any other reason. Additionally, virtual students who qualify for dyslexia services will receive zoom interventions through our Dyslexia Interventionist using our dyslexia reading program to provide dyslexia services. Moreover, if any virtual students requiring dyslexia services want to receive just those services on campus in addition to their virtual schedule, they would be allowed to do so.

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

All GT standards will be followed when designing programming for identified gifted students with all GT policies of the Fort Smith School District followed for virtual students. All 2nd grade virtual students will complete the district's universal screener remotely on the same timeline as on-site students. Additional screening and evaluation will take place remotely when possible or will be scheduled individually through the District GT Coordinator. For grades 3-5, fully virtual GT students will have the option to participate in on-site GT classes with the campus GT teacher or participate in virtual GT classes with the building GT teacher through Zoom and Schoology. For grades 6-8, virtual students may choose to attend a GT class on campus daily or be enrolled in one or more GT classes in the Pearson Connexus platform.



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

Fort Smith School District will work with ESOL/ESL students to ensure the provisions of their LPAC plan requirements are met. Licensed teachers and trained paraprofessionals—under the supervision of teachers—work with students to increase their language skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Professional development is provided for teachers and paras to support the language development and academic needs of English language learners. In addition, support is provided for the parents to be fully engaged in their child's education by providing them with training, information, and translation services through Cafecitos and Family Literacy.

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

Special Education services and supports for digital learning students are provided through TeachTown and Unique Learning Systems for students in a self-contained type setting. Resource students Zoom with SPED teachers to receive their academic services. Occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech language therapy are done via Zoom unless the student and parent feel comfortable coming to school for these services. Evaluations are scheduled with the parent to bring their child to our office for testing. Conferences are still being held via Zoom. Special Education teachers will work with General Education teachers to provide accommodations for inclusion students. The Virtual Option will include a full-time Special Education teacher to provide services, coordinate activities and liaison between virtual teachers, campus personnel, families & students.

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.

District-provided Chromebooks have the following built-in accessibility options: Select to Speak, Dictation, High Contrast Mode, Full Screen Magnifier, Docked Magnifier, and Chromevox for the visually impaired. All of the Google Apps have their own accessibility features built-in as well. Training has been provided to teachers for these features and are incorporated into lessons at the beginning of the year.

Teacher Supports



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

FSPS has a robust instructional support system and demonstrated dedication to integrating technology in the classroom. Virtual teachers will be required to complete all three levels of the FS Virtual Academy which is a targeted professional development program designed to help teachers design and implement effective virtual/remote learning focused on Communication/Engagement, Instruction & Assessment. The district has purchased a variety of digital tools & content which are available to all FSPS teachers. The virtual option teachers will have access to not only the digital resources but to the district Technology Integration Specialists and the district Instructional Specialists.

A GoogleSite will be maintained and frequently updated with information & resources to keep parents engaged in the learning process.

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?

Daily: 1 hour, Mon-Thur (individual)

Weekly: 1.5 hour grade span PLC

1.5 hour K-8 vertical curriculum

FSPS will provide teachers with planning time, including PLC & vertical curriculum time, weekly. FSPS will provide access to resources, including training as needed along with access to district personnel to support effective instruction for all learners.

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.

Fort Smith Public School District assures that no person in the School District will, on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, sex, or disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of the Fort Smith Public School District.

Equity Policy (p. 4):

<https://www.fortsmithschools.org/cms/lib/AR02203514/Centricity/Domain/194/2020-2021%20District%20Student%20Handbook-revised%207%2027%202020.pdf>



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.

Fort Smith School District understands that all students are expected to take state-wide summative assessments onsite per DESE guidance. Each LEA has a Site Testing Coordinator. The STCs will work with the virtual option students to coordinate testing, both virtually and on-site. Options for assessments that must be administered onsite as well as those that may be administered either onsite or virtually may include during the regular school day, after school hours and on weekends.

Depending on which state assessment, students can be grouped by various grade levels. This means a plan could be made to choose locations and days to group students. Once the district agrees on a plan, information will be shared through various ways: letters, social media, phone calls, etc.

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.

Program directors will monitor implementation using direct observation, indirect observation, data analysis of student progress, testing data, content review, collaborative curriculum review and/or stakeholder feedback. A Virtual Focus Group including representatives from various stakeholder groups (parents, students, virtual & traditional teachers, virtual and traditional administrators, other district personnel, etc.) will meet quarterly to review the effectiveness and make recommendations to be shared with district leadership.

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)

Virtual option staff will work with local LEA' s to engage families into the digital learning process. A GoogleSite will be maintained and frequently updated with information & resources to keep parents engaged in the learning process. Opportunities for parents and families to engage face-to-face will be offered as CDC guidelines allow. There are plans to host multiple family nights and other events will be scheduled throughout the school year, either virtually or face-to-face.

2020-21 PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

(<https://www.fortsmithschools.org/cms/lib/AR02203514/Centricity/Domain/134/District%20Parent%20and%20Family%20Engagement%202020%202021.pdf>)

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

Approved at Called Board Meeting on March 8, 2021 (<https://www.fortsmithschools.org>)

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

Stakeholder feedback was obtained in conjunction with the 3/8/21 school board



Policies

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

Students who are enrolled in the digital learning program are expected to access

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

FSPS School District students who are enrolled in the digital learning program ar

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

General District Policies apply to all students, both on-site and virtual. (<https://w>

[^ Back to Top](#)