



## DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

# 2021 District Conversion Public Charter School Application

**Fort Smith Virtual Academy**

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Name of Proposed Charter

- Initial Application - Deadline July 1, 2021, at 5:00 p.m.**  
Applications will not be accepted after this time.
  
- Final Application - Deadline September 10, 2021, at 5:00 p.m.**  
Applications will not be accepted after this time.

Any application that is substantially incomplete will not be forwarded to the authorizer for consideration. An application will be considered substantially incomplete if it does not provide enough information to enable staff at the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide a meaningful review.

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Charter School Office  
Four Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201  
501-683-5312

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**Division of Elementary and Secondary Education  
 Charter School Office  
 Four Capitol Mall  
 Little Rock, AR 72201  
 501-683-5312**

**APPLICANT INFORMATION**

<b>Name of Proposed Charter:</b>	<b>Fort Smith Virtual Academy</b>
<b>School District:</b>	<b>Fort Smith Public Schools</b>
<b>Superintendent:</b>	<b>Terry Morawski</b>
<b>Superintendent Phone:</b>	<b>479-785-2501</b>
<b>Superintendent Email:</b>	<b>tmorawsk@fortsmithschools.org</b>
<b>Primary Contact for Application:</b>	<b>Samantha Hall</b>
<b>Primary Contact Phone:</b>	<b>1-844-989-3399</b>
<b>Primary Contact Cell:</b>	<b>479-652-8058</b>
<b>Primary Contact Email:</b>	<b>shall@fortsmithschools.org</b>

**1. Describe the public hearing which was held for the purpose of assessing support for the establishment of this public charter school. Include the number of attendees and the feedback and/or public comments that were received.**

A public hearing was held on June 8, 2021 at 5:30 pm at the Fort Smith Public Schools Service Center Auditorium at 3205 Jenny Lind Road, Fort Smith, AR. Notice of the charter school hearing was posted on the school district website & Facebook page, FS Virtual Option website & Facebook page and published in a local newspaper, Times Record. Fort Smith Schools sent out Parent-link phone & text messages to parents.

Twenty-one (21) people signed into the June 8th meeting. Martin Mahan, Deputy Superintendent of Fort Smith Public Schools welcomed attendees and introduced Dr. Terry Morawski, Superintendent of Fort Smith Public Schools, welcomed attendees and introduced Dr. Samantha Hall, Assistant Director of District Innovation. Dr. Hall introduced members of the charter planning committee present at the meeting, Mr. Mahan and Dr. Gary Udouj, Director of Career Education and District Innovation, and recognized members of the charter planning committee members who were not present. Dr Hall presented a brief overview of the proposed conversion charter school and the process. She explained we were still in the planning and application stage and were holding a hearing to get input and feedback from the community stakeholders about the opportunity for a new school. Dr. Hall presented background information, an explanation for a need for this type of option for students in the Fort Smith district, an overview of the vision for the virtual charter school, a timeline for implementation and an invitation to serve on the charter planning committee. Questions and comments were taken from community stakeholders attending the public hearing. Discussion centered around the curriculum, the role of teachers in the environment, access to district services, options for flexibility and personalization, other resources that would be provided for students and opportunities for students to be connected to the school and their peers. Attendees were interested in opportunities the charter school could offer their students and had many questions about the need for the conversion charter school in Fort Smith. Community members were interested and very positive about the possibility the school could offer students.

A notice of the event, agenda, roster and notes from the public hearing are attached.

**2. Describe the educational need for the charter. Include quantitative data related to academic achievement.**

Careful consideration has been given to determine the need for a local virtual school. In 2017, Fort

Smith Public Schools (FSPS) conducted a comprehensive needs analysis, identified eight key beliefs and seven focus areas for improvement; and developed a strategic plan, Vision 2023. Key elements identified through Vision 2023\* indicated a need for Fort Smith Virtual Academy (FSVA). FSPS also conducted a thorough analysis of academic data, some of which is included here.

School Year	District/Charter	Graduation Rate	ACT Aspire – All Grades: Percent Meets/Exceeds Standards				
			Literacy	Math	Science	English	Reading
2017-18	Fort Smith School District	88.92%	46.81%	47.38%	39.42%	-	-
	Arkansas Connections Academy	-	40.60%	24.47%	31.93%	-	-
	Arkansas Virtual Academy	75.23%	38.38	30.95%	35.64%	-	-
2018-19	Fort Smith School District	90.49%	46.06%	45.93%	37.08%	68.16%	40.39%
	Arkansas Connections Academy	-	37.11%	24.24%	32.77%	64.58%	39.66%
	Arkansas Virtual Academy	66.06%	33.47%	27.73%	33.45%	65.34%	36.66%
2019-20	Fort Smith School District	90.40%	-	-	-	-	-
	Arkansas Connections Academy	73.97%	-	-	-	-	-
	Arkansas Virtual Academy	68.79%	-	-	-	-	-

ACT Aspire Summative Assessment data for SY2019-20 and SY2020-21 is not available due to the interruption of testing caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

At the public hearing, parents expressed the need for students participating in the virtual option to feel connected both to the school and to their peers. As a separate LEA, FSVA will be able to provide students from across the district with a sense of identity and belonging. FSVA will also provide a space for students to interact in-person with teachers, staff, and peers. The separate LEA will also provide the opportunity for students to participate in clubs and activities which will be developed based on

student interests.

Across the United States, the provision of online public schools is growing due to the demand of students and their families needing more flexible options. There are virtual schools available to students on a statewide basis; however, the performance of those schools has been declining in math and literacy. Furthermore, FSPS has increased their graduation rate over the course of the past three years, and it far exceeds the graduation rate of the two statewide virtual schools serving students in Arkansas. FSPS can offer an online opportunity while allowing students to retain the identity and culture associated with the local community and District. FSPS can provide, in addition to the opportunity to take classes online, FSVA-based core teachers, FSPS-based specialty teachers, access to the Peak Innovation Center, access to FSPS support services and the chance to take part in locally based athletic, Gifted and Talented Education (G/T) and music programs. FSPS is confident that we will be able to provide a more robust program within our District that will result in better outcomes for our students.

After reviewing the data and the district demographics, including the student population, the needs of potential students and their families, it was determined FSPS educational opportunities should be expanded beyond traditional schools to allow students virtual opportunities. FSVA, a new LEA within the district, will strive to serve students in the following categories: students who are homeschooled\*, students who are medically fragile, students who seek accelerated and/or unique learning opportunities, and/or students who are experiencing circumstances that hinder success in a traditional school structure.

\*Any non-resident student must attend via school choice. If a homeschool student accesses the FSVA platform, he/she will lose homeschool status and must be enrolled in FSPS and assessed as a public school student.

Fort Smith's Peak Innovation Center will forever change the educational and economic landscape of the River Valley region. The culmination of education, community, business and industry efforts have forged a path towards a new educational model where students will be taught by industry leaders in real-world scenarios and on up-to-date, industry-specific equipment. The Peak Innovation Center is a place where career and college-bound students develop real-world skills and earn industry-specific certifications to create a future workforce that will drive success across the industry and beyond.

In addition to meeting the needs of a segment of students who might be more successful in a virtual environment, FSVA's program will be innovative as it integrates a Community/Career focus in grades K-8th with the goal of providing students the information and tools needed to choose a career path as they enter high school. The Community/Career focus will include activities such as career exploration, guest speakers, field trips (virtual or otherwise), community service opportunities and more.

#### \*Vision 2023 Key Beliefs and Focus Objectives

- Key Belief 2: All students deserve equitable access to a high-quality education in a safe and accepting environment structured to foster the learning process.
- Key Belief 4: All students have the potential to become productive citizens in our diverse and rapidly-changing world.
- Key Belief 5: The involvement of families is important to the success of students.
- Key Belief 7: Embracing change enhances our ability to achieve at our highest potential.
- Focus Objective "Career Pathways": Each student will have early exposure to education and career planning, resources and guidance to prepare them with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful, life-long learners.
  - Strategy: Develop and implement education and career pathways so that each student graduates with a viable plan and relevant skill set for his or her future.
  - FSVA: Equip students with the knowledge and skills to make informed choices when

they reach high school.

- Focus Objective “Equity”: Each student will have equitable access to programs, resources and opportunities.
  - Strategy: Develop and implement a system-wide plan to provide all students with the resources they need to optimize learning.
  - FSVA: Provide non-traditional access to learning to meet the needs of students who may benefit from it.
- Focus Objective “Instruction”: Each student will engage in high-quality instruction that targets identified individual needs from preschool through graduation.
  - Strategy: Design, develop and implement programs to promote rigor, relevance, collaboration, critical-thinking skills and learning environments designed to meet each student’s unique needs and aspirations.
  - FSVA: Provide a non-traditional learning environment based on the tenets of this strategy focused on meeting the unique needs and aspirations of the students.

## SCHOOL INFORMATION

	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
<b>Grades to be Offered</b>	<b>K-8</b>	<b>K-8</b>	<b>K-8</b>	<b>K-8</b>	<b>K-8</b>
<b>Enrollment Cap</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>

### 3. What type of educational model will the school follow?

- Traditional
- 100% Virtual
- College Prep
- Credit Recovery/ALE

Other:

### 4. Provide the mission statement of the proposed charter school:

Fort Smith Virtual Academy will provide an equitable, challenging, individualized, technology-based educational experience to equip students with the academic and social skills to embrace their roles in our culturally diverse community and rapidly changing world. The educational process will empower future-focused individuals to engage in service-oriented experiences, develop personal reflection skills and discover meaningful career paths.

**5. Provide a list and brief description of the programmatic features that the school will implement in order to accomplish the mission.**

FSVA will focus on providing educational experiences to equip students with the academic and social skills to embrace their roles in our culturally diverse community and rapidly changing world. The educational process will empower future-focused individuals to engage in service-oriented experiences, to develop personal reflection skills and to discover meaningful career paths. FSVA will provide students with flexible learning choices, accelerated learning opportunities, real-world experiences and support to overcome challenging circumstances.

The FSPS proposes a district-conversion charter school that will operate as a new LEA. The proposed school will offer a virtual learning experience blended with real-world experiences that are differentiated to meet the needs of a diverse population. FSVA will provide a tuition-free public option for all K-8 students, with a curriculum and services which can also address the needs of students who are homeschooled, who are medically fragile, who seek accelerated and/or unique learning opportunities, or who are at-risk or experiencing circumstances that hinder success in a traditional school structure.

The FSVA curriculum will include both core classes and grade-appropriate electives. Housed in the Peak Innovation Center, FSVA will work in partnerships with students, parents, teachers, higher education, local businesses and the community to provide career-focused field experiences, service projects, and integrated curriculum activities based on specific student interests. Students and parents will have an optional weekly opportunity to participate in face-to-face activities. These activities may address academic and social-emotional needs and include conferences with teachers, participation in clubs, opportunities for assistance, and team-building. FSVA will also provide time for students to collaborate, acquire extra help, socialize with peers, and/or develop interests in a safe, monitored environment. FSVA students will have the option to participate in co-curricular activities, including athletics, band, choir, orchestra and G/T at their zoned FSPS campus.

Field experiences will offer FSVA students opportunities to interact with other students and adults to develop collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking skills. Field experiences will allow students opportunities to fully participate in their community by finding areas where they can serve others. The two focus areas will be community service learning and career exploration.

Students in grades K-5 will focus primarily on community service learning with more career exploration opportunities as they progress. Sixth through eighth grade students will continue community service learning while the exploration of future college and career choices will be the focus. Clubs will also be created based on students' interests such as: Quiz Bowl, BioMed, Book Clubs, Chess, Debate, Disc Golf, Esports, Fashion Club and more.

There are many benefits to our unique learning model including a rigorous curriculum aligned to state standards, high quality instruction by FSPS certified teachers, flexible learning anytime and anywhere, and a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) developed to meet each student's unique learning needs, and support from a public traditional school district with a proven track record.

**6. Describe a plan for school improvement that addresses how the conversion charter school will improve student learning and meet the state educational goals.**

FSVA students will participate in an individualized online academic curriculum aligned to the Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks. The district and school administration, along with the School Improvement

Plan (SIP) committee, will review the online curriculum selected and/or developed to ensure it is aligned with Arkansas Frameworks and all curriculum requirements.

**7. Describe how the licensed employees and parents of the students to be enrolled in the conversion public charter school will be involved in developing and implementing the school improvement plan and identifying performance criteria.**

FSVA faculty and staff along with a group of stakeholders, including parents of students to be enrolled, will collaborate to prepare the school improvement plan (SIP). The SIP Team will collaboratively develop goals and evaluation plans to measure the effectiveness of the school. They will also set both academic and non-academic goals annually along with measurable objectives to assure the goals are met. Examples of academic goals cited in our response to number nine of this application include performance on state required exams in reading and math, the percentage of students who complete minimum field experiences, etc. Non Academic goals could relate to student satisfaction and/or parent satisfaction of the students' participation in FSVA or survey results related to the different field experiences in which FSVA students participate.

In addition, the SIP Team will organize a PTSA to serve as the vehicle for students and parents to have a voice in the operation of the virtual academy, to provide feedback to the FSVA staff and to advocate for FSVA to non-FSVA parents and to the greater Fort Smith community. The quarterly PTSA meetings will provide timely information on various topics of interest to parents of virtual learners. The President of the FSVA PTSA will serve on the FSPS City Council PTA.

**8. Describe how the concerns of licensed employees and parents of students enrolled in the conversion charter school will be solicited and addressed in evaluating the effectiveness of the improvement plan.**

The SIP team will review data annually and make recommendations about goals, evaluation measures, persons responsible for action items and resources needed. The Team will meet at least three times per school year.

**9. Establish performance criteria that will be used to measure the school's progress in improving student learning and meeting or exceeding the state educational goals. The mission of the school should be reflected in the performance criteria.**

Goal	Measuring Instrument	Performance Level that Demonstrates Achievement	When Attainment of the Goal will be Assessed
FSVA students will attain proficiency in reading.	3rd-8th grade: State mandated tests K-2: State mandated tests	Meet or exceed state average in Reading	Annually with state required assessment
	3rd-8th grade: State	Meet or exceed state	Annually with state



FSVA students will attain proficiency in mathematics.	mandated tests K-2: State mandated tests	average in Mathematics	required assessment
FSVA students will attain proficiency in language arts.	3rd-8th grade: State mandated tests K-2: State mandated tests	Meet or exceed state average in Language Arts	Annually with state required assessment
FSVA students will attain proficiency in writing.	3rd-8th grade: State mandated tests K-2: State mandated tests	Meet or exceed state average in Writing	Annually with state required assessment
FSVA students will develop a PLP to support college & career readiness.	PLPs	Meet or exceed personal goals	Assessed at least quarterly
FSVA students will participate in a minimum of one field experience per quarter and indicate it was relevant to their interests and educational careers.	Field Experience records Survey results	Meet minimum attendance goal and 90% student/parent satisfaction and indication of educational relevance	Assessed quarterly

## CURRICULUM

**10. Will the school provide the required courses as outlined in the Standards for Accreditation and the 38 Required High School Course Offerings? If not, explain what changes will be made. What additional electives will be offered?**

FSVA will serve students in K-8th grade, therefore, the school will provide the required courses as outlined in the Standards for Accreditation but not all 38 required high school course offerings. Only the state and district courses approved for high school credit in the 8th grade will be offered.

**11. Describe the process that will be used to ensure all curriculum materials used in the educational program are aligned with the Arkansas Academic Standards?**

Content specialists employed by FSPS in collaboration with the FSVA staff, will ensure that units of study, lessons, learning activities, and projects with the online curriculum are fully aligned with the Arkansas Academic Standards found within the various frameworks. Documentation of this joint annual review by FSPS content specialists and FSVA staff will be maintained by FSVA staff and FSVA, as a separate LEA, will be required to ensure the Standards are met.

K-5th grade teachers will be proficient in RISE and employ Science of Reading strategies via synchronous instruction, both large group and small group. Synchronous instruction will take place 3-4 days per week and students will have opportunities for additional one-on-one support during Virtual Office Hours.

## STUDENT SERVICES

### **12. Describe how the school will provide guidance and counseling services for all students.**

FSPS will maintain the ratio of 450:1 for the district, and a counselor will be assigned to FSVA using a proportional FTE. Since the students will not be physically housed on an FSPS campus, many of the counseling services will be provided virtually. FSPS plans to adhere to the requirements outlined in Act 190, Comprehensive School Counseling in Arkansas and provide guidance and counseling services for all students by having the counselor provide the SEL curriculum resources and work with individual students. The required counseling plan will be developed collaboratively under the supervision of the District Student Services Director, school administrator, and teachers. Based on each student's PLP, the PLP team, consisting of student, parent and teacher, will work together in scheduling support. FSPS career counselors will provide college and career guidance for each student as appropriate.

### **13. Describe how the school will provide library media services for all students.**

FSVA is seeking waivers of the requirements to hire a licensed library media specialist and provide a brick-and-mortar library/media center; however, FSVA will provide access to virtual books through Sora, a user-friendly app that empowers students to discover and enjoy ebooks and audiobooks from their school, for both leisure and class-assigned reading. Virtual students will also be able to access the other FSPS school campus media centers throughout the district. Additionally, FSPS will work to partner with the Fort Smith Public Library to provide more opportunities. The Arkansas Library Media Services Standards will be taught and embedded in the ELA courses. ELA teachers will work with certified district LMS to plan and implement the standards with fidelity.

### **14. Describe how the school will provide special education services for all students.**

FSVA will comply with all state and federal special education regulations and laws. FSVA will ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to the appropriate educational setting. If a student qualifies for enrollment for an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), then an IEP will be developed to ensure that the student who has a disability identified under the law will be properly accommodated by every teacher pursuant to rules and regulations set for under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If a student qualifies for a 504 Plan, modifications and accommodations will be provided in accordance to all applicable state and federal laws. Students will be screened and assessed for screening purposes at the FSVA campus. IEP meetings will be held at the FSVA campus and/or virtually to maximize participation in the meetings. Occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech language therapy are done via Zoom unless the student and parent feel comfortable coming to a school campus for these services. FSVA will provide all necessary transportation services for students receiving special education services.

### **15. Describe how the school will provide dyslexia screening and services for all students.**

Dyslexia screening will be provided virtually by an FSPS dyslexia interventionist in accordance with the requirements outlined in Act 1268 of 2015. FSVA students identified with characteristics that could be associated with dyslexia will receive state-approved dyslexia intervention services. Virtual students will receive a daily ZOOM invitation to participate in their group's intervention session at the designated times.

**16. Describe how the school will provide screening and instruction for English Language Learners.**

FSVA is committed to providing screening and instruction for English Language Learners by complying with all federal and state regulations. Licensed teachers and trained paraprofessionals (paras) will 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 will be provided for the parents to be fully engaged in their children's education by providing them with training, information, and translation services through Cafecitos and Family Literacy.

**17. Describe how the school will address the needs of gifted and talented students.**

FSVA will offer students access to G/T services. FSPS employs highly trained G/T teachers. Grade appropriate G/T services will be available to students, either through participation in on-campus G/T classes and/or enrollment in accelerated G/T courses within the digital platform. FSVA students will have the opportunity to work at an accelerated rate and access advanced courses. For example, a student in 8<sup>th</sup> grade may enroll in and complete Algebra I instead of taking Math 8. All courses for high school credit below grade 9 will be selected from those for which the district has received course approval. These opportunities will also help address the needs of gifted and talented students. Additionally, FSVA teachers will differentiate instruction for all students based on their individual academic needs. The field experiences that FSVA will provide also include enriching learning activities that will extend the learning that takes place within the digital platform.

**18. Describe how food services will be provided for students.**

FSPS has a high-quality food service department that serves students at 26 campuses. FSVA students will be able to pick up take-home meals from their neighborhood school. Meals may be boxed for 5 days to prevent virtual students from having to make a daily trip to the campus.

## SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

**19. Describe the student recruitment process and timeline that will provide an equal opportunity for all parents and students to learn about and apply for admission to the proposed public charter school.**

Enrollment will be open to all students who are residents of the State of Arkansas and the Fort Smith School District enrolling in grades K through 8 in the Fall of 2022. Enrollment will begin early in the Spring of 2022 with students who will be classified as current PK through 7th grade students who are residents of the Fort Smith School District or are eligible to attend Fort Smith Public Schools. Pursuant to School Choice Act 2015, non-resident students may request a waiver.

The FSPS students and their parents will be provided multiple opportunities to learn about the enrollment process through recruitment information distributed through class meetings, newsletters, evening meetings and electronic communications at schools within the FSPS district. The recruitment information will include a description of the instructional program, application process and the selection process. Information about FSVA will be presented to community groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce or Kiwanis Club and will be available in school parent centers.

Application to the FSVA will be voluntary and offered as a choice. A one-year commitment by the student and the parent to attend FSVA will be strongly encouraged. All applications will be completed electronically and the date and time of submission will be electronically recorded. In the event more students apply for admission to FSVA, a random anonymous lottery will be hosted.

**20. Describe the facility where the school will be located.**

The physical site of Fort Smith Virtual Academy will be within the newly opened Peak Innovation Center located at 5900 Painter Lane in Fort Smith. The structure is the former Hutcheson Shoe building that was converted to a regional Career & Technology Center which will open in Fall 2021. Office and other dedicated spaces for teachers & students are found within this building and will be designated as the physical location of FSVA. This facility will be in compliance with all requirements for accessibility in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and IDEA and all other state and federal laws and local zoning ordinances.

## 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 in order to meet the goals of the school.

<b>Waiver #1 Topic</b>	<b>Attendance Records</b>
<b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>	6-18-213(a)(2)
<b>Standard for Accreditation</b>	
<b>ADE Rules</b>	
<b>Rationale for Waiver</b>	Given the nature and intent of a self-paced learning environment, and given the perpetual availability of the online curriculum, FSPS will adjust our daily schedule to accommodate the needs of our learning community and to ensure we are providing the best educational experience possible for virtual students. The schedule will run Monday-Sunday with all assignments due no later than Sunday evening of each week. FSPS has adopted an attendance policy for virtual students based on weekly participation in required synchronous instruction and assessment (either virtual or onsite) and timely completion of coursework. Attendance will be entered on Tuesday for the previous week based on the requirements of the policy. FSPS requests a waiver to report daily attendance.

<b>Waiver #2 Topic</b>	<b>Instructional Day</b>
<b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>	6-16-102
<b>Standard for Accreditation</b>	1-A.4.2
<b>ADE Rules</b>	

<b>Rationale for Waiver</b>	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 adjust our daily schedule to accommodate the needs of our learning community and to ensure we are providing the best educational experience possible for virtual students. FSVA will use a hybrid instructional model combining asynchronous instruction (availability of content and weekly assignment deadlines) with required synchronous instruction, both whole class and small group 3-4 days per week. Based upon DESE legal comments received, FSVA requests a waiver of Ark. Code Ann. §6-16-102 to fully effectuate our waiver request for Standard 1-A.4.2

<b>Waiver #3 Topic</b>	<b>Class Size</b>
<b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>	<b>6-17-812(a)(2)</b>
<b>Standard for Accreditation</b>	<b>1-A.5</b>
<b>ADE Rules</b>	<b>DESE Rules Governing Class Size &amp; Teaching Load</b>
<b>Rationale for Waiver</b>	In an online setting teachers may successfully work with a larger number of students. FSVA will employ full-time core teachers assigned only to this school and only teaching virtually. The specialty and elective classes will have smaller enrollments or have lower time requirements (such as 40 min per week) so these teachers will either be assigned a partial FTE, within onsite class size limits, or will be employed part-time as a separate contract. FSPS proposes the following alternatives for traditionally non-large format core classes in the virtual format: K: not to exceed 20:1 1-3: not to exceed 30:1 4-5: not to exceed 35-1 6-8: not to exceed 180 (Teaching Load) (60 students per grade level giving room to allow 2--5th grade classes of 28 to funnel into middle school).

	While the class sizes are slightly higher than the onsite counterparts, the additional slots give us flexibility to maintain full classes while remaining below the average class size/load of many national programs (45:1 for K-5 and 240 for 6-8).
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<b>Waiver #4 Topic</b>	<b>Recess</b>
<b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>	<b>6-16-102(a)(5)</b>
<b>Standard for Accreditation</b>	<b>1-A.4.3</b>
<b>ADE Rules</b>	<b>DESE Rules Governing Nutrition and Physical Activity Standards and Body Mass Index, Section 7.11</b>
<b>Rationale for Waiver</b>	K-8: FSPS understands the importance of physical activity and nutrition. The district remains committed to providing K-5 students with the opportunities through the virtual Health & PE courses. This waiver supports the flexibility needed by the virtual option to meet its academic goals.

<b>Waiver #5 Topic</b>	<b>120 Clock Hours for Unit of Credit</b>
<b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>	
<b>Standard for Accreditation</b>	<b>1-A.2</b>
<b>ADE Rules</b>	
<b>Rationale for Waiver</b>	While FSVA will be a K-8th school, some 8th grade students may take high school credit-bearing classes. Due to the flexible nature of the courses, FSVA is requesting waiver of Standard 1-A.2, to be used only for our 8th grade students who are enrolled in credit-bearing courses for which the district has obtained courses approval from DESE, not any graduation requirements. Demonstrated mastery of the state standards will be required to receive credit towards graduation. This waiver assists in providing the flexibility needed to reach the academic goals.



<b>Waiver #6 Topic</b>	<b>Principal--Employment of/Licensure</b>
<b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>	<b>6-17-302</b>
<b>Standard for Accreditation</b>	<b>4.C.1</b>
<b>ADE Rules</b>	
<b>Rationale for Waiver</b>	Due to the scope and nature of the K-8 virtual school, a director will oversee daily operations. FSPS requests a waiver allowing the individual to hold either Building OR District Administrator licensure. This waiver will provide flexibility in selecting the most qualified leader for FSVA.

<b>Waiver #7 Topic</b>	<b>Teacher Licensure</b>
<b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>	<b>6-15-1004; 6-17-309; 6-17-401; 6-17-902; 6-17-919</b>
<b>Standard for Accreditation</b>	<b>4-D.1</b>
<b>ADE Rules</b>	<b>DESE Rules--Licensure--Educator Licensure--Section 7</b>
<b>Rationale for Waiver</b>	Teachers will be licensed in Arkansas. All FSVA teachers will meet the Arkansas Qualified Teacher requirements as necessary but may need the flexibility to teach out-of-area for some elective, non-graduation required, courses. While certified administrators and teachers will be sought, FSVA requests the discretion to hire the best leaders and teachers available for the school. This waiver will aid in increasing student achievement by providing students with the most effective teachers and a full catalogue of elective courses. We are not seeking a waiver of special education licensure requirements.

<b>Waiver #8 Topic</b>	<b>School Nurse</b>
<b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>	<b>6-18-706</b>

<b>Standard for Accreditation</b>	<b>2-E.1</b>
<b>ADE Rules</b>	
<b>Rationale for Waiver</b>	As a virtual academy FSVA will not require a full-time school nurse. FSPS will assign a nurse to review medical records, write health plans, and conduct required health screenings, vision and hearing screenings, etc. The nurse will also be on campus on a scheduled basis and available for students/families to make an appointment for services and This waiver supports the virtual academy goals.

<b>Waiver #9 Topic</b>	<b>Library Media</b>
<b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>	<b>6-25-103; 6-25-104</b>
<b>Standard for Accreditation</b>	<b>4-F.1; 4-F.2</b>
<b>ADE Rules</b>	
<b>Rationale for Waiver</b>	As a virtual academy FSVA will not require a. FSVA will not employ a dedicated LMS or utilize a media center. These tools will be available online through partnerships with online libraries or local libraries (Fort Smith Public Library). District LMS will be available to provide instruction and assistance. The LMS standards will be embedded in the ELA courses and a district LMS will work with the FSVA teachers to implement them with fidelity. This waiver supports the virtual academy goals.

<b>Waiver #10 Topic</b>	<b>Flag Display; Period of Silence; Pledge of Allegiance</b>
<b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>	<b>6-10-115; 6-16-105; 6-16-106; 6-16-108</b>
<b>Standard for Accreditation</b>	
<b>ADE Rules</b>	

<b>Rationale for Waiver</b>	Peak Innovation Center will display the US & Arkansas flags and, as FSVA is housed within, will adhere to their standard. A group Period of Silence or recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in a virtual setting would be difficult without a synchronous live lesson start time each day.
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<b>Waiver #12 Topic</b>	<b>Food Services</b>
<b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>	<b>6-18-705</b>
<b>Standard for Accreditation</b>	<b>3-D.1</b>
<b>ADE Rules</b>	
<b>Rationale for Waiver</b>	As a virtual academy FSVA will not serve meals. Students will have access to meals at the neighborhood school campuses. FSPS will provide child nutrition services for the students at FSVA as needed (i.e., sack lunches for field experiences, testing days, etc.).

<b>Waiver #13 Topic</b>	<b>Report Cards</b>
<b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>	<b>6-15-903(a)(2)</b>
<b>Standard for Accreditation</b>	
<b>ADE Rules</b>	
<b>Rationale for Waiver</b>	FSVA parents will have real time access to report cards via the online platform. Emailed or printed report cards will be available to parents upon request.

## **Fort Smith Virtual Academy Charter 2021 District Conversion Application**

*Legal comments are below, separated by waiver. For each comment, please provide a response in the "Response" field. The attorney will review your comments once you resubmit this Legal Review. Any legal concerns that are not addressed by your responses must be discussed in front of the Charter Authorizing Panel during your hearing. If you have any questions about the Legal Review, please contact Mary Claire Hyatt at 501-683-0960.*

### **General Legal Concerns**

1. Why did you choose to do a charter rather than a digital learning plan that would be accessible to all students in all schools?

*After reviewing the data and the district demographics, including the student population, the needs of potential students and their families, it was determined FSPS educational opportunities should be expanded beyond traditional schools to allow students virtual opportunities. FSVA will strive to serve students in the following categories: students who are homeschooled\*, students who are medically fragile, students who seek accelerated and/or unique learning opportunities, and/or students who are experiencing circumstances that hinder success in a traditional school structure.*

*\*Any non-resident student must attend via school choice. If a homeschool student accesses the FSVA platform, he/she will lose homeschool status and must be enrolled in FSPS and assessed as a public school student.*

*Fort Smith's Peak Innovation Center will forever change the educational and economic landscape of the River Valley region. The culmination of education, community, business and industry efforts have forged a path towards a new educational model where students will be taught by industry leaders in real-world scenarios and on up-to-date, industry-specific equipment. The Peak Innovation Center is a place where career and college-bound students develop real-world skills and earn industry-specific certifications to create a future workforce that will drive success across the industry and beyond.*

***In addition to meeting the needs of a segments of students who might be more successful in a virtual environment, FSVA's program will be innovative as it integrates a Community/Career focus in grades K-8th with the goal of providing students the information and tools needed to choose a career path as they enter high school. The Community/Career focus will include activities such as career exploration, guest speakers, field trips (virtual or otherwise), community service opportunities and more.***

2. Confirm you are aware that this program will be its own school with its own LEA.

Students who are enrolled in this school that leave the virtual program to attend in-person learning may be considered highly mobile for purposes of accountability.

*After reviewing the data and the district demographics, including the student population, the needs of potential students and their families, it was determined FSPS educational opportunities should be expanded beyond traditional schools to allow students virtual opportunities. FSVA, a new LEA within the district...*

3. Explain more in the application how you will be doing synchronous learning for K-2, with special attention to reading.

*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 adjust our daily schedule to accommodate the needs of our learning community and to ensure we are providing the best educational experience possible for virtual students. FSVA will use a hybrid instructional model combining asynchronous instruction (availability of content and weekly assignment deadlines) with required synchronous instruction, both whole class and small group 3-4 days per week.*

*K-5th grade teachers will be proficient in RISE and employ Science of Reading strategies via synchronous instruction, both large group and small group. Synchronous instruction will take place 3-4 days per week and students will have opportunities for additional one-on-one support during Virtual Office Hours.*

4. Question 12 says that the school will adhere to the requirements outlined in the School Counseling Improvement Act of 2019, but then also says you are seeking a waiver of the requirement to have a counselor. Also, there was no waiver request listed.

*We will not seek a waiver. FSPS will maintain the ratio of 450:1 for the district, and a counselor will be assigned to FSVA using a proportional FTE. Since the students will not be physically housed on an FSPS campus, many of the counseling services will be provided virtually. FSPS plans to adhere to the requirements outlined in Act 190, Comprehensive School Counseling in Arkansas and provide guidance and counseling services for all students by having the counselor provide the SEL curriculum resources and work with individual students.*

5. Confirm you are aware that you will be required to meet the Standards in this school alone.

*Content specialists employed by FSPS in collaboration with the FSVA staff, will ensure that units of study, lessons, learning activities, and projects with the online curriculum are fully aligned with the Arkansas Academic Standards found within the various frameworks. Documentation of this joint annual review by FSPS content specialists and FSVA staff will be maintained by FSVA staff and FSVA, as a separate LEA, will be required to ensure the Standards are met.*

### **1. Attendance**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-213(a)(2)**

**Legal Comments:** None.

## **2. Instructional Day**

### **Standard 1-A.4.2**

**Legal Comments:** You need to add Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-102 to fully effectuate this waiver. What is your proposed instructional day? Are you offering only asynchronous instruction or will you have synchronous instruction?

*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 adjust our daily schedule to accommodate the needs of our learning community and to ensure we are providing the best educational experience possible for virtual students. FSVA will use a hybrid instructional model combining asynchronous instruction (availability of content and weekly assignment deadlines) with required synchronous instruction, both whole class and small group 3-4 days per week. Based upon DESE legal comments received, FSVA requests a waiver of Ark. Code Ann. §6-16-102 to fully effectuate our waiver request for Standard 1-A.4.2*

## **3. Class Size**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-812(a)(2)**

### **Standard 1-A.5**

#### **DESE Rules Governing Class Size and Teaching Load**

**Legal Comments:** Confirm that these teachers will be assigned only to this school and will only be teaching virtually.

*In an online setting teachers may successfully work with a larger number of students. FSVA will employ full-time core teachers assigned only to this school and only teaching virtually. The specialty and elective classes will have smaller enrollments or have lower time requirements (such as 40 min per week) so these teachers will either be assigned a partial FTE, within onsite class size limits, or will be employed part-time as a separate contract. FSPS proposes the following alternatives for traditionally non-large format core classes in the virtual format:*

*K: not to exceed 20:1*

*1-3: not to exceed 30:1*

*4-5: not to exceed 35-1*

*6-8: not to exceed 180 (Teaching Load) (60 students per grade level giving room to allow 2--5th grade classes of 28 to funnel into middle school).*

*While the class sizes are slightly higher than the onsite counterparts, the additional slots give us flexibility to maintain full classes while remaining below the average class size/load of many national programs (45:1 for K-5 and 240 for 6-8).*

#### **4. Recess**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-102(a)(5)**

**Standard 1-A.4.3**

**DESE Rules Governing Nutrition and Physical Activity, Section 7.11**

**Legal Comments:** None.

#### **5. 120 Clock Hours**

**Standard 1-A.2**

**Legal Comments:** This Standard only applies to high school units of credit. Confirm you only need the waiver for your 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.

*FSVA is requesting waiver of Standard 1-A.2, to be used only for our 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who are enrolled in credit-bearing courses for which the district has obtained courses approval from DESE.*

#### **6. Principal**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-302**

**Standard 4-C.1**

**Standard 4-C.2**

**Legal Comments:** Based on the rationale provided, only a waiver of Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-302(a) is necessary. Nothing in the rationale supports a waiver of 4-C.1.

#### **7. Teacher Licensure**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1004**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-309**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-401**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-902**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-919**

**Standard 4-D.1**

**DESE Rules Governing Educator Licensure**

**Legal Comments:** If you are using an approved digital learning provider for these courses, no waiver of teacher licensure is required. If you are not using an approved digital learning provider, you must have a licensed Arkansas teacher of record. I need to know what you will be doing to determine if additional waivers of the DESE Rules Governing Distance and Digital Learning are required. Only a waiver of Section 7 of the DESE Rules Governing Educator Licensure is required.

*Currently we use Pearson, an approved provider. However, we plan to use our district adopted curriculum & resources in the future. The waiver would mainly be if we wanted to use some of our full-time core teachers as teacher-of-record for some Middle School elective (non-credit) courses.*

## **8. School Nurse**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-706**

**Standard 2-E.1**

**Legal Comments:** In the rationale it says that FSPS will assign a nurse to review records and provide services when students are on campus. Please confirm a nurse will also be available for any required health screenings, vision and hearing screenings, etc.  
*be available when students are on campus for scheduled activities, such as required health screenings, vision and hearing screenings, etc.*

## **9. Library Media**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-25-103**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-25-104**

**Standard 4-F.1**

**Legal Comments:** With which local library will the school partner? The rationale says that district LMS will be available to provide instruction and assistance. That LMS is still bound by the Standards LMS ratio. Does that LMS have the ratio flexibility to be providing services to another school? Does the other school have the necessary waivers to make that happen? Do you also need a waiver of 4-F.2 if you are not going to have a dedicated LMS?  
*These tools will be available online through partnerships with online libraries or local*



libraries (Fort Smith Public Library). District LMS will be available to provide instruction and assistance. The LMS standards will be embedded in the ELA courses and a district LMS will work with the FSVA teachers to implement them with fidelity. This waiver supports the virtual academy goals.

## **10. Flag Display**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-10-115**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-105**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-106**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-108**

**Legal Comments:** None.

## **11. High School Credit in 5-8**

**Standard 1-A.1.2.9**

**Legal Comments:** I don't understand the need for this waiver. The standard says that courses in 5-8 may be offered for high school credit. In Waiver #5 the rationale stated that 8<sup>th</sup> grade students would be taking courses for high school credit.

*We will offer the courses but if it's covered under #5 can we leave out #11?*

## **12. Food Services**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-705**

**Standard 3-D.1**

**Legal Comments:** Please review the DESE Rules Governing Nutrition and Physical Activity and add necessary sections to your request. How will students have access to meals at the neighborhood schools? Since they are not enrolled in those schools, I do not think they would not be reimbursable meals.

*The Nutrition office will complete a Schedule A with the new LEA and be able to claim the meals.*

## **13. Report Cards**

**Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-903(a)(2)**

**Legal Comments:** None.

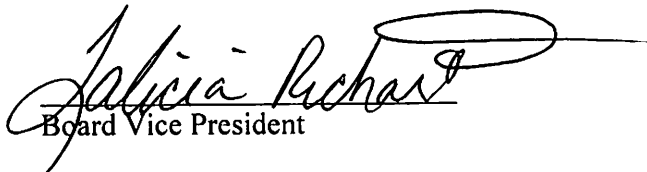
RESOLUTION OF THE FORT SMITH SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION

WHEREAS, the Fort Smith School District Board of Education met in a regular, open, and properly-called meeting on June 28, 2021 in Fort Smith, Arkansas;

WHEREAS, \_\_\_ members were present, a quorum was declared by the chair;

WHEREAS, the Fort Smith School District Board of Education, pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-103, has determined that the Fort Smith School District should submit an application to the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education for a conversion charter school, which if granted, would be effective for the 2022-2023 School Year.

NOW THEREFORE, upon due consideration and deliberation, it is hereby declared to be the intent of the Fort Smith School District Board of Education to authorize the submission of an application to the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education for a conversion charter for the Fort Smith School District, and further authorize the Superintendent to do all things necessary to submit the application to the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education for consideration.

  
Board Vice President

6/28/21  
Date

  
Board Secretary

6/28/21  
Date



June 21, 2021

Terry Morawski, Ed.D., Superintendent  
Fort Smith Public Schools  
3205 Jenny Lind Road  
Fort Smith, AR 72902-1948

To whom it may concern,

ABB Motors and Mechanical Inc. is a leading marketer, designer, manufacturer and service provider of energy-saving industrial electric motors, generators and mechanical power transmission products. The company was founded on the premise that a better motor is one that uses less electricity, a belief that stands true today.

The company was founded in 1920 in St. Louis, Missouri and was acquired by ABB Ltd of Zurich, Switzerland in 2011. ABB has been based in Fort Smith, Arkansas since 1967 and employs over 5,000 employees around the world, with close to 2,000 in Fort Smith.

We are writing this letter to express our support for the Fort Smith Public Schools and their application to create a Virtual Conversion Charter School. The options and opportunities created by this groundbreaking program will be invaluable to our community, including many of our current and future employees and their children, as it will serve a variety of students and families in creative and innovative ways.

Please know that you have our full support in accordance with the Virtual Conversion Charter School. If there is anything else we can do to supportive this initiative, please let us know.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jason Green'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Jason Green  
Vice President – Human Resources

June 8, 2021

Fort Smith Virtual Academy

Public Hearing

- I. Welcome
  
- II. Introduction of Charter School Planning Team
  
- III. [Overview of the Fort Smith Virtual Academy \(FSVA\)/Slideshow](#)
  - A. Background
  - B. Vision
  - C. District Need
  - D. Timeline for Implementation
  
- IV. Q & A



# TIMES RECORD WEATHER

FORT SMITH FIVE-DAY FORECAST				
TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
77 56	78 64	75 64	76 64	77 62
Mostly sunny and pleasant	Intervals of clouds and sunshine	Mostly cloudy, a stray t-storm	Some rain and a t-storm; humid	Humid with a stray thunderstorm

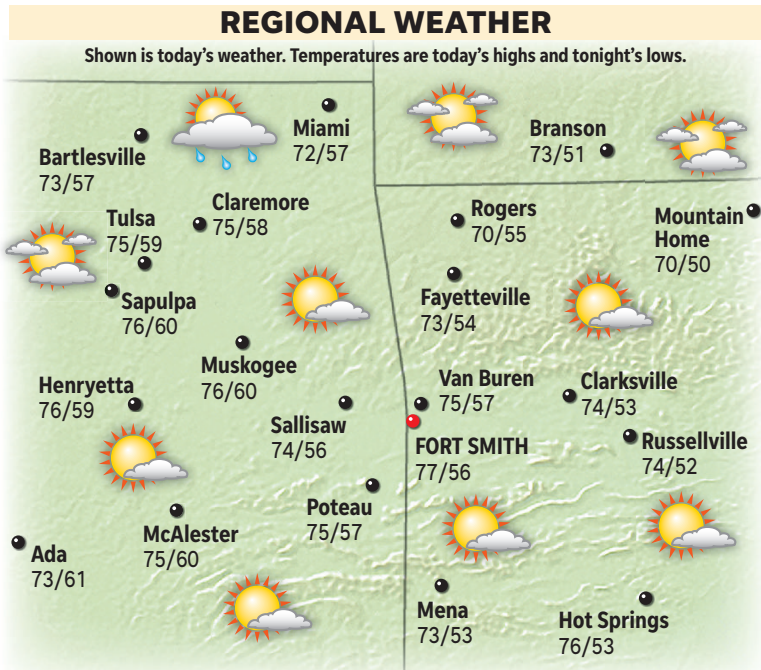
**AccuWeather**  
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ALMANAC	
Fort Smith through 6 p.m. Thursday	
<b>Temperature</b>	
High/low	73/54
Normal high/low	80/58
Record high	93 in 1962
Record low	41 in 1971
Last year high/low	80/53
<b>Precipitation</b>	
24 hours through 6 p.m. Thu.	0.00"
Month to date	1.22"
Normal month to date	2.31"
Year to date	15.71"
Normal year to date	16.03"
<b>Wind</b>	
Average wind speed	5 mph
Highest wind gust	9 mph
<b>Relative humidity</b>	
Average	59%
<b>National extremes</b> (for the 48 contiguous states)	
<b>High Thursday</b>	102 Needles, CA
<b>Low Thursday</b>	18 Dillon, CO

ALLERGY INDEX	
Pollen as of May 12	
<b>Trees</b>	<b>Grass</b>
<b>Weeds</b>	<b>Mold</b>
MODERATE	MODERATE
MODERATE	ABSENT
MODERATE	MODERATE
Source: The Allergy Clinic	

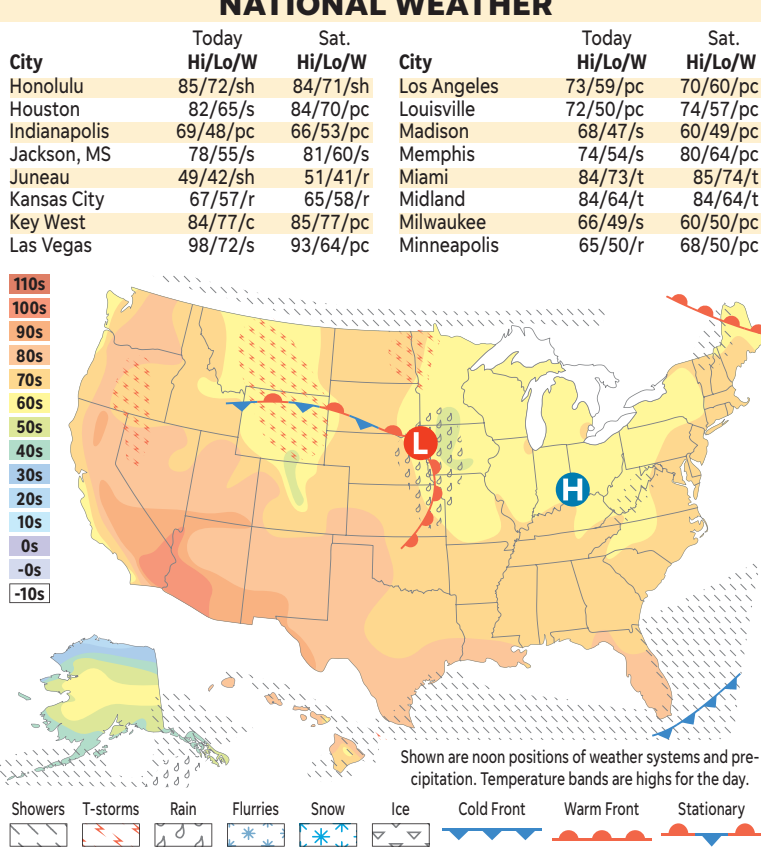
SUN AND MOON	
Today	
Sunrise	6:14 a.m.
Sunset	8:14 p.m.
Moonrise	8:06 a.m.
Moonset	11:09 p.m.
None	
First Full Last New	
May 19	May 26
Jun 2	Jun 10

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RIVERS AND LAKES			
<b>RIVER STAGES</b>	7 a.m.	24 hr.	
Location	Flood	Thu.	Change
<b>Arkansas River Basin/Arkansas River</b>			
Lee Creek	--	3.40	+0.22
Van Buren	22	19.74	+0.17
Ozark L/D	357	344.40	-0.81
Dardanelle	32	11.93	-2.45
Morrilton	30	16.60	-2.78
Toad Suck Ferry	275	264.62	-0.36
Little Rock	23	8.57	-0.82
Pine Bluff	42	32.64	-0.04
Pendleton	31	26.58	+0.08
<b>White River and Tributaries</b>			
St. Joe	27	6.43	+0.40
Corning	15	10.54	-0.24
Pocahontas	17	18.05	-0.67
Black Rock	14	19.97	-0.64
Batesville Br.	14	8.33	-0.03
Newport	26	21.60	-0.49
<b>Mulberry River</b>			
Mulberry	18	2.63	+0.12
<b>Petit Jean River</b>			
Danville	20	14.82	-0.14
<b>Ouachita River</b>			
Arkadelphia	17	12.29	+7.47
Camden	26	15.75	-0.62
<b>LAKE LEVELS</b>			
Location	7 a.m.	24 hr.	Change
<b>Arkansas River Basin Lake</b>			
Blue Mountain Lake	392.58	-0.20	
Nimrod Lake	347.02	-0.76	
<b>White River Basin Lakes</b>			
Beaver	1128.48	-0.02	
Table Rock	919.14	-0.29	
Bull Shoals	677.50	+0.55	
Norfolk	567.18	+0.14	
Greers Ferry	467.77	none	
<b>Ouachita River Basin Lakes</b>			
Lake Ouachita	577.84	+0.20	
Degray	406.92	-0.02	
Lake Greeson	547.45	+0.26	
<b>Illinois River Basin Lake</b>			
Tenkiller	392.58	-0.20	

LOCAL AND STATE WEATHER			
<b>City</b>	<b>Thu.</b>	<b>Today</b>	
Fayetteville	70/45/0.00	73/54/pc	
De Queen	75/53/0.00	75/56/s	
Harrison	67/43/0.00	70/51/pc	
Hot Springs	72/56/0.00	76/53/s	
Jacksonville	71/51/0.00	74/51/s	
Jonesboro	69/49/0.00	72/52/s	
Little Rock	72/52/0.00	75/53/s	
Magnolia	73/52/0.00	78/56/s	
Mountain Home	69/41/0.00	70/50/pc	
Monticello	72/56/0.00	77/57/s	
North Little Rock	71/50/0.00	75/52/s	
Mount Ida	73/49/0.00	76/51/s	



NATIONAL WEATHER	
<b>City</b>	<b>Today</b>
Newport	70/47/0.00
Paragould	69/45/0.00
Pine Bluff	72/55/0.00
Rogers	68/52/0.07
Russellville	71/43/0.00
Springdale	68/47/0.00
Texarkana	75/53/0.00
West Memphis	72/52/0.00

## 10-year-old goes from homeless child to chess master

Has sights set on becoming youngest grandmaster

**Christine Fernando**  
USA TODAY

A 10-year-old who once lived in a New York City homeless shelter has achieved a remarkable title for someone his age: chess master.

Tanitoluwa "Tani" Adewumi became America's newest chess master on May 1 at the age of 10 years, seven months and 28 days, making him the 28th youngest person to achieve the status, according to the U.S. Chess Federation.

"I was very happy that I won and that I got the title," Tani, a Nigerian refugee, told NPR. "I really love that I finally got it."

On his road to master status, Tani had to defeat two experts, a master and an international master, the Chess Federation said.

He told NPR he practiced chess for 10 or 11 hours every day after school to get to that level.

Tani made national headlines in 2019 when he was living in a homeless shelter and won the New York state chess championship for his age group.

Tani's family left northern Nigeria in 2017 as refugees and moved to New York City, the New York Times reported. While his family lived in a homeless shelter, Tani learned to play chess at school.

When his family was unable to pay membership costs for the school's chess program, chess teacher Russell Makofsky waived the fees. Tani went on to win the state championship for kindergarten through third grade in 2019.

"It's unheard of for any kid, let alone one in a homeless shelter," Makofsky told USA TODAY at the time.

Others offered to help as well, the New York Times reported. A student gave Tani a chess clock. His mother took him to free practice sessions in Harlem, and his dad offered his laptop for Tani to play chess online.

Since then, a GoFundMe set up by his father, Kayode, has raised almost \$255,000 for housing, legal and educational resources for Tani.

Now, a grandmaster coach teaches Tani two or three times a week, according to a May 10 update on the GoFundMe page. But travel costs are still a challenge. And when Tani is invited to tournaments abroad, he often can't go "while his immigration case is pending for fear he might not be allowed back into the United States."

But his love of chess is "as strong as ever," the page said.

"Tani's talent has continued to blossom through hard work," the U.S. Chess Federation said.

Tani has also since become an author.

His book, "My Name Is Tani ... and I Believe in Miracles"

**"Eight-year-old Tani jumped into his new life with courage and perseverance – and an unusual mind for chess. After joining the chess club in his public school, Tani practiced his game for hours in the evenings at the shelter. And less than a year after he learned to play, Tani won the New York state chess championship."**

**Description of Tani's book "My Name Is Tani ... and I Believe in Miracles: The Amazing True Story of One Boy's Journey from Refugee to Chess Champion"**

acles: The Amazing True Story of One Boy's Journey from Refugee to Chess Champion," tells the story of his family fleeing Boko Haram and coming to the U.S., where his father became a dishwasher and Uber driver and his mother cleaned buildings, according to the book's summary.

"Eight-year-old Tani jumped into his new life with courage and perseverance – and an unusual mind for chess," the book says. "After joining the chess club in his public school, Tani practiced his game for hours in the evenings at the shelter. And less than a year after he learned to play, Tani won the New York state chess championship."

But Tani isn't done yet. He's set his sights on becoming the youngest grandmaster. According to International Chess Federation, he has two years to accomplish this: Sergey Karjakin, the current record-holder, achieved that status at 12 years and seven months.

On his GoFundMe page, people have left messages thanking Tani for inspiring them and encouraging him to continue to rise in the chess world.

"Tani's story has touched so many, inspired us to be better, to love more, to try harder, and has tapped into the good that exists in all of us," the GoFundMe page said.



In 2019, Tanitoluwa Adewumi earned the title of New York's chess champion for kindergarten through third grade. He went on to earn the title of chess master. PROVIDED BY RUSSELL MAKOFSKY

**Public Hearing Notice**  
The community is invited to a public hearing to discuss a Conversion Charter School Application for the Fort Smith Public Schools' proposed Virtual Academy.  
**Tuesday, June 8, 2021, 5:30 pm**  
**Fort Smith Public Schools Service Center Auditorium**  
3205 Jenny Lind Road Fort Smith, AR

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# KALPA Sign In Sheet

Course ID: 1107501

Title: Public Hearing---Conversion Charter

Location: Service Center Auditorium

Instructor:

Date/Time: <sup>6-8-21</sup>~~06/03/2021~~ 5:30PM-6:30PM

Class Size: 50

Total Registered: 0

Name	Building	Please sign in	Time In	Please sign-out	Time Out
				PRINTED NAME	ROLE
<i>Amanda Norris</i>			5:30	Amanda Norris	FSPS
<i>Gary Woods</i>			5:30	Gary Woods	FSPS
<i>Samantha Hill</i>			5:30	Samantha Hill	FSPS Admin
<i>Jennifer Burckett</i>			5:15	JENNIFER BURCKETT	PARENT
<i>Melissa Roberts</i>			5:25	Melissa Roberts	PARENT
<i>Rebecca Kaelin</i>			5:20	Rebecca Kaelin	PARENT/ TEACHER
<i>Peter Kaelin</i>			5:20	PETER Kaelin	PARENT/ TEACHER
<i>Cathy Adams</i>			5:25	CATHY ADAMS	PARENT
<i>Maya Maul</i>			5:25	MAYA MAUL	PARENT
<i>Zena Featherston</i>			5:30	Zena Featherston	FSPS Admin
<i>Martin Mathan</i>			5:30	MARTIN MATHAN	FSPS Admin
<i>Karen Ness</i>			5:30	Karen Ness	Teacher
<i>Howard Woodall</i>			5:30	Howard Woodall	Community MEMBER
<i>Frey Morawski</i>			5:30	Frey Morawski	FSPS SUPT
<i>Zia Siddiqui</i>			5:35	Zia Siddiqui	PARENT
<i>Shabnam Siddiqui</i>			5:35	Shabnam Siddiqui	PARENT
<i>Noea Molinero</i>			5:35	Noea Molinero	Social Worker
<i>Dusti Standridge</i>			5:35	DUSTI STANDRIDGE	PARENT/ Community
<i>Gabby Mainero</i>				Gabby Mainero	STUDENT

<u>Name</u>	<u>Building</u>	Please sign in	Time In	Please sign out	Time Out
	<input type="text"/>				
Chad Warr			5:36	Chad Warr	FSP Admin
Kim Clark			5:50	Kim Clark	PARENT



# Charter School Meeting 6-8-21

Dr. Morawski - welcome & thank you for attending the meeting. Expressed excitement about opportunity. Turned over to Dr. Hall.

Dr. Hall - Welcome. Background of process -

- Virtual Option started during pandemic. See need to continue offering virtual
- Challenges - students connected to 24 campuses with different testing schedules. Disconnect from peers.
- Conversion Charter would be its own school & students would be part. Increase sense of belonging. More opportunities to expand & flexibility. Primary, virtual but opportunities to meet on campus.
- critical planning committee born from virtual option feedback groups. included admin, teachers, parents & students want to expand - more parents & students



- Timeline + Process  
(see slides)

Questions & Concerns?

So the school will still be  
open virtual?

What about Athletics? Band?

Dr. H: Yes - it will be virtual  
curriculum. Students can  
still attend local schools  
for athletics, band, orchestra,  
choir, GATE.

Will they still have teachers?

Dr. H: Yes. We will still  
have TPS teachers. They will  
offer live lessons, small groups  
& individual sessions. We plan  
to provide opportunities for students  
to meet in person occasionally.

Where will it be located?

Plan to develop space at Peak  
and include space for testing  
and for students to meet to  
collaborate or hang out.

The education was wonderful, especially  
math + science. But our child was  
not included in school activities  
like Spelling Bee. Will students  
have the opportunity to participate?



Dr. H: Yes. As our own school we can have our own Spelling Bee, Geography Bee, History Day, etc. as well as after school clubs.

Will you continue to use the same curriculum?

Dr. H: We plan to build our own curriculum in Schoology, which the district will be using K-12.

Dr. M: You might explain what Schoology is.

Dr. H: Schoology is a learning management system the district has been using in 7-12 and will expand to K-12 next year. It is a hub where students + parents access courses but also announcements, grades, etc. There will be one starting place for everyone to find information.

Have you thought about offering foreign languages in the lower grades?

Dr. H: We will mirror the courses offered by the district schools but we will have flexibility to add non-credit courses or clubs based on interests.



My student is in GATE. Will they be able to continue.

Dr. H: We may not provide every program but students will have access to the FSPS district resources. If we don't have a dedicated program such as GATE or dyslexia, FSPS staff will provide those services for students.

What about Special education?

We have a full-time Special education teacher who works with the teachers and also works directly with students in individual & small group sessions - virtually.

What grade levels will be included?

FSPA will be a K-8<sup>th</sup> grade school. Virtual for the 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade will be provided by each High School through their Schools of Innovation

Will the school have its own mascot? PTA?

Yes to both!