



## Organization Information

### Organization Name

Searcy County School District Career and Agriculture Trades Academy

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72650

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### City

Marshall

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### State

Arkansas

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## 1. Applicant Profile Information

Q1.

### Name of applicant

Searcy County School District

Q2.

### Contact person

#### 1. Full Name

#### 2. Title/Relationship to Charter

#### 3. Mailing Address

#### 4. Primary Phone

#### 5. Primary Contact Email

Heather Bohannon

Director of Curriculum and Administrator Support; District Administrator

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Q3.

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

#### 1. Full Name

#### 2. Current Role with Proposed School



### 3. Future Role with Proposed School

Valorie McCleary

Superintendent

Julie Rippy

North Central Career Center Director

Charter Director

Q4.

#### Projected Date of School Opening (Month/Year)

August 2026

Q5.

#### Type of Charter

- Conversion Charter
- Other. Please explain in the comment section:

Q6.

#### Educational Model

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

- Classical
- Traditional
- Virtual
- Career/CTE



- Hybrid Learning
- Performing Arts
- Special Populations
- Other: Please explain in the comment section.

## Section



Freddie Scott

Ratings

Meets

All elements are met.



Sarper Turker

Ratings

Meets

All elements are met.



## 2. Executive Summary

Q7.

### A.1 Vision and Mission

**State the charter school's mission and vision for the proposed school. Provide a clear, focused, and compelling purpose for the school that is measurable and focused on educational outcomes.**

**a. What specific needs or challenges within the district have led to the decision to pursue a district conversion charter school model?**

*Please describe the factors that support this request (academic, operational, community-based, etc.)*

**b. In what ways is the proposed district conversion charter school expected to positively impact student achievement, educational innovation, or overall district performance?**

*Include a description of anticipated benefits and how they align with district goals.*



The mission of the SCSD CATA is to ensure academic excellence, foster personal responsibility, and prepare students for skilled workforce and postsecondary success through rigorous instruction, conservation leadership, and career-aligned education.

We envision a PK–12 school system where rigorous academics, applied learning, durable skill development, and workforce-aligned instruction operate together to produce graduates who lead with integrity, solve real-world problems, and contribute productively to their communities, families, and careers.

SCSD CATA exists to increase literacy and mathematics proficiency, accelerate growth for all students—particularly those in the lowest quartile—expand access to career pathways and industry-recognized credentials, and graduate students prepared for Merit or Distinction diplomas, postsecondary education, military service, or direct workforce entry without remediation.

While the SCSD remains committed to continuous improvement, several academic indicators demonstrate the need for structural flexibility to accelerate student growth and achievement. Additionally, rural constraints limit the district’s ability to provide diverse elective pathways aligned with workforce demands. Approximately 40% of our 10th-12th grade students enroll at NCCC, located in Leslie, approximately 15 minutes from Marshall High School. The need to transport between campuses impedes the ability to implement flexible schedules for students needing core classes, preferred electives, acceleration opportunities, and intervention.

We have a demonstrated need to provide experiential and hands-on learning models that improve engagement. Student engagement data, attendance patterns, and stakeholder feedback indicate a need for more relevant, applied learning opportunities that connect academic content to real-world skills. Stakeholders voice strong support for the integration of academic standards into career pathways.

216 students are homeschooled in Searcy County, representing 22.7% of the district’s school-age population, the highest concentration of homeschooled students in the state, a statistic that has doubled over the last decade. These families want opportunities to participate with choice and flexibility that we cannot always offer in our traditional public school.

SCSD CATA is designed to improve student achievement, strengthen educational innovation, and enhance overall district performance through a coherent PK–12 system aligned to the district’s Improvement Plan. The model maintains full alignment to Arkansas Academic Standards and state



testing accountability while embedding conservation leadership, career-connected learning, and flexible instructional pathways.

SCSD CATA strengthens student achievement by increasing Tier 1 rigor, protecting instructional time, and implementing a robust Multi-Tiered System of Support. Early identification of struggling learners, structured interventions, weekly monitoring of growth, and Personalized Learning Plans directly support the district goal of increasing literacy proficiency and ensuring at least 60% of bottom quartile students demonstrate positive growth. Embedding writing and applied problem-solving across content areas strengthens long-term ACT performance and reduces remediation needs.

Educational innovation is advanced through conservation-based, interdisciplinary learning and early career awareness beginning in elementary grades. Research demonstrates that engagement and applied learning increase academic growth and persistence. Structured hybrid and virtual pathways increase personalization while maintaining accountability.

SCSD CATA strengthens overall district performance by aligning elementary literacy foundations with high school Merit and Distinction graduation goals. This integrated model ensures measurable academic growth, workforce readiness, and long-term district sustainability.

Q8.

### **B.1 Evidence of Need, Support, and Involvement**

**Describe the anticipated student population the school intends to serve. Provide a rationale for seeking to serve this population.**



If approved as a districtwide conversion charter, the Searcy County School District (SCSD) Career and Technical Academy (CATA) will serve Kindergarten-12th students at Marshall Elementary, Leslie Intermediate, and Marshall High School. SCSD CATA will serve traditional onsite students as well as hybrid learners, district-supported virtual learners, homeschool-connected students, and high school students accessing expanded academic and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming at the site of the North Central Career Center (NCCC), the district's vocational training center with more than 40 years of service to the region.

Searcy County is a rural community where economic realities, workforce demands, and geographic factors significantly influence educational access and opportunity. Many families seek flexibility due to work schedules, transportation challenges, or the need for early workforce entry. Aligning education to local and regional workforce needs while maintaining rigorous academic standards is essential for long-term community sustainability. The anticipated student population reflects these rural demographic realities and reinforces SCSD's commitment to serving students within their community rather than losing them to external providers.

Traditional onsite students will continue to receive face-to-face instruction aligned to Arkansas Academic Standards. These students will benefit from strengthened literacy systems, conservation leadership programming, and vertically aligned career awareness initiatives that support graduation readiness.

CATA will expand structured hybrid and virtual pathways for students who need flexible pacing for acceleration or remediation, who have health or family scheduling needs, or who seek an alternative to full-time online charter schools while remaining connected to their home district. Hybrid and virtual students will retain eligibility for athletics, clubs, fine arts, leadership programs, and courses offered at Marshall High School.

SCSD CATA also anticipates serving homeschool-connected students who desire structured access to public school coursework and activities while maintaining flexible learning environments. These students may apply for enrollment in academic courses, conservation leadership programming, extracurricular activities, and CTE programs.

CATA will expand the role of NCCC by offering additional core academic courses and electives for students in grades 9–12 aligned to pathway offerings. Expanded programming will include select core courses in English, mathematics, science, and social studies; career-focused electives; industry-recognized credential pathways; and applied technical coursework integrated with academic standards. Flexible scheduling will accommodate onsite, hybrid, and virtual students. Participants



will remain enrolled in SCSD, be included in state accountability measures, receive special education and intervention services, maintain eligibility for Core, Merit, or Distinction diplomas, and earn credit toward graduation requirements.

This anticipated population reflects current and projected community needs based on stakeholder outreach meetings and data review. It reflects current community trends, family feedback, and enrollment data indicating increased demand for flexible learning models and career-aligned coursework within the district.

By offering district-controlled flexibility and expanded career pathways, CATA allows SCSD to retain students, attract homeschool families seeking structured academic or career coursework, preserve funding, and strengthen long-term district sustainability. This comprehensive model ensures that flexibility, innovation, and accountability work together to improve student achievement and enhance workforce readiness while maintaining compliance with Arkansas education standards.

Q9.

## **B.2 Evidence of Need, Support, and Involvement**

**Describe the current educational options available to your target population and how a new charter school will impact the available options.**



Students residing in Searcy County currently have access to several educational pathways. These include traditional enrollment at Marshall Elementary, Leslie Intermediate, and Marshall High School; a district-operated online option for elementary and high school students; statewide open-enrollment charter schools, including fully virtual programs; homeschool options; and school choice transfers. High school students may also participate in CTE programming through North Central Career Center (NCCC) in CNA/Medical Professions, LPN, Construction Trades, and Auto Tech. Through its partnership with North Arkansas College, SCSD offers concurrent credit coursework and pathway-based certificates for students enrolled in CTE programs. Additionally, students have access to concurrent credit through partnerships with Arkansas State University–Mountain Home and North Arkansas College.

While these options provide meaningful opportunities, structural gaps remain. Families seeking flexible scheduling, hybrid access, expanded career pathways, or applied workforce experiences often must leave the district to obtain them. Even though the district offers online options, students pursuing fully virtual or hybrid flexibility frequently lose integrated access to extracurricular programs, leadership opportunities, and cohesive PK–12 pathway alignment. Students enrolling in external online charter schools or transitioning to homeschool exit district accountability systems and disconnect from established literacy supports and career pipelines. This fragmentation contributes to enrollment decline, weakens Average Daily Membership (ADM) funding stability, and disrupts long-term district improvement efforts.

These challenges are intensified by the economic and geographic realities of Searcy County. In a county with a 21% poverty rate according to the 2024 United States Census, approximately 73% of SCSD students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. As a rural school district, geographic isolation and transportation limitations significantly affect educational access. If the district were to close NCCC, students seeking vocational training would be required to travel more than two hours per day to reach the nearest technical centers. For economically disadvantaged families, this commute is not realistic. In practical terms, vocational participation would decline sharply, and students who would benefit most from hands-on workforce preparation would likely forgo those opportunities entirely. This is why the district has supported the NCCC program for over 40 years.

NCCC eliminates this geographic inequity by providing high-quality, industry-aligned training within the county. It serves not only Searcy County students but also students in the Clinton School District. School districts in neighboring communities of Timbo, Rural Special, and Shirley have demonstrated interest in participation this next year. The proposed SCSD Career and Technical Academy (SCSD



CATA) conversion charter strengthens this regional model by increasing core and elective offerings, expanding industry-recognized credential pathways, and deepening academic integration within CTE coursework.

The economic implications of this expansion extend beyond individual students. Rural communities depend on locally trained, credentialed graduates to sustain small businesses, healthcare services, agriculture operations, skilled trades, and emerging industries. When students leave the community for educational options elsewhere, they are less likely to return, contributing to workforce shortages and population decline. By expanding SCSD CATA, the district positions itself as a regional workforce development hub that aligns education with labor market demand. Increased access to concurrent credit and credential attainment through North Arkansas College and ASU Mountain Home strengthens the talent pipeline and reduces the need for employers to recruit outside the region.

The conversion charter strengthens—not duplicates—existing options. It integrates flexibility, innovation, and expanded academic access under local governance while maintaining full alignment to Arkansas ATLAS accountability requirements.

Under the conversion model, the district will continue offering structured onsite and district-supported virtual pathways while expanding hybrid options that allow students to personalize learning without sacrificing access to athletics, fine arts, clubs, and leadership programs. Homeschool families may apply for part-time enrollment in academic courses, conservation leadership programming, extracurricular activities, and expanded coursework at NCCC, creating a flexible but accountable middle-ground option.

The charter will expand NCCC to include additional core academic courses and electives for grades 7–12 aligned to workforce pathways and durable skill development. These offerings will be available to traditional onsite students, hybrid learners, district-supported virtual students, approved homeschool students, and potentially neighboring district students seeking expanded options. Districts seeking to enroll students only in NCCC vocational programs offered in partnership with North Arkansas College do not have to enroll as SCSD students as the vocational center is a stand-alone program. Student completion of these programs provide eligibility for Merit or Distinction diplomas to be provided by their school districts. All students enrolled in K-12 courses will be enrolled in SCSD, be included in state accountability measures as applicable, and maintain eligibility for Core, Merit, or Distinction graduation pathways. Partnering school districts may develop MOU's with SCSD to access core or elective courses if needed to support students in completion of their CTE pathway.



Importantly, the expanded model strengthens concurrent credit opportunities through ASU Mountain Home and North Arkansas College. Students enrolled in pathway programs will have access to college credit coursework and certificate attainment aligned to industry needs. This ensures students graduate with not only a diploma but also postsecondary credit, credentials, or certifications that accelerate workforce entry or college completion. These opportunities are also available to partner district students.

This anticipated population reflects current and projected community needs based on stakeholder outreach, enrollment data, and family feedback indicating increased demand for flexible learning models and career-aligned coursework. By expanding access while preserving accountability, SCSD CATA strengthens PK–12 coherence, stabilizes enrollment, protects ADM funding, expands concurrent credit access, and aligns academic preparation with regional workforce needs.

The proposed SCSD CATA ensures that flexibility, rigor, and workforce preparation operate together —improving academic outcomes, reducing geographic barriers, strengthening rural economic sustainability, and positioning Searcy County School District as a regional leader in innovative, accountable public education.

Q10.

### **B.3 Evidence of Need, Support, and Involvement**

**Based on your outreach, research, and knowledge of the student population and community, what are the primary challenges to student success in the area you seek to serve?**

*Describe how the proposed district conversion charter school will address these challenges through its academic model, support structures, or innovative practices.*



The district's 2025–2026 Improvement Plan identifies a distinct performance profile: strong overall achievement relative to state averages paired with systemic growth challenges among the lowest-performing students. SCSD serves a high-poverty rural population with a 21% poverty rate in which approximately 73% of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. In addition, 17% of students receive special education services and 11% receive dyslexia intervention services. These demographics intensify the need for consistent instructional rigor, systematic intervention, and strong Tier I implementation.

Within this context, the “lowest quartile” (Q1) refers to the bottom 25% of students based on ATLAS growth percentiles. These students demonstrate the greatest need for acceleration and targeted instructional support to close achievement gaps.

Academic Growth and Proficiency data underscore the urgency of this work. Grades 3–10 reading proficiency stands at 45% (ATLAS 2025). Grades 1–3 literacy proficiency is 51%, and Kindergarten literacy proficiency is 71%. Literacy growth for Grade 3 students in the lowest quartile falls at the 29th percentile. Overall student growth—and growth for lowest-quartile students—at Marshall Elementary and Leslie Intermediate falls below the 50th percentile in most measured areas. In contrast, Marshall High School demonstrates that lowest-quartile students can achieve growth in the 88th percentile in literacy and 85th percentile in math when instructional rigor and monitoring structures are implemented consistently. This contrast confirms that strong systems already exist within the district and can be scaled downward to earlier grades.

District analysis identifies pacing, rigor, engagement, scaffolding, and inconsistent Tier I implementation as contributing factors. Writing has been identified as a district-wide weakness in grades K–12. Additionally, 76% of students require math remediation based on ACT performance, and the ACT composite average of 18.7 has remained flat or slightly declined over five years. Although 75% of graduates earned Merit or Distinction diplomas in 2025, readiness indicators demonstrate that foundational literacy and mathematics rigor must be strengthened earlier in the PK–12 continuum to reduce remediation and expand postsecondary opportunity.

The proposed charter model responds directly and structurally to these challenges.

First, it replicates high school growth systems in K–6. The conversion charter formalizes lowest-quartile monitoring as a standing PLC agenda item, institutes weekly Q1 data tracking, protects Tier I literacy blocks, schedules Tier 3 interventions four days per week, and embeds literacy coach-led module planning cycles. For students receiving special education services and dyslexia interventions, progress monitoring will align with IEP and structured literacy plans to ensure



acceleration within inclusive settings. The measurable outcome is that at least 60% of lowest-quartile students demonstrate positive literacy growth by May 2026, with the district median growth percentile at or above the state median annually.

Second, the charter strengthens Tier I rigor and alignment. It ensures 100% fidelity implementation of Wit & Wisdom (K–6), structured word study through UFLI (K–3) and Structures (4–6), and embedded writing tasks across disciplines through conservation-based projects. Classroom tasks will align with ATLAS depth-of-knowledge expectations to close the gap between local mastery and state assessment performance. The measurable outcome is to increase Grades 3–10 reading proficiency from 45% to 56% and Grades 1–3 literacy proficiency from 51% to 65% by May 2026.

Third, the Schools of Conservation Leadership framework addresses engagement gaps through applied, interdisciplinary learning. Students engage in analytical reading, evidence-based writing, mathematical data analysis, collaborative problem-solving, and public presentation. Research demonstrates that engagement strongly correlates with academic growth (Fredricks et al., 2004; Hattie, 2009). By embedding engagement within Tier I instruction rather than as enrichment, the charter strengthens achievement for all students, particularly those in poverty and those requiring intervention services.

Fourth, SCSD CATA strengthens the PK–12 academic and career pipeline. To address ACT remediation and readiness concerns, the model introduces structured career awareness in elementary grades and expands 7–12 core and elective coursework at North Central Career Center (NCCC). Traditional, hybrid, virtual, and approved homeschool students will have access to industry-aligned programming. The measurable outcome is to increase Merit and Distinction attainment to 80% by May 2026 and improve ACT readiness metrics over a five-year trajectory.

Fifth, the SCSD CATA stabilizes enrollment through flexible delivery. Structured hybrid enrollment, district-supported virtual pathways, and part-time academic access for homeschool students allow families to remain connected to district systems while maintaining flexibility. The measurable outcome is enrollment stabilization within two years and reduction of annual enrollment decline to below 2%.

Importantly, the charter builds on existing district strengths: proven high school growth systems, established literacy curriculum adoption, existing NCCC infrastructure, and clearly identified improvement targets with monitoring systems in place. The conversion does not introduce untested initiatives; it formalizes, protects, and scales systems already implemented in the SCSD.



In sum, the SCSD CATA exceeds standard expectations by clearly identifying measurable academic challenges, providing data-aligned structural solutions, establishing explicit growth and proficiency benchmarks, demonstrating PK–12 alignment, and ensuring accountability through ATLAS and district monitoring structures. By addressing lowest-quartile growth, literacy rigor, writing performance, readiness indicators, and enrollment sustainability through coherent structural redesign, the charter establishes measurable and sustainable pathways for academic improvement for all students.

Q11.

#### **B.4 Evidence of Need, Support, and Involvement**

**What evidence demonstrates community interest and support for establishing a district conversion charter school?**

*Please describe any meetings, surveys, focus groups, or other forms of outreach that indicate stakeholder engagement and community backing for the proposed school.*



Community interest and support for establishing the SCSD CATA were demonstrated through multiple stakeholder engagement activities, including board of education meetings, staff meetings, community partner surveys, parent surveys, staff surveys, student pathway surveys, and ongoing discussions with local officials, local employers and advisory partners. These outreach efforts were designed to ensure that the proposed charter model reflects the needs of our families, students, communities, and the regional workforce.

Multiple meetings have been held in the 2025-26 school year to assess stakeholder interest and engagement in a district conversion charter application. The SCSD Board of Education expressed formal support to the SCSD Superintendent to explore a charter conversion in September 2025. In November 2025, a stakeholder meeting was held at the NCCC where parents, students, staff, and local business partners participated in an introductory meeting to the charter conversion model and provided input into the mission and development of the charter focus. The Charter School Stakeholder Input Survey was administered at the conclusion of this meeting.

Following this meeting, the Board of Education conducted a work session in December 2025 at the NCCC, toured programs and classrooms and provided input to help define the mission, purpose, and goals, including the Charter Executive Summary before submission to the Arkansas Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The superintendent and NCCC Director participated in a stakeholder meeting with veterans held at the Searcy County Veterans Hall in November 2025. Over 20 veterans provided input and expressed their support for the SCSD CATA. In this meeting, these veteran leaders formally voted to revise their scholarship criteria to only support students entering postsecondary education in vocational trades.

The SCSD CATA model was presented to students and parents at three separate Career and Academic Planning nights in February and March 2026 for grades 6-11. The Conversion Charter Survey was administered to parents and 10th and 11th grade students on each of these nights.

Stakeholders for CNA/Medical Professions, LPN, Auto Tech, and Construction Trades programs were invited to participate in a stakeholder planning meeting in March 2026. Stakeholders provided verbal discussion and expressed strong support for the SCSD CATA model.

The Charter School Stakeholder Input Survey gathered feedback regarding interest in serving on Charter Development Committee, educational priorities, CTE programs, and interests. Responses confirmed strong interest in expanded career pathways, applied learning opportunities, and



improved connections between academic coursework and real-world careers. Several open-ended responses emphasized the importance of maintaining strong relationships with local schools while providing additional flexibility and career-focused programming.

The Conversion Charter Survey, completed by 82 respondents representing parents, guardians, and students, demonstrated strong overall support for the proposed conversion charter model. The input provided by these parents represents over one-third of students enrolled in SCSD. When asked whether they would support the district applying for conversion charter status to provide expanded options such as hybrid learning, career pathways, and flexible scheduling, 78% of respondents indicated they support or strongly support the initiative and 18.5% were neutral. Only two of 82 respondents were in opposition! Additionally, when asked whether they would enroll or keep their student enrolled if the charter model were implemented, 64 respondents (82 percent) reported they were likely or very likely to do so. These responses indicate strong parent interest in a school model that expands flexible learning options while maintaining connection to local programs and extracurricular opportunities.

The survey also identified several key themes explaining why families seek alternative educational options. Respondents consistently cited the need for flexible scheduling, hybrid learning opportunities, work-based learning options, and expanded career pathway access as major factors influencing decisions to homeschool or enroll in virtual charter schools. Parents also expressed strong support for career certifications, structured internships, and partnerships with local businesses that allow students to earn academic credit while gaining workforce experience. These responses directly informed the design of SCSD CATA's hybrid learning structures, NCCC expansion, and work-based learning partnerships.

Student voice was also incorporated through Career and Technical Education pathway surveys and career exploration activities. 250 students in grades 7–11 (representing over 80% of students in these grades) were asked to identify career interests, desired certifications, and preferred pathway options. Survey results indicated strong interest in agriculture, healthcare, construction trades, business, and automotive technology pathways—areas already supported by Marshall High School and NCCC. Students also expressed interest in work-based learning opportunities, industry certifications, and apprenticeship-style experiences that allow them to gain skills while completing graduation requirements.

In addition to surveys, the district engaged stakeholders through advisory committees, employer consultations, and community discussions regarding the future of career pathways and flexible learning options. Local employers and workforce partners consistently emphasized the need for



graduates with strong technical skills, professional behaviors, and durable competencies such as communication, reliability, problem-solving skills and teamwork. This feedback influenced the integration of durable skills, SkillsUSA programming, and work-based learning opportunities within the charter model.

Collectively, these outreach efforts demonstrate broad community backing for the proposed conversion charter school. Survey data show strong parent support for expanded academic flexibility and career preparation, while student feedback confirms strong interest in pathway-based learning opportunities. Engagement with employers and community partners further validates the need for a school model that integrates rigorous academics with workforce readiness. These are some of the comments provided by stakeholders in these outreach efforts:

- *“The Searcy County Unit was known as the unit who could fix anything in Desert Storm. We want to support students who choose trades.”*
- *“NCCC is a beacon in our community. Anything that builds it, we support.”*
- *“I came to ALE because I wanted to come to the Career Center. I have another year before I can enroll and I’m not sure which one I will enroll in, but I’m going to enter a votech program.”*

These findings provide clear evidence that the SCSD CATA model reflects community priorities and has strong stakeholder support. The charter proposal is therefore not simply a district initiative but a community-driven response to evolving educational and workforce needs in Searcy County.

## Section



Sarper Turker

### Ratings

**Meets** All elements are met.



### 3. Academic Plan

Q12.

#### A.1 Academic focus

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



SCSD serves several rural communities where geographic isolation, transportation barriers, and limited local industry create unique educational challenges. Like many rural districts across Arkansas, SCSD has experienced enrollment pressure from homeschooling and statewide virtual charter schools as families seek flexible learning options. At the same time, district data indicate strong overall achievement but persistent growth challenges among the lowest-performing students, particularly in literacy and writing. The SCSD CATA is designed to address both challenges simultaneously: strengthening academic rigor while expanding flexible pathways that keep students connected to their home district and community.

The proposed conversion charter will operate as a K-12 Career and Technical Academy with career-focused pathways and flexible instructional delivery, integrating rigorous academics, applied learning within a conservation leadership focus, and workforce preparation into a coherent improvement framework. The academic focus centers on strengthening literacy and mathematics outcomes, accelerating growth for the lowest-performing students, and ensuring graduates leave school prepared for postsecondary education, skilled employment, military service, or entrepreneurship.

### **Educational Philosophy**

SCSD CATA is grounded in the belief that academic excellence and real-world application are mutually reinforcing. Students learn best when rigorous academic instruction is paired with opportunities to apply knowledge through meaningful projects, career exploration, and authentic problem-solving. The district's philosophy therefore integrates strong core academic instruction, applied interdisciplinary learning, durable skill development, and career readiness beginning in elementary grades.

The model recognizes that students have diverse academic goals and learning needs. Some students thrive in traditional classroom environments, while others benefit from applied learning, technical pathways, or flexible scheduling that allows them to balance coursework with work-based experiences. SCSD CATA provides multiple pathways to mastery of Arkansas Academic Standards, while maintaining a strong accountability focus.

### **Academic Benchmarks and Performance Goals**



The district's 2025-26 improvement plan establishes clear benchmarks guiding the academic model. These targets are based on ATLAS results, literacy screening data, and graduation readiness indicators. Key benchmarks include increasing Grades 3–10 reading proficiency from **45 percent to 56 percent**, increasing Grades 1–3 literacy proficiency from **51 percent to 65 percent**, and ensuring **60 percent of students in the lowest quartile demonstrate positive literacy growth by May 2026**. Additional 2025-26 goals include increasing Merit and Distinction diploma attainment to **80 percent**, reducing ACT remediation rates, and expanding student participation in credential-bearing career pathways. Progress toward these benchmarks is monitored through universal screening cycles, interim assessments, ATLAS performance analysis, and structured Professional Learning Community data reviews.

### **Conservation Leadership Integration**

Beginning in the 2026–27 school year, SCSD CATA will implement the Schools of Conservation Leadership model across all district campuses in partnership with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. This initiative integrates environmental stewardship, applied science, and civic responsibility into academic instruction. Students participate in watershed studies, greenhouse projects, ecological investigations, environmental data analysis, and conservation writing assignments. These experiences reinforce literacy, mathematics, and scientific reasoning while strengthening student engagement.

### **Flexible Hybrid and Virtual Learning Opportunities**

A central innovation of SCSD CATA is expanded hybrid and virtual instructional flexibility. The district currently serves students through a virtual learning option, and survey data indicate strong interest in combining virtual academic courses with in-person career training opportunities. At present, 36 students are enrolled in the district's virtual program. These students and families have expressed interest in a flexible model that would allow them to take core academic courses online while attending career pathway classes at the North Central Career Center campus. Under SCSD CATA, students will be able to access this blended structure.



Students may complete core courses through virtual or hybrid scheduling while attending NCCC for technical coursework. They may also enroll in electives at the Marshall High School campus while participating in pathway programs at NCCC. This flexible scheduling model allows students to combine virtual learning, high school electives, and technical training while remaining connected to district athletics, activities, clubs, and student organizations. This approach addresses a key challenge in rural education: providing flexible learning opportunities without forcing students to leave the district for statewide virtual charter schools or homeschooling.

### **Innovation Through Charter Flexibility**

The district may seek the following waivers to support innovation:

- **Flexible Scheduling and Seat Time**—A waiver from traditional seat-time requirements allows students to earn credit through competency-based demonstrations, internships, or apprenticeships. This flexibility supports hybrid learning schedules and work-based learning.
- **Teacher Licensure Flexibility for CTE**—A waiver allowing industry experts with specialized credentials to teach technical courses or workshops supports workforce-aligned instruction in fields such as construction, healthcare, and automotive technology.
- **Class Size and Teaching Load Adjustments**—A waiver allows adjustment of class size or teaching load in specialized CTE labs or project-based courses where collaborative learning models differ from traditional classrooms.
- **Calendar and Instructional Time Flexibility**—Flexible scheduling allows extended project blocks, internship hours, and conservation field experiences while still meeting instructional hour requirements.
- **Course Credit Flexibility**—This flexibility allows students to earn credit for coursework through competency demonstration, certifications, or work-based learning (e.g., NCCER, CNA, ASE certifications).
- **Smart Core Requirements Flexibility (Oral Communication, Fine Arts)**—Oral Communication can be integrated into other courses. Students may take a career-focused elective specified through Student Success Plans instead of Fine Arts.



- **Staff Assignment Flexibility**—SCSD CATA may offer courses that combine multiple subject areas—for example environmental science, policy analysis, and technical writing within conservation projects. Staff assignment flexibility allows appropriately qualified educators to lead integrated courses without requiring multiple endorsements.
- **Elective Flexibility for Career Pathways**—Flexibility allowing students to prioritize career pathway electives in place of electives beyond minimum state requirements. Students pursuing technical pathways may need additional time for advanced career coursework or certification preparation.
- **Flexibility in Scheduling Planning Periods and Teacher Duties** *(to support hybrid instruction and interdisciplinary collaboration)*—Project-based learning, conservation leadership, and career pathway coordination require increased collaboration between teachers, CTE instructors, and stakeholders. Scheduling flexibility allows educators to participate in vertical planning, pathway coordination, and professional learning communities without disrupting instructional continuity.

Q13.

### A.2 Academic focus

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



The improvement model for SCSD CATA is built on a coherent theory of action: when rigorous Tier I instruction, structured intervention systems, applied learning, and personalized career planning operate cohesively across PK-12, academic proficiency increases and achievement gaps narrow.

### **Strengthening Tier I Core Instruction**

High-quality Tier I instruction serves as the foundation of sustained academic improvement. Hattie's (2009) synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses identifies teacher clarity, structured feedback, and deliberate practice as among the highest-impact strategies influencing achievement. The National Reading Panel (2000) confirms that systematic, explicit literacy instruction is essential for improving outcomes for struggling readers. Bloom's (1984) research on mastery learning further demonstrates that when students receive structured instruction with targeted feedback and time for practice, achievement gains can approach those of individualized tutoring.

SCSD CATA ensures 100% fidelity implementation of literacy curriculum and embedded writing across disciplines aligned to Arkansas Academic Standards and ATLAS depth-of-knowledge expectations. Writing is integrated into conservation leadership projects, science investigations, and CTE coursework to strengthen analytical reasoning and constructed-response performance. Tier I literacy blocks are protected in master schedules to ensure sufficient time for explicit instruction, guided practice, and application. These structural protections are designed to increase literacy proficiency, strengthen writing rigor, and reduce discrepancies between classroom performance and state assessment results.

### **Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and Gap Closure**

To address lowest-quartile growth deficits, the district embeds a structured MTSS. Universal screening occurs three times annually, and data are disaggregated by subgroup and growth percentile. Professional Learning Communities meet weekly to review lowest-quartile data, analyze instructional impact, and adjust intervention placement. Tier III intervention is scheduled four days per week with defined intensity and duration.



The Institute of Education Sciences (2008) identifies MTSS and Response to Intervention frameworks as effective models for reducing achievement gaps when implemented consistently. Formative assessment research by Black and Wiliam (1998) demonstrates that frequent, actionable feedback significantly increases student growth. SCSD CATA formalizes these practices through Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs), modeled after Arkansas Student Success Plans, which document intervention strategies, growth benchmarks, and acceleration opportunities.

The district sets a measurable target that at least 60% of lowest-quartile students will demonstrate positive literacy growth annually, with the district median growth percentile meeting or exceeding the state median.

### **Engagement Through Applied, Interdisciplinary Learning**

Academic rigor is reinforced through the Schools of Conservation Leadership framework, which integrates interdisciplinary, applied learning into standards-based instruction. Students engage in watershed analysis, soil conservation research, wildlife habitat studies, agricultural sustainability projects, and public presentations requiring analytical reading, mathematical modeling, collaboration, and technical writing.

Research indicates that student engagement—cognitive, behavioral, and emotional—is strongly correlated with academic achievement and persistence (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Darling-Hammond et al. (2008) found that project-based learning increases retention and higher-order thinking by requiring students to apply knowledge to authentic problems. By embedding engagement into Tier I instruction rather than treating it as enrichment, SCSD CATA strengthens both academic rigor and student motivation, particularly among students at risk of disengagement.

### **PK-12 Career Alignment and Workforce Readiness**

District data indicate that 76% of students require math remediation based on ACT scores, and the composite average has remained flat. These indicators demonstrate the need for earlier academic rigor and stronger alignment between coursework and postsecondary expectations.



Advance CTE (2019) research shows that early exposure to career pathways increases student motivation, goal clarity, and postsecondary persistence. SCSD CATA introduces structured career awareness beginning in elementary grades, where students explore career clusters, develop digital portfolios, and begin drafting personalized academic and career plans. In middle school, students complete career interest inventories and align course selections to emerging goals.

At the secondary level, North Central Career Center expands core and elective offerings aligned to workforce pathways and industry-recognized credentials. Academic standards are integrated directly into technical coursework, reinforcing applied literacy and mathematics skills. Partnerships with Arkansas State University–Mountain Home and North Arkansas College allow students to earn concurrent credit and pathway-based certificates, strengthening both academic preparation and workforce alignment. The measurable outcome includes increasing Merit and Distinction attainment to 80% and improving ACT readiness metrics over a five-year trajectory.

### **Flexible Delivery and Personalization**

Structured hybrid and district-supported virtual pathways increase personalization while maintaining ATLAS accountability. Means et al. (2010) found that blended learning environments demonstrate modest but positive academic effects when paired with strong instructional design and monitoring. PLPs guide both intervention and acceleration, ensuring that struggling students receive targeted supports while advanced learners access concurrent credit and credential opportunities. Flexible delivery also supports enrollment stabilization, preserving the continuity of literacy systems and intervention structures essential for sustained growth.

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Q14.

### **A.3 Academic focus**

**Describe the school's curriculum and discuss how it will prepare students to meet or exceed Arkansas standards.**

**a. If the curriculum is fully developed, summarize curricular choices, and explain the rationale for selection. If the curriculum still needs to be fully developed, describe any curriculum decisions made to date, share any proposed curricular decisions that are pending, and explain the process for completion.**



**b. Provide evidence or documentation that the literacy curriculum chosen is based on the science of reading. Describe your strategy for students reading at or above grade level or higher and your strategy for students reading below grade level.**



The Searcy County Districtwide Conversion Charter (SCSD CATA) will implement a vertically aligned, standards-based curriculum designed to ensure that all students meet or exceed Arkansas Academic Standards while developing durable skills, career readiness competencies, and applied technical expertise. The curriculum reflects intentional, research-based decisions grounded in district data, Science of Reading principles, workforce alignment, and continuous monitoring of results. It is fully developed in core academic areas and strategically expanded in conservation leadership and workforce pathways to create a coherent K–12 system.

### **English Language Arts and Core Literacy Curriculum (Grades K–6)**

In grades K–6, the district utilizes Wit & Wisdom as the core English Language Arts curriculum. Wit & Wisdom is a knowledge-building, text-centered curriculum aligned to Arkansas Academic Standards and designed to increase student exposure to complex texts, academic vocabulary, and evidence-based writing. Students engage in sustained book and novel studies, structured close reading, analytical writing, and academic discourse.

The rationale for selecting Wit & Wisdom is rooted in district writing goals and literacy data. Writing has been identified as a K–12 area for growth, and Wit & Wisdom embeds writing across every module. Students regularly produce constructed responses, analytical essays, research tasks, and performance-based writing assignments aligned to ATLAS depth-of-knowledge expectations. Because the curriculum is text-centered and organized around content-rich themes, it naturally supports applied learning extensions.

Wit & Wisdom is supported by structured foundational literacy programs aligned to the Science of Reading. In grades K–3, UFLI Foundations provides explicit, systematic, cumulative phonics instruction. Students develop phonemic awareness, decoding, encoding, fluency, and automatic word recognition through sequenced lessons. In grades 4–6, Structures word study deepens morphological awareness through instruction in roots, prefixes, suffixes, and multisyllabic word decoding. Together, these programs address all five essential components identified by the National Reading



Panel (2000): phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. This framework ensures compliance with the Arkansas LEARNS Act and supports students reading below grade level while maintaining grade-level rigor.

### **Secondary Literacy (Grades 7–12)**

In grades 7–12, the district utilizes My Perspectives as the core English Language Arts curriculum. My Perspectives emphasizes analytical reading, argumentative and research writing, grammar and language conventions, and academic vocabulary development. Students engage in sustained text studies that require evidence-based reasoning and synthesis. The district selected My Perspectives because of its strong alignment to Arkansas standards, its focus on text analysis and structured writing workshops, and its compatibility with applied learning models.

The curriculum supports ATLAS expectations for constructed-response tasks and prepares students for postsecondary writing demands. Its structure allows easy integration with conservation projects and career pathway coursework, reinforcing literacy skills across academic and technical contexts.

### **Elementary Mathematics (Grades K–6)**

Grades K–6 utilize Eureka Math, selected for its coherence, conceptual progression, and alignment to Arkansas Mathematics Standards. Eureka emphasizes conceptual understanding before procedural fluency and integrates regular problem-solving tasks requiring mathematical reasoning and communication.

### **Secondary Mathematics (Grades 7–12)**

At the secondary level, the district developed a locally aligned mathematics curriculum under the leadership of a veteran mathematics teacher serving as district math coach. The rationale for developing a local curriculum was to ensure vertical alignment, close monitoring of ATLAS task rigor, and responsiveness to district performance data.

Pacing guides were created to ensure alignment with ATLAS depth-of-knowledge expectations. Structured formative assessment cycles were embedded into instruction. As a result of this alignment work, high school math growth scores have improved substantially, with lowest-quartile students demonstrating growth in the 85th percentile



statewide. Middle school math performance has stabilized, and grades 4–6 fraction and proportional reasoning alignment has strengthened Algebra readiness. This locally developed curriculum demonstrates the district’s capacity to monitor, refine, and scale effective instructional practices.

### **Science**

The SCSD is committed to a rigorous, inquiry-based approach to science education. To achieve this, the district currently utilizes a multifaceted curriculum for grades K–8, drawing from esteemed providers like National Geographic, McGraw Hill, and Amplify Science, complemented by high-quality, district-created materials. While these resources have served our students well, the district is now moving toward a more unified and vertically aligned instructional model. To ensure vertical alignment—meaning students build on their knowledge seamlessly as they move from one grade to the next—SCSD is transitioning all K–8 classrooms to the Amplify Science curriculum in three phases.

Amplify Science is an Arkansas-approved curriculum designed to shift students from simply "learning about" science to "doing" science. It challenges students to take on the roles of scientists and engineers to solve real-world problems.

### **Virtual Learning**

For families choosing virtual enrollment, the district has curated a selection of approved digital partners. These platforms provide a comprehensive curriculum that spans everything from foundational core subjects to specialized electives.

To ensure the content is age-appropriate and academically rigorous, CATA utilizes different providers based on age and grade level while providing flexibility and choice for students and families. Elementary learners benefit from the Arkansas Public School Resource Center course content and instructional delivery. This partnership focuses on building strong literacy and numeracy foundations through engaging, child-friendly digital interfaces. For middle school and secondary students, Edmentum provides flexible, standards-aligned coursework, while Virtual Arkansas offers a robust catalog of electives and Advanced Placement options, ensuring students remain competitive for college and career opportunities.



By leveraging these approved providers as well as others, the district guarantees that every virtual credit earned meets the same high standards as those earned within the four walls of a physical classroom.

### **K-12 Conservation Leadership Curriculum (Proposed Implementation 2026–27)**

SCSD has committed to becoming a School of Conservation Leadership supported by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. This curriculum integrates environmental stewardship, applied science, and civic literacy into standards-based instruction.

Students participate in watershed analysis, greenhouse and agricultural science projects, environmental data collection and analysis, conservation-focused writing, outdoor safety programming, and annual environmental stewardship events. Research demonstrates that environment-based education improves engagement and academic achievement across disciplines (Lieberman & Hoody, 1998). Conservation-based learning reinforces literacy, mathematics, science reasoning, and civic responsibility through authentic application.

### **Early Career Awareness (Grades K–6 and 7–8) (Proposed Implementation 2026–27)**

Career awareness begins in elementary grades through structured activities aligned to Arkansas Student Success Plans. Students participate in career exploration days, classroom guest speakers, tours of district agriculture, construction, culinary, and healthcare programs, and introductory digital portfolio development. Elementary students tour North Central Career Center facilities and local employers to observe live demonstrations of career pathways.

In grades 7–8, students complete career interest inventories, conduct occupational research, and engage in structured presentations aligned to potential high school pathways. These experiences strengthen motivation, goal clarity, and course selection alignment. Junior high students will participate in NCCC recruitment days and visits to local employers to help define career interests and identify career pathways.

### **High School Career Pathways**



Students access Agriculture (FFA), Family & Consumer Sciences (FCCLA), Business (FBLA), CNA/Medical Professions, Construction Trades (NCCER-aligned), and Auto Technology (ASE-aligned). Academic standards are embedded within pathway coursework. Students apply algebra in construction measurement, technical reading in blueprint interpretation, scientific documentation in healthcare labs, and persuasive writing in business proposals. Students participate in Be Pro Be Proud mobile workshops for more exposure to trades careers.

Concurrent credit partnerships with Arkansas State University–Mountain Home and North Arkansas College allow students to earn dual credit and industry-aligned certificates. This integration strengthens workforce readiness while reinforcing academic standards.

### **SkillsUSA**

The SkillsUSA Framework is the foundational blueprint for preparing students to become skilled professionals, career-ready leaders, and responsible community members. All programs in NCCC participate in the Skills USA chapter. It provides a common language and intentional structure that articulates what students learn and achieve through participation in SkillsUSA programming, whether in classroom coursework, CTSO activities, competitions, leadership experiences, or work-based learning.

At its core, the SkillsUSA framework is organized around three major skill domains: Personal Skills, Workplace Skills, and Technical Skills Grounded in Academics. Together, these domains define the essential attributes that students need to be successful on Day One in the workplace and in their postsecondary pursuits. The framework serves not only as a guide for student learning but also as a common standard that educators, employers, and community partners can use to evaluate student readiness and growth.

Personal Skills focus on the character traits and individual behaviors that support success in life and career. These include integrity, responsibility, self-motivation, adaptability, professionalism, and a strong work ethic. Workplace Skills center on the communication, interpersonal, and collaborative competencies necessary for effective



participation in professional environments. Workplace skill development ensures that students are not only technically proficient but also able to function productively as part of a team in diverse settings.

Technical Skills Grounded in Academics involve the specific knowledge, technical competencies, and applied problem-solving that students need for success in their chosen career fields. These skills are informed by rigorous academic standards and industry expectations. Students hone technical skills through hands-on coursework, industry-aligned certifications, and competitions that require real-world application of academic content. Technical skills are developed in context, where literacy, mathematics, science, and technology are integrated into meaningful tasks that mirror workplace demands.

In practice, the SkillsUSA Framework is used by the local NCCC chapter to assess student skill development, plan Program of Work activities, align classroom curriculum with career-readiness outcomes, and support student leadership experiences that mirror industry expectations. It also provides a foundation for self-reflection, continuous improvement, and documented evidence of skill progression that students can communicate to employers, postsecondary institutions, and other stakeholders.

### **K-12 Durable Skills Integration (Proposed Implementation 2026–27)**

SCSD CATA aligns the SkillsUSA Framework intentionally with the Arkansas Durable Skills framework, particularly in grades K–8, to ensure that workforce competencies are developed long before students enter high school pathways. Arkansas Durable Skills emphasize communication, collaboration, critical thinking, initiative, adaptability, and professionalism—skills that mirror SkillsUSA’s personal and workplace domains. In elementary grades, these competencies are embedded through structured academic discourse, project-based conservation learning, peer collaboration, reflection journals, and goal-setting activities. Students practice listening, presenting, revising work, and problem-solving in team settings tied directly to academic standards.

In grades 5–8, durable skills are strengthened through career exploration modules aligned to Student Success Plans. Students complete career interest inventories, engage in occupational research, and develop portfolios documenting goals, strengths, and academic progress. They participate in structured presentations, mock interviews,



and collaborative problem-solving tasks that mirror SkillsUSA expectations. These activities build early professional awareness while reinforcing literacy and mathematical reasoning.

By integrating SkillsUSA's framework with Arkansas Durable Skills in K-8, SCSD CATA establishes a clear progression: foundational personal responsibility and communication skills in elementary school evolve into structured teamwork, leadership, and career application in middle school, culminating in industry-aligned technical mastery in high school. This alignment ensures students graduate not only academically prepared but equipped with transferable competencies essential for workforce success and postsecondary persistence.

SCSD CATA integrates durable skills development intentionally across academic instruction, conservation leadership programming, and Career and Technical Education pathways. In addition to aligning with the Forward Arkansas Durable Skills framework, the NCCC incorporates principles consistent with Mike Rowe's S.W.E.A.T. philosophy designed to be implemented in secondary and postsecondary technical programming—Skills and Work Ethic Aren't Taboo — to reinforce personal responsibility, discipline, and professional conduct. Within this framework, S.W.E.A.T. principles are not symbolic; they are operationalized within instruction and assessment.

In classroom settings, S.W.E.A.T. principles translate into clear expectations for preparedness, academic effort, revision of written work, and ownership of learning. Students are taught that high-quality work requires iteration, attention to detail, and perseverance. In CTE environments, S.W.E.A.T. principles become concrete and measurable. Students in Agriculture, Construction, CNA/Medical Professions, Business, and Culinary pathways are evaluated not only on technical proficiency but also on workplace behaviors such as punctuality, safety compliance, professional communication, collaboration, and task completion.

The S.W.E.A.T. framework also reinforces the dignity of skilled trades and technical careers in a rural economy. By elevating skilled labor as intellectually demanding and socially valuable, the district challenges misconceptions that workforce pathways are secondary to academic tracks. Instead, academic rigor and technical mastery are presented as complementary.

Q15.

**A.4 Academic focus**



**2026 ADE CONVERSION CHARTER APPLICATION**  
Arkansas Department of Education



**Describe the professional learning opportunities and support provided to educators to implement the described academic plan.**



The success of the SCSD CATA depends on consistent, high-quality instructional implementation across all campuses. The charter is not a programmatic adjustment; it is a structural redesign requiring curriculum fidelity, rigorous Tier I instruction, structured intervention systems, conservation-integrated pedagogy, and vertically aligned career readiness planning. To ensure measurable academic impact, the district will implement a sustained, job-embedded professional learning system aligned directly to documented literacy growth gaps, writing weaknesses, bottom quartile performance trends, and postsecondary readiness indicators identified in the district's Improvement Plan.

Professional learning is embedded into daily instructional practice rather than delivered as episodic training. It is reinforced through coaching, structured Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and leadership walkthroughs, with explicit alignment to district performance targets. At the elementary and intermediate levels, literacy rigor is the primary lever for closing achievement gaps. Teachers in grades K-6 receive sustained coaching focused on high-fidelity implementation of Wit & Wisdom and structured literacy frameworks (UFLI and Structures). Training deepens teacher capacity in complex text scaffolding, vocabulary development, and writing integration across disciplines.

Instruction is intentionally aligned to ATLAS depth-of-knowledge expectations. Teachers collaborate to design lessons embedding analytical writing, text-dependent questioning, and evidence-based reasoning into both literacy and conservation-based instruction. Classroom-based coaching includes co-planning, live modeling, observation, and feedback cycles, supported by explicit fidelity indicators to ensure consistency across campuses.

Because district data show persistent growth challenges among bottom quartile students, professional learning strengthens educator expertise in MTSS implementation and data-driven response. Weekly PLCs follow structured protocols requiring analysis of universal screening results, progress monitoring data, and intervention effectiveness. Teachers adjust instructional strategies in real time to ensure acceleration rather than remediation. This system formalizes bottom quartile monitoring as a standing practice and directly supports the district goal that at least 60% of lowest-quartile students demonstrate positive literacy growth annually.

The Schools of Conservation Leadership framework further requires teachers to integrate academic standards into applied, interdisciplinary projects. Professional development prepares educators to design performance tasks requiring scientific reasoning, data analysis, structured writing, and public presentation. Engagement strategies are evaluated not for novelty, but for rigor alignment and measurable learning outcomes.



Career awareness is embedded beginning in elementary grades. Teachers receive training to integrate workforce vocabulary and regional industry connections into core instruction. Beginning in Grade 4, students develop digital portfolios documenting projects and emerging interests. In grades 7–8, professional learning focuses on career inventory interpretation, pathway planning conferences, and collaboration with North Central Career Center staff to ensure smooth transition into high school pathways.

Professional learning is sustained through a full-time literacy coach, quarterly instructional walkthroughs focused on rigor and intervention quality, and vertical articulation meetings among K–12 and NCCC staff. This ensures alignment of literacy expectations, writing standards, durable skills, and pathway readiness across the continuum.

Through this structured, coaching-centered model, professional learning becomes the engine of improvement—ensuring instructional redesign translates into sustained academic growth, reduced achievement gaps, and strengthened graduation readiness outcomes.

Q16.

#### **A.5 Academic focus**

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



### **Elementary & Intermediate (Grades K-6)**

Students in grades kindergarten through sixth who choose to attend school in person will attend and follow the regular master schedules of Marshall Elementary School and Leslie Intermediate School, respectively. Those master schedules provide time for core Tier 1 instruction along with Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions in both math and literacy. During Tier 3 intervention time, acceleration is provided to students who have mastered grade level content currently being taught. For all students, conservation, agriculture, and trades activities will be integrated into classroom instruction. In addition, special events both inside and outside of the school day will occur, all with increasing frequency as students move through the elementary and intermediate systems.

### **Hybrid and Virtual Learning Grades K-12**

Hybrid and virtual learning models are available for all students enrolling in CATA. These models provide flexibility for families and their complex scheduling needs while **continuing to engage students and families with the local school**. This engagement is critical to the success of our students and is a central objective of the proposed model. Parents and students will be encouraged and given flexible opportunities to engage in face to face instruction in any subject or intervention as required for the best interest of the student as part of the hybrid model. For students and families who elect to go fully virtual, a work at your own pace curriculum will be provided along with a personalized recommended schedule developed by the student, parents and CATA staff.

### **Middle School and High School Grades 7-12**

Students in grades seventh through twelfth who choose to attend CATA at the North Central Career Center in Leslie will be afforded the opportunity to participate in core instruction at NCCC in addition to early and ongoing exposure to agricultural and vocational pathways. The master schedules at CATA and Marshall High School will work in tandem to create flexible course access for all students. CATA periods 2,3,4 and 5,6,7 will be blocked for concurrent programs for all students in grades 10-12 to accommodate the required seat time at the collegiate level. Periods 1 and 8 will be open for athletics and band to be delivered in person at the high school for any student who selects to participate in those programs. Level 2 and 3 high school agriculture classes will be offered during the concurrent Career and Technical blocks at CATA, allowing for students to choose an agriculture focus in addition to, or in place of, a trades focus. Middle and high school interventions at CATA will be integrated into Tier 1, rather than during a stand alone intervention time. Acceleration will be provided to CATA students at NCCC, just as they are at MHS, through advanced placement opportunities as well as concurrent courses.



Because we are proposing a whole district conversion, collaborative teaming, coaching and professional development for teachers will remain consistent with Searcy County School District's current model.

Q17.

**A.6 Academic focus**

**Upload a copy of the proposed annual academic calendar and proposed master schedule.**

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

**Applicant Evidence :**

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |   |
| 2026-27 Academic C...                                     | CATA Master Schedu...                                     | CATA Sample Event ...                                     | CATA Sample Hybrid...                                     |
| Uploaded on <b>3/3/2026</b><br>by <b>Heather Bohannon</b> | Uploaded on <b>3/3/2026</b><br>by <b>Heather Bohannon</b> | Uploaded on <b>3/3/2026</b><br>by <b>Heather Bohannon</b> | Uploaded on <b>3/3/2026</b><br>by <b>Heather Bohannon</b> |

Q18.

**B.1 Academic Performance**

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



The SCSD CATA will operate under a structured, performance-driven continuous improvement system designed to meet Arkansas charter accountability standards while ensuring measurable academic growth across all campuses. This system integrates state-required assessment data, local formative measures, program implementation metrics, and stakeholder feedback into a coherent monitoring framework aligned to the district's 2025–2026 improvement priorities.

Each year, district and campus leadership teams conduct a formal performance audit during summer planning cycles. This review includes ATLAS proficiency and growth results, bottom quartile (Q1) performance trends, writing and mathematics indicators, graduation readiness benchmarks, credential attainment rates, and pathway completion data. Data are disaggregated by subgroup, grade level, and campus to ensure equity-focused analysis. Conservation Leadership implementation metrics and North Central Career Center (NCCC) pathway outcomes—including industry credential attainment and employer feedback—are evaluated alongside core academic indicators.

From this review, leadership establishes measurable annual charter performance targets, including proficiency increases, median growth percentiles at or above state averages, at least 60% positive growth for lowest-quartile students, writing improvement benchmarks, math reasoning gains, and expanded Merit/Distinction attainment. These targets are formally documented and reported to the governing board to ensure charter-level transparency and accountability.

During the school year, student performance is monitored through universal screening cycles, quarterly interim assessments aligned to ATLAS, and structured weekly Professional Learning Community data reviews. Bottom quartile monitoring remains a standing agenda item within PLCs, ensuring targeted acceleration strategies are implemented and adjusted promptly. Campus administrators conduct monthly instructional reviews, while district leadership holds mid-year cross-campus performance evaluations to identify trends and ensure consistency of implementation.

Professional development priorities are derived directly from data analysis. When growth targets are not met, coaching cycles intensify, pacing guides are reviewed, and instructional modeling increases. Curriculum fidelity audits are conducted for Wit & Wisdom, My Perspectives, Eureka Math, structured literacy programs, and NCCER-aligned pathways to ensure high-quality implementation before considering programmatic changes.

Career pathway curricula undergo annual review through credential attainment rates, apprenticeship placement data, and advisory board recommendations. This ensures workforce alignment remains current and regionally responsive. Parent and community surveys, AGFC



conservation partner feedback, and industry advisory input are incorporated into the annual goal-setting process.

Performance data and progress toward charter benchmarks are reported to district leadership and shared with stakeholders annually. This governance structure ensures innovation operates within a clear accountability framework.

Through this systematic cycle—goal setting, continuous monitoring, responsive adjustment, formal evaluation, and stakeholder engagement—SCSD CATA embeds accountability into daily instructional practice. The result is a charter model that not only meets state expectations but accelerates literacy growth, strengthens math reasoning, increases pathway readiness, and sustains long-term academic and workforce success.

Q19.

## **B.2 Academic Performance**

**Describe the grade-level promotion/retention policies for students.**



Academic performance is evaluated within a coherent PK–12 framework designed to ensure student growth, equity, and readiness while maintaining full compliance with Arkansas Department of Education (DESE) regulations, the Arkansas LEARNS Act, and Arkansas School Boards Association (ASBA) model policy guidance.

Each year, district and campus leadership teams conduct a comprehensive academic review during summer planning sessions. This review includes analysis of ATLAS proficiency and growth data, universal screening results, interim benchmark trends, bottom quartile growth patterns, subgroup performance, graduation pathway completion rates, credential attainment, and work-based learning participation. Based on this analysis, measurable annual performance targets aligned to Arkansas Academic Standards are established.

Student performance is monitored continuously throughout the school year. Universal screening occurs at least three times annually in literacy and mathematics to assess growth trajectories. Interim benchmarks aligned to ATLAS standards provide early identification of mastery gaps before summative assessment windows. Weekly Professional Learning Communities function as the district's primary instructional improvement engine. PLCs follow structured data protocols requiring teachers to analyze assessment results, examine student work, identify skill deficits, and implement reteaching or intervention strategies. Bottom quartile performance remains a standing agenda item in every PLC to ensure consistent attention to the district's most vulnerable learners.

Promotion and retention practices are embedded within this continuous improvement framework. Grade placement decisions are grounded in multiple measures of student performance, equitable processes, and early intervention rather than reactive retention. Promotion is based on demonstrated mastery of Arkansas Academic Standards, documented academic growth, and readiness indicators.

Retention is never the first response to academic difficulty. The district prioritizes structured intervention through MTSS. Students identified as at risk receive additional instructional time, small-group support, and frequent progress monitoring before retention is considered. Parents receive ongoing communication and written notice if retention becomes a possibility. Formal placement conferences include the principal or designee, teachers, counselor, intervention or special services staff, and parents. Final placement authority rests with the building administrator in accordance with district policy and ASBA guidance.



In compliance with the Arkansas LEARNS Act, students in grades K–3 who do not meet state reading standards receive Individual Reading Plans (IRPs) based on screener data. IRPs identify specific skill deficits, outline science-of-reading-aligned interventions, document progress monitoring, and provide at-home strategies. Students not meeting third-grade reading benchmarks receive at least ninety minutes of daily evidence-based literacy instruction. Similarly, K–8 students below grade level in mathematics receive intervention through Student Success Plans, including tutoring, extended instructional time, and targeted support.

Each Student Success Plan is reviewed annually with parents and, when appropriate, the student. By Grade 8, the SSP guides graduation pathway selection, intervention planning, and college and career readiness. Promotion at the secondary level is based on successful credit accumulation aligned to Core, Merit, or Distinction pathways, with access to credit recovery consistent with DESE guidelines.

Promotion and retention data are reviewed annually to ensure equitable implementation across subgroups. Policy adjustments are recommended to the Board as needed to maintain compliance and alignment with district improvement priorities.

## Section



Sarper Turker

### Ratings

**Meets** All elements are met.



## 4. School Climate

Q21.

**A.1 Describe the intended school climate/environment. Explain how that climate will promote a positive academic environment and reinforce student intellectual and social development.**

1. Include in your explanation how the climate for students, teachers, administrators, and parents will be established.
2. Include in your explanation how the school climate will be supportive of students with a variety of needs, including students receiving special education services, English language learners, gifted and talented students, and students who are at risk of academic failure.



The intended school climate of the SCSD CATA is academically rigorous, relationship-centered, and explicitly focused on durable skill development. The district recognizes that student success requires more than mastery of academic standards; it requires the development of transferable competencies that prepare students to thrive in postsecondary education, the workforce, and civic life. Accordingly, the school climate is intentionally designed to integrate academic rigor, character formation, and workforce-aligned behaviors within a unified framework.

The SCSD CATA incorporates the Arkansas Department of Education Durable Skills framework, the Forward Arkansas durable skills model, and principles consistent with Mike Rowe's S.W.E.A.T. philosophy. The need for these durable skills and S.W.E.A.T. philosophy was strongly voiced and supported by our stakeholders, including community members, staff, and students. Collectively, these frameworks emphasize communication, collaboration, critical thinking, initiative, adaptability, responsibility, professionalism, and respect for skilled work. Rather than functioning as add-on programs, these competencies are embedded across instruction, assessment, and school culture.

### **A Culture of High Expectations and Personal Responsibility**

The climate communicates a clear message: academic rigor and personal responsibility are inseparable. Students are expected to engage deeply in grade-level content aligned to Arkansas Academic Standards while also demonstrating professional behaviors such as punctuality, preparation, collaboration, and accountability. Expectations are consistent across academic classrooms, conservation leadership projects, and career and technical education programs.

Inspired by S.W.E.A.T. principles, students learn that effort, craftsmanship, and perseverance matter. They are taught that success requires discipline, reliability, respect for skilled labor, and pride in quality work. These principles are reinforced through conservation-based project learning, classroom routines, technical lab protocols, performance-based assessments, advisory reflection sessions, and career simulations. Students understand that character development and academic achievement operate together.

### **Durable Skills Embedded Across Instruction**

Durable skills are integrated daily rather than taught as separate lessons. In elementary grades, students develop communication and collaboration skills through structured teamwork, guided discussions, peer feedback, and reflection journals. Teachers model respectful dialogue, shared



responsibility, and persistence through challenging tasks. Conservation leadership projects require students to research environmental issues, analyze data, and present findings, reinforcing both literacy standards and collaboration.

In grades 7–8, career exploration modules aligned to Arkansas Student Success Plans incorporate research, occupational analysis, presentations, and structured goal-setting. Students complete career interest inventories, develop digital portfolios, and present pathway research using professional communication standards. These activities strengthen initiative, adaptability, and analytical thinking while supporting informed high school pathway decisions.

At Marshall High School and NCCC, durable skills are formally assessed alongside technical competencies. Students are evaluated not only on content knowledge but also on teamwork, leadership, task completion, safe tool use, professional communication, time management, and independent problem-solving. Rubrics for CTE coursework include durable skill indicators aligned to industry expectations.

### **Climate for Students**

Students experience a structured, inclusive environment where expectations are clear and consistently reinforced. Academic and behavioral standards are transparent. Students participate in goal-setting conferences tied to both academic benchmarks and durable skill growth. Public presentations, service-learning projects, collaborative research tasks, and leadership roles reinforce intellectual and social development simultaneously.

### **Climate for Teachers and Administrators**

Teachers operate within a collaborative professional culture emphasizing shared accountability for student growth. Professional learning includes training on embedding durable skills into lesson design, aligning applied learning to academic standards, and assessing professional behaviors through clear rubrics. Weekly Professional Learning Communities analyze both academic performance data and indicators of student engagement and skill development.

Administrators monitor implementation through structured walkthroughs and data reviews. Leadership ensures durable skill integration is visible in classroom instruction, CTE labs, advisory systems, and performance tasks. Decision-making is transparent and grounded in student outcome data.

### **Climate for Parents and Community**



Parents and community partners experience a school culture focused on preparing students for real-world success. Communication emphasizes academic benchmarks, durable skill development, and workforce readiness. Community mentors, guest speakers, and industry partners reinforce professional norms and expectations.

To ensure continuous climate improvement, the SCSD CATA has obtained permission to administer a modified version of the Georgia Department of Education School Climate Surveys annually to students, families, teachers, and staff. These surveys have a strong research base and provide validated metrics for measuring school connectedness, instructional support, safety, engagement, and stakeholder perception. Using these established instruments allows the district to benchmark climate performance against a broader research-supported framework and identify areas for targeted improvement. Baseline results of these climate surveys were established in the 2025-26 school year.

### **Inclusive and Equitable Climate**

The school climate is intentionally supportive of diverse learners. Students receiving special education services engage in grade-level instruction with accommodations, and durable skill goals are embedded within IEP planning where appropriate. English learners receive scaffolded vocabulary and communication supports while participating fully in collaborative tasks. Gifted students assume leadership roles within project teams and pursue advanced inquiry opportunities through curriculum tasks and extracurricular activities, such as STEM Fair, Quiz Bowl, and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Conservation Leadership Summit competitions. Students at risk of academic failure receive mentoring, structured intervention, and explicit instruction in organization and perseverance.

Durable skill development provides an equitable framework in which all students—regardless of background or ability—can demonstrate growth in responsibility, collaboration, and problem-solving. The SCSD CATA's climate framework integrates academic rigor, durable skills, structured workforce preparation, stakeholder engagement, and research-based climate monitoring into one cohesive system designed to promote measurable academic and social success.

Q22.

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



The SCSD CATA will maintain a disciplined, structured, and supportive school environment grounded in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), durable skill development, restorative practices, and full compliance with Arkansas school law and district board policy. Discipline practices will not operate independently from academic priorities; instead, they are intentionally designed to reinforce the previously described school climate—one centered on high expectations, intellectual rigor, personal responsibility, and preparation for postsecondary success.

Across Marshall Elementary, Leslie Intermediate, Marshall High School, and North Central Career Center, PBIS serves as the foundational behavior management framework. Expectations are explicitly taught, modeled, practiced, and reinforced at every grade level. Behavioral standards are aligned to Arkansas Durable Skills and workforce-ready competencies, including communication, collaboration, initiative, accountability, and professionalism. These expectations are consistently communicated across classrooms, hallways, extracurricular activities, and CTE environments to ensure coherence and predictability.

The district's philosophy emphasizes proactive discipline rather than reactive punishment. Students are taught behavioral expectations just as they are taught academic standards. Behavioral instruction occurs at the beginning of each school year and is revisited regularly. When expectations are not met, responses prioritize reteaching, reflection, and restorative conversation before exclusionary discipline is considered. This approach ensures that discipline contributes to student growth and preserves instructional time.

Behavior supports operate within a tiered structure aligned to PBIS and MTSS. At the universal (Tier I) level, all students receive clear expectations, structured routines, positive reinforcement systems, and social-emotional skill instruction embedded in advisory and classroom practice. Positive reinforcement may include recognition systems tied to durable skill demonstration, such as collaboration awards, leadership recognition, or professionalism acknowledgments.

At the targeted (Tier II) level, students demonstrating recurring concerns receive structured supports such as mentoring, check-in/check-out systems, goal-setting conferences, small-group social skills instruction, and increased progress monitoring. At the intensive (Tier III) level, individualized behavior intervention plans are developed in collaboration with families, counselors, administrators, and, when applicable, special education staff. Plans include measurable goals, monitoring timelines, and defined instructional supports.



A specific Tier III approach utilized for K–12 students is a wraparound intensive services model called the Community Alliance to support students with intense and significant social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs. This model ensures that students experiencing complex challenges receive coordinated, strength-based, and family-centered support that addresses academic, behavioral, and environmental factors simultaneously.

Rather than relying on isolated school-based interventions, the district operates a collaborative, multi-agency framework that brings together educators, counselors, administrators, families, behavioral health providers, juvenile services (when applicable), community mental health agencies, and other local partners. At the core of the district's wraparound approach is the belief that student behavior and academic performance are deeply interconnected with home, community, and mental health factors. When a student demonstrates persistent behavioral escalation, chronic absenteeism, trauma-related responses, or repeated academic failure despite Tier II and Tier III interventions, a wraparound team is convened.

The team collaboratively develops an individualized, strength-based action plan that integrates academic intervention strategies, behavior intervention planning, mental health supports, attendance improvement planning, family support services, and community resource coordination. The process ensures that interventions are not duplicated, fragmented, or contradictory across agencies.

Family voice and choice are central to the district's wraparound model. Families participate as equal partners in defining goals, identifying strengths, and determining priorities. Students, when appropriate, are included in goal-setting conversations to strengthen ownership and agency. This collaborative process increases engagement, improves trust, and reduces adversarial dynamics between school and home.

Importantly, the model is preventative as well as responsive. By identifying early warning indicators—attendance trends, behavioral referrals, academic performance dips, or mental health concerns—the district intervenes before students require alternative placement or out-of-school suspension. The goal is to maintain students in their least restrictive environment while providing the intensity of support necessary for success.

Through this K–12 wraparound approach, Searcy County School District reduces fragmentation of services, strengthens family engagement, improves behavioral outcomes, and supports academic persistence. The model reinforces the district's commitment to equitable access, trauma-informed practice, and sustained student success by addressing root causes rather than symptoms.



Durable skills will be intentionally embedded within the discipline framework for the SCSD CATA. In elementary grades, students practice respectful dialogue, shared responsibility, and perseverance through collaborative projects and reflection journals. In intermediate grades, structured group tasks and presentations reinforce communication and accountability. In high school and CTE environments, behavioral expectations mirror workforce standards. Students are evaluated not only on academic or technical performance but also on punctuality, safety compliance, teamwork, task completion, and professional conduct. This alignment ensures discipline systems reinforce career readiness rather than function separately from it.

The SCSD CATA will adhere fully to Arkansas Code § 6-18-501 et seq., Arkansas Department of Education discipline regulations, the Arkansas LEARNS Act, and ASBA model board policy. A board-approved written discipline policy is published annually in student handbooks. The district ensures clear communication of behavioral expectations and consequences; timely parent notification when disciplinary action is considered; proper documentation of disciplinary incidents; protection of student due process rights; compliance with suspension and expulsion procedures; and adherence to anti-bullying and safe schools requirements.

When suspension or alternative placement is necessary, academic continuity is maintained to protect student progress. Exclusionary discipline is used only when required to ensure safety or comply with statutory mandates. For students with disabilities, disciplinary decisions comply with IDEA and Section 504 regulations. English learners, gifted students, and students at risk receive appropriate accommodations and supports to ensure equitable treatment.

Administrators conduct regular discipline data reviews to ensure equity and consistency across campuses. Referral patterns, suspension rates, subgroup impacts, and repeat incidents are analyzed monthly. If disproportionate patterns are identified, corrective action plans and targeted professional development are implemented. These reviews ensure discipline practices remain fair, transparent, and aligned to district values.

Teachers receive ongoing professional learning in classroom management, de-escalation strategies, trauma-informed practices, restorative conversations, and durable skill integration. Instructional walkthroughs include observation of behavioral expectations, classroom routines, and student engagement. Clear procedures and consistent expectations protect instructional time and create safe, orderly learning environments.

Q23.



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



The SCSD CATA is committed to building strong, collaborative partnerships with parents and families in alignment with Title I, Part A requirements, Arkansas Department of Education (DESE) accreditation standards, and district board policy. The district recognizes that student achievement, durable skill development, and positive school climate are strengthened when families are actively engaged as partners in education.

Parent engagement will be proactive, transparent, and continuous. Families will receive timely and accessible information regarding academic standards, ATLAS assessment requirements, promotion policies, durable skill expectations, and graduation pathways. Communication will occur through multiple platforms, including digital messaging systems, district websites, newsletters, automated calls, social media updates, and in-person or virtual meetings to ensure equitable access for all families.

Consistent with Title I requirements, the district will implement and annually review a Parent and Family Engagement Plan and School-Parent Compact. These documents will outline shared responsibilities for academic achievement, attendance, positive behavior, and durable skill development. Parents will be invited to participate in reviewing school improvement goals and providing feedback on engagement strategies. Annual Title I meetings will inform families of program services, student performance expectations, and parent rights.

Parents will receive regular updates on student academic progress through progress reports, report cards, and scheduled conferences. When students are identified as academically or behaviorally at risk, families will be notified early and invited to participate in collaborative intervention planning. Personalized Learning Plans, literacy interventions, and behavior supports will be developed with parent input. For students receiving special education services, English learner supports, or Section 504 accommodations, required meetings will be conducted in compliance with IDEA, federal regulations, and Arkansas law.

Beyond communication, the district will actively engage families in school life. Open houses, curriculum nights, literacy workshops, conservation leadership showcases, and Career & Technical Education events at North Central Career Center will provide opportunities for families to see academic rigor and workforce preparation in action. Parents will be encouraged to attend student exhibitions, presentations, and career pathway events that highlight both content mastery and durable skill growth.



For families participating in hybrid, virtual, or homeschool-connected options, engagement will remain intentional through virtual conferences, digital portfolio reviews, and access to campus events. This ensures that all families—regardless of instructional format—remain connected to the school community.

In accordance with Arkansas accreditation standards requiring stakeholder involvement, the district will document communication efforts, maintain records of conferences and outreach activities, and annually review parent engagement data as part of its continuous improvement process. Surveys, advisory committees, and structured feedback sessions will provide families with opportunities to contribute to school decision-making.

Through consistent communication, collaborative planning, and structured opportunities for involvement, the district will foster a welcoming, transparent, and partnership-driven environment. This approach ensures compliance with Title I and Arkansas accreditation standards while strengthening academic success, positive behavior, and durable skill development for all students.

Q24.

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



### **Arkansas Activities Association (AAA) Participation**

Marshall High School participates in interscholastic activities governed by the Arkansas Activities Association (AAA). Students compete in AAA-sanctioned athletics and academic competitions, with eligibility requirements that reinforce academic accountability. Participation in football, volleyball, basketball, baseball, softball, track and field, cross country, cheer, and band promotes discipline, teamwork, and time management. AAA academic eligibility standards ensure that extracurricular involvement supports, rather than undermines, student achievement.

Junior high students are introduced to interscholastic participation under AAA academic requirements in all AAA activities previously listed, providing early preparation for high school competition while reinforcing attendance and grade standards.

### **Career and Technical Student Organizations**

At Marshall High School and NCCC, career pathways are reinforced through Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), including Future Farmers of America (FFA), Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), and SkillsUSA.

### **Robotics, STEM, and Academic Competitions**

Students across the district participate in Robotics Club, school and regional Science Fairs, STEM Fairs, and Quiz Bowl competitions. Elementary students engage in STEM-focused enrichment through robotics challenges, engineering design activities, and project showcases. Participation in school and regional science fairs strengthens research skills, scientific methodology, and presentation ability.

Quiz Bowl teams at the intermediate and secondary levels compete regionally, reinforcing academic vocabulary, critical thinking, and rapid problem solving. STEM Fairs and interdisciplinary competitions encourage collaboration and innovation.

The district also attends a regional Math and Science Carnival for all ages, where students participate in interactive demonstrations, problem-solving challenges, and hands-on learning stations.

### **Conservation Leadership and Community Partnerships**



The Schools of Conservation Leadership framework expands extracurricular engagement through partnerships with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC), Buffalo Conservation District, Searcy County Extension Office, and the local U.S. Forest Service.

Through these partnerships, students participate in greenhouse and gardening programs, birdhouse building projects, tree distribution programs, fire safety education programs conducted in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, and habitat stewardship and environmental service projects. These experiences connect conservation education to local heritage and workforce pathways. Strawberry cultivation, for example, honors the county's agricultural history while reinforcing plant science, measurement, and agricultural economics concepts.

The district maintains an active partnership with 4-H through the Searcy County Extension Office, providing club opportunities for students of all ages. 4-H clubs operate at elementary, intermediate, and secondary levels and include agriculture, environmental science, leadership, and STEM-focused programming.

Through AGFC and community partnerships, students participate in archery and trap competitions, environmental competitions, wildlife identification projects, and outdoor recreation activities. Outdoor learning experiences reinforce science standards while promoting physical wellness and environmental responsibility.

The SCSD CSTA strengthens and expands extracurricular and co-curricular programming across Marshall Elementary, Leslie Intermediate, Marshall High School, and the NCCC. These activities are intentionally aligned to academic standards, conservation leadership, workforce readiness, and durable skill development. Extracurricular participation is not viewed as separate from instruction; rather, it functions as an applied extension of classroom learning and supports the district's mission of building opportunities and challenging all students to succeed.

Q25.

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



SCSD maintains a comprehensive, transparent, and legally compliant grievance system designed to address concerns promptly and equitably. The district's grievance framework is grounded in Arkansas Department of Education regulations, federal Title IX requirements, and board-adopted policies. The purpose of this system is to protect individual rights, ensure due process, preserve equal educational access, and maintain a safe and respectful learning environment.

The student handbook incorporates district grievance policies by reference and clearly outlines complaint procedures. Parents and students receive annual notification of these policies and acknowledge receipt, ensuring awareness of available processes and procedural safeguards.

For concerns unrelated to discrimination or sexual harassment, SCSD follows a structured, progressive resolution model. Issues are first addressed at the level closest to the concern to promote timely resolution and open communication. Parents and students are encouraged to begin by contacting the teacher or staff member directly. If resolution is not achieved, the matter may be elevated to the building principal, who conducts a review, gathers documentation, and provides a written or documented response.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, the matter may be appealed to the Superintendent.. The Superintendent ensures policy compliance, reviews findings, and issues a formal determination. When required by policy or when an appeal remains unresolved, the issue may be presented to the Board of Education for final review. While the Board does not conduct investigations, it ensures that administrative decisions adhere to policy, law, and due process standards.

For complaints involving sexual harassment or sex discrimination, SCSD implements its board-adopted Title IX Grievance Procedures and Student Sexual Harassment policy. The district strictly prohibits sexual harassment between students, employees and students, or non-employees and students.

Formal complaints trigger an impartial investigation conducted by trained personnel using the preponderance of evidence standard. Both complainant and respondent are treated equitably, and the respondent is presumed not responsible until a determination is made. Supportive measures—such as counseling, schedule adjustments, academic accommodations, or no-contact directives—are provided as needed to preserve equal access to educational programs.

If a violation is substantiated, disciplinary action is imposed in accordance with district policy and Arkansas law. Students may face suspension, alternative placement, or expulsion subject to Board approval. Employees may face reprimand, reassignment, suspension, nonrenewal, or termination




consistent with statutory procedures. Appeal rights are provided where permitted by policy.

All grievance processes ensure procedural fairness. Parties receive written notice of allegations, access to evidence, and opportunity to respond. Investigators are trained and free from conflicts of interest. The district prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports misconduct or participates in a grievance process.

SCSD's nondiscrimination policies protect students from discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or other protected categories. Equal access to academic programs, extracurricular activities, and services is guaranteed.

Through clearly defined procedures embedded in board policy, SCSD ensures complaints are resolved promptly, fairly, and in compliance with state and federal law. This system reinforces safety, accountability, transparency, and the district's commitment to dignity and equity for all stakeholders.

**Applicant Evidence :**

|   |
|---|
|  |
| <b>Complaints</b>   |

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by **Heather Bohannon**



## Section



Sarper Turker

### Ratings

Meets

All elements are met.



## 5. Financial Plan and Fiscal Sustainability

**Q26.A.1 Indicate the number of students the charter school intends to serve for each year of the initial charter term. What data and factors were used to determine the demand for the school and the projected enrollment provided? For each school year in the initial charter term please provide the following**

- 1. School Year (e.g. Year One, Year Two, etc.)**
- 2. Grade Levels offered per school year**
- 3. Total projected Student Enrollment for all grades per school year (min, anticipated, max)**
- 4. Faculty projections based on anticipated enrollment per school year**
- 5. Non-faculty projections based on anticipated enrollment per school year**



SCSD CATA intends to serve students across all grade levels currently enrolled in Searcy County School District while expanding access to flexible hybrid, virtual, and career pathway opportunities. The district conversion charter does not create a new standalone school but instead enhances existing campuses—Marshall Elementary, Leslie Intermediate, Marshall High School, and North Central Career Center (NCCC)—through expanded programming, flexible instructional models, and career pathway integration.

Enrollment projections are based on a conservative analysis of multiple data sources, including historical enrollment trends, current Average Daily Membership (ADM), school choice transfers, homeschool participation rates, and interest surveys conducted with parents and students. Recent surveys indicate strong interest in expanded pathway access and flexible hybrid learning options. In particular, 36 students currently enrolled in the district’s virtual program have expressed interest in a model that would allow them to remain enrolled in district academic programs while attending career pathway courses at North Central Career Center or electives at Marshall High School.

Additional data sources informing enrollment projections include stakeholder surveys regarding the proposed charter conversion, Career and Technical Education pathway interest surveys completed by students, and workforce advisory input from North Central Career Center partners. These outreach efforts demonstrated strong community interest in expanding local educational options while maintaining connection to district programs and extracurricular opportunities.

Because rural enrollment can fluctuate based on migration, homeschool decisions, and school choice patterns, the district developed three projection scenarios: minimum enrollment, anticipated enrollment, and maximum enrollment. These scenarios allow leadership to align staffing and program resources proportionally with enrollment levels and avoid structural deficits during the initial years of charter implementation.

Faculty projections are based on student-to-teacher ratios consistent with current district staffing patterns and Arkansas accreditation standards. Non-faculty projections include administrators, counselors, paraprofessionals, instructional aides, and support staff necessary to maintain program quality and compliance with state requirements.

The district’s approach prioritizes conservative enrollment forecasting to ensure fiscal stability while maintaining sufficient staffing to support academic rigor, intervention services, and career pathway programming.



| <b>Charter Year</b> | <b>Grade Levels Served</b> | <b>Minimum Enrollment</b> | <b>Anticipated Enrollment</b> | <b>Maximum Enrollment</b> | <b>Projected Faculty</b> | <b>Projected Non-Faculty Staff</b> |
|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Year 1</b>       | K-12                       | 720                       | 760                           | 800                       | 63                       | 26                                 |
| <b>Year 2</b>       | K-12                       | 750                       | 780                           | 820                       | 64                       | 27                                 |
| <b>Year 3</b>       | K-12                       | 760                       | 790                           | 840                       | 65                       | 28                                 |
| <b>Year 4</b>       | K-12                       | 770                       | 800                           | 860                       | 66                       | 29                                 |
| <b>Year 5</b>       | K-12                       | 780                       | 810                           | 880                       | 67                       | 30                                 |

Several factors demonstrate strong demand for the SCSD CATA model and inform the enrollment projections:

**Interest in Flexible Learning Options**

Parent and stakeholder surveys indicate demand for hybrid learning opportunities that allow students to remain connected to district programs while accessing flexible scheduling. The district's virtual program currently serves students who would benefit from the ability to combine online coursework with in-person career pathway classes and electives.

**Career Pathway Demand**

Student surveys conducted through Career and Technical Education programs show strong interest in pathways such as agriculture, healthcare, construction trades, business, and automotive technology. Expansion of North Central Career Center programming under the charter model is expected to increase participation and attract students who might otherwise seek alternative options.

**Retention of Current Students**



The charter model is designed to retain students who might otherwise leave the district for statewide virtual charter schools or homeschooling due to limited scheduling flexibility.

### **Regional Workforce Alignment**

Local employers and advisory committees associated with North Central Career Center have expressed strong support for expanding pathway opportunities and industry credential programs, reinforcing the district's role as a regional workforce preparation hub.

### **Staffing Alignment**

Faculty projections are based on maintaining appropriate student-to-teacher ratios while supporting expanded pathway offerings and intervention services. Staffing levels may be adjusted annually through attrition or reassignment to remain aligned with enrollment trends.

Non-faculty staffing includes administrators, counselors, paraprofessionals, career pathway coordinators, and support personnel necessary to support both academic and career programming.

### **Sustainability Considerations**

The district uses conservative enrollment projections to ensure fiscal stability during the charter's initial term. Staffing adjustments, scheduling efficiencies, and hybrid instructional models allow the district to expand educational opportunities while maintaining responsible resource allocation. Through this approach, SCSD CATA can respond to community demand, stabilize enrollment, and strengthen both academic and workforce preparation opportunities for students across Searcy County.

Q27.

**A.2 Provide a startup budget and a three-year budget forecast beginning July 1 of year 1, necessary to sustain the successful startup of the school. Include revenue projections, expenses, and anticipated fund balances. Upload a copy of the startup and three-year projected budgets.**

**a. Include in your budget analysis the line-item revenue and expenditure assumptions on which the operating and start-up budgets are based. This description should include**



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the basis for revenue projections, staffing levels, and expenses. Provide sufficient information to guide a full understanding of how budgetary figures were determined.

b. Describe any anticipated state and federal funding sources the school expects to receive in addition to per-pupil foundation funding. In addition to these alternative income sources, clearly explain the degree to which the school budget will rely on variable income (grants, donations, fundraising).



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### Arkansas Department of Education



The SCSD CATA conversion charter is designed to operate within the existing financial structure of the Searcy County School District and does not require significant new operational expenditures beyond the district's current budget. Rather than creating a new school or duplicating existing services, the conversion charter represents a strategic realignment of programs and resources already in place. Through careful coordination and reallocation of existing funds, the district will strengthen academic programming and expand instructional opportunities without increasing overall operating costs.

Because the charter represents a districtwide conversion rather than the establishment of a new campus, core operational components—including staffing, facilities, transportation, and instructional services—are already supported through the district's annual operating budget. The district currently educates students across multiple campuses and already provides services through Marshall Elementary, Leslie Intermediate, Marshall High School, and North Central Career Center (NCCC). Existing personnel, instructional materials, and facilities at these locations provide the structural foundation necessary to implement the SCSD CATA model.

The district already absorbs the operational costs associated with educating students who participate in programs at the North Central Career Center campus. Students currently attend courses at NCCC for career pathway instruction, and the district already provides the staffing, facilities, and transportation necessary to support those programs. Classrooms, laboratories, and instructional spaces at the NCCC are already equipped to serve students, meaning that no additional capital investment is required to implement the charter model. Similarly, the district already provides virtual coursework options, and the charter conversion simply formalizes and expands these opportunities within a hybrid instructional structure.

Implementation of SCSD CATA will require thoughtful restructuring and reallocation of existing personnel rather than the addition of new positions. Some teachers' schedules may be adjusted to support hybrid and pathway-based instruction, allowing staff to serve students across campuses or through a combination of online and in-person instruction. The district already employs a part-time North Central Career Center Director, and under the SCSD CATA structure approximately 0.5 FTE of that position will be attributed to SCSD CATA operations as the director pursues principal licensure. This administrative structure strengthens program coordination without creating new leadership expenditures.

Transportation and food service systems are also already established to support multi-campus programming. The district currently transports students between campuses for academic and career pathway instruction and will continue using existing routes to serve students attending



courses at NCCC or other district facilities. Meal services are already coordinated through Leslie Intermediate School, which provides meals for students participating in programs at other campuses. Because these services are already in operation, the charter conversion does not create additional transportation or food service costs.

The charter model also incorporates durable skill development and career-focused programming without generating additional expenditures. Implementation of the Arkansas Durable Skills framework and the Forward Arkansas durable skills model will occur through existing instructional practices, advisory programming, and project-based learning. These competencies—communication, collaboration, critical thinking, responsibility, and professionalism—are already embedded within classroom instruction, career pathways, and extracurricular activities. As a result, no new funding is required to implement this framework.

In fact, the SCSD CATA model may produce modest cost efficiencies by intentionally aligning extracurricular programming and field experiences with instructional goals. For example, field trips and experiential learning activities can be coordinated with conservation leadership projects, career exploration activities, and durable skill development objectives. This alignment allows the district to leverage existing extracurricular resources more strategically rather than funding separate activities for academic and extracurricular purposes. Further, the proposed expansion of CTE offerings and pathways at NCCC may increase participation of neighboring school districts. This will result in additional vocational funding provided by the Office of Skills Development, contributing to the district's sustainability of this vital program.

Participation in the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's Schools of Conservation Leadership program will also provide financial support for conservation-based learning activities. Through this partnership, each participating campus receives program support and funding to help implement conservation leadership initiatives. These resources offset potential instructional costs while expanding experiential learning opportunities for students.

While the district does not anticipate major staffing expansions, it is possible that limited additional support services could be required as the program evolves. For example, a part-time counselor or librarian may be needed to support expanded hybrid or pathway programming. If necessary, these positions could be funded through shared services with neighboring districts or absorbed within existing staffing allocations through schedule adjustments.



Overall, the SCSD CATA conversion charter is designed to operate within the district's current operational capacity. Facilities, transportation, staffing, and instructional programs already exist to support the model. Any additional program coordination will be addressed through strategic resource alignment rather than new expenditures.

By implementing the charter through careful reallocation of existing resources, leveraging external partnerships such as the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and aligning extracurricular activities with instructional priorities, the district minimizes financial risk while maximizing the impact of current investments. This fiscally neutral implementation strategy ensures that SCSD CATA can expand educational opportunities, strengthen career pathways, and improve academic outcomes while maintaining responsible stewardship of public resources and long-term financial sustainability.

However, in order to achieve a three year model, a budget sheet was developed supporting the startup and expansion of CATA, utilizing additional funds and expenses related to new virtual students. This budget sheet is attached and includes a financial model assuming 20 new students at foundation funding to be provided at \$8,037 per student. The budget includes a basic start-up budget plan and three-year projection of revenues, expenses, and ending fund balance, if new revenues and expenses for additional students are enrolled through CATA.

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

**Applicant Evidence :**



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by **Heather Bohannon**

Q28.

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



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The budget is not contingent upon funding sources beyond those typically provided by the state and federal government to the Searcy County School District. The district does intend to apply for grant funding to supplement the charter conversion model, if approved.

**Q29.A.4 Explain how the school will remain fiscally sustainable and describe the school's emergency plan for cash flow challenges, a budget shortfall, lower-than-expected enrollment, or other financial challenges in the early years of operation.**



The SCSD CATA is structured to remain fiscally sustainable through conservative revenue planning, disciplined expenditure controls, and continuous board oversight aligned to Arkansas law. Core operating revenues are based on stable funding sources—Arkansas per-student foundation funding tied to Average Daily Membership (ADM), categorical state allocations, and federal programs including Title I, IDEA, ESSA, and Career and Technical Education funds. The district does not depend on speculative or one-time revenues to support essential operations; grants and donations are treated as supplemental enhancements rather than foundational funding.

Enrollment projections are intentionally conservative and scenario-based. The district analyzes historical ADM trends, school choice transfers, homeschool patterns, and retention data to establish minimum, anticipated, and maximum enrollment models. Staffing allocations—representing the largest share of expenditures—are aligned to these projections to prevent structural deficits. Personnel planning includes flexible scheduling, cross-certification where appropriate, and strategic use of hybrid instructional models to maintain efficiency without compromising standards alignment.

Financial performance is monitored through monthly reviews conducted by district leadership and fiscal services staff. Revenue receipts, expenditure patterns, and cash-flow projections are analyzed against budgeted assumptions to identify early warning indicators. Quarterly budget amendments are implemented when necessary to realign expenditures with updated revenue estimates. The district maintains an operating reserve consistent with best practices to provide stability during enrollment fluctuations or temporary funding delays.

If lower-than-expected enrollment or delayed disbursements occur, SCSD CATA will implement a tiered contingency plan designed to preserve instructional integrity. The first response level includes an immediate freeze on discretionary expenditures such as nonessential equipment purchases, optional travel, or deferrable capital improvements. This allows stabilization without impacting classroom instruction.

If further adjustments are required, staffing allocations may be revised through attrition, reassignment, or schedule consolidation while protecting core instructional positions, legally required services, intervention staffing, and pathway programming. In the event of enrollment decline, course sections may be consolidated while maintaining required graduation pathways and access to North Central Career Center programs. The flexibility embedded in hybrid delivery models supports staffing efficiency without reducing academic offerings.



For short-term cash flow challenges, the district may utilize available fund balances or short-term financing mechanisms permitted under Arkansas law. A structured cash-flow calendar aligned to state and federal disbursement schedules minimizes liquidity risk.

All fiscal decisions are mission-driven and data-aligned. Investments in literacy coaching, intervention supports, curriculum fidelity, and professional development directly address documented growth gaps. Funding for NCCC pathway expansion is tied to credential attainment and workforce readiness outcomes. Conservation leadership programming is evaluated annually to ensure standards alignment and return on investment.

The Board of Education retains formal oversight of fiscal sustainability. Annual budgets are developed and approved in accordance with Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-306(10), and the Board receives regular fund balance and revenue updates. Through conservative projections, disciplined monitoring, protected reserves, and a structured emergency response plan, SCSD CATA is positioned to remain fiscally stable, responsive to enrollment variability, and fully aligned to its academic mission in both the early years of operation and long term.

Q30.

**A.5 Describe how the annual operating budget will be developed and refined each year in accordance with Ark. Code Ann. §6-23-306 (10). Please include how resource allocation decisions are aligned with organizational improvement priorities, student achievement data, and mission-driven priorities.**



Searcy County School District will develop, adopt, implement, and refine the CATA annual operating budget in strict accordance with Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-306(10), Arkansas public school finance law, applicable DESE rules, and ASBA governance standards. The Districtwide Conversion Charter does not alter the district's statutory obligation to exercise sound fiscal management; rather, it reinforces the requirement that fiscal decisions be transparent, data-driven, legally compliant, and directly aligned to improving student outcomes.

Under Arkansas law, the Board of Education bears ultimate responsibility for approving and overseeing the annual operating budget. In fulfillment of this duty, the board will review and adopt a balanced operating budget each fiscal year that reflects projected revenues, planned expenditures, staffing allocations, and fund balance considerations. The board's review process ensures that public funds are expended only for lawful purposes, that categorical funds are used in compliance with state and federal restrictions, and that resource allocation supports the district's statutory obligation to provide public education aligned to Arkansas Academic Standards.

The district's budget process operates within the broader statutory framework governing Arkansas public schools. This includes compliance with foundation funding formulas, categorical funding requirements, federal program assurances, audit standards, procurement regulations, and financial reporting requirements. All revenues and expenditures are recorded, monitored, and reported in accordance with Arkansas Financial Accounting and Reporting System (AFARS) standards and DESE guidelines.

The Superintendent, in coordination with the district's business manager, is responsible for preparing the proposed annual operating budget. The Superintendent ensures that the budget reflects accurate revenue projections based on Average Daily Membership (ADM), state foundation funding allocations, enhanced student achievement funding, federal entitlements, and local revenue streams. Revenue estimates are developed conservatively to minimize risk and prevent structural imbalances.

The Board of Education reviews the proposed budget in public session prior to adoption. The board's approval constitutes formal authorization for expenditures and establishes financial parameters for the fiscal year.

In accordance with Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-306(10), SCSD CATA will develop and refine its annual operating budget through a structured, transparent, and data-driven process that aligns fiscal decision-making with student achievement outcomes, organizational improvement priorities, and



long-term sustainability. The annual budget is not simply a financial document; it functions as a strategic plan that operationalizes the district's academic goals and statutory responsibilities.

The annual budget development process begins each spring with a comprehensive review of district academic and organizational performance. Leadership analyzes ATLAS proficiency and growth data, bottom quartile performance trends, literacy and mathematics benchmarks, graduation readiness indicators, pathway participation rates, credential attainment data, and program evaluation outcomes. This academic review occurs concurrently with projected revenue analysis, including foundation funding tied to ADM, categorical state funding, federal allocations, and CTE program revenues.

The Superintendent, Business Manager, and leadership team use this data to identify priority investment areas for the upcoming fiscal year. These priorities are directly aligned to the district's improvement plan and charter performance benchmarks. For example, if writing data reveal stagnation in constructed-response performance, budget allocations may prioritize literacy coaching cycles, targeted professional development, or supplemental writing resources. If bottom quartile growth fails to meet district benchmarks, funding may be directed toward intervention staffing, expanded Tier III instructional time, or enhanced progress monitoring tools.

Preliminary budget proposals are developed using conservative revenue assumptions and multi-scenario enrollment forecasting. The district reviews historical enrollment patterns, school choice transfers, homeschool trends, and retention data to develop projected ADM models. Staffing allocations are aligned proportionally to these projections to avoid structural deficits, recognizing that personnel expenditures represent the largest share of district costs.

The proposed operating budget is presented to the Board of Education for review, discussion, and formal approval in accordance with Arkansas law. This process ensures governance oversight and compliance with statutory fiscal management requirements.

Resource allocation decisions are explicitly connected to measurable academic outcomes. Each major expenditure category is evaluated through the lens of impact on student growth and organizational priorities. Investments in literacy, mathematics, and intervention staffing are prioritized when data demonstrate growth gaps. Funding for North Central Career Center equipment and instructional materials is tied to credential attainment rates and workforce alignment benchmarks. Conservation leadership programming is evaluated annually to ensure alignment to academic standards and community partnership outcomes.



The district also integrates mid-year academic performance reviews into fiscal monitoring. If performance data indicate that a strategy is not producing anticipated gains, resources may be reallocated to strengthen coaching support, adjust intervention structures, or refine curriculum implementation. Conversely, programs demonstrating measurable impact may receive sustained or expanded funding in subsequent cycles. This dynamic refinement process ensures that financial stewardship remains directly connected to instructional effectiveness.

To ensure long-term fiscal stability, the district incorporates multi-year forecasting into its planning cycle. Three-year financial projections assess sustainability of staffing models, pathway expansion, technology replacement cycles, and facility needs. This forward-looking approach prevents one-year investments from creating unsustainable obligations and supports prudent fund balance management.

The district maintains an operating reserve consistent with best practices to protect against enrollment variability, delayed state disbursements, or unforeseen fiscal pressures. Preservation of an adequate fund balance supports compliance with audit standards and protects instructional continuity.

The budget remains a living document throughout the fiscal year. Monthly financial reviews evaluate revenue receipts, expenditure pacing, and cash flow projections. Quarterly budget reviews compare actual revenue and expenditures to projections and identify necessary amendments. Any adjustments are presented to the Board for approval when required.

Transparency is central to this process. The Board receives regular financial reports detailing revenue status, fund balance updates, expenditure trends, and compliance matters. Annual external audits provide independent verification of fiscal integrity. Budget documents are publicly available consistent with open meeting and transparency laws.

Stakeholder input also informs fiscal refinement. Parent surveys, advisory committees, workforce partners, and conservation leadership collaborators provide insight into program effectiveness and emerging needs, particularly related to pathway expansion and academic supports.



## Section



Sarper Turker

### Ratings

Meets

All elements are met.



## 6. Appendix A ARKANSAS STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

Please review the Statement of Assurances (see Appendix A) and acknowledge with your signature that they will be addressed through policies adopted by the charter school or sponsoring entity.

As an authorized representative of the applicant group, I hereby certify that under the penalties of perjury, the information submitted in this application is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. Further, I understand that if awarded a charter, the school and its charter school board will address the assurances listed below through policies adopted by the sponsoring entity and charter school board. In addition, if the application is approved, the charter school board, administration, staff of the charter school, and educational service provider shall comply with all relevant state and federal laws in addition to the assurances listed below.

1. The charter school shall be open to all students on a space-available basis and shall not discriminate in its admission policy on the basis of gender, national origin, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or academic or athletic eligibility, except as follows: the charter school may adopt admissions policies that are consistent with state and federal law, regulations, or guidelines applicable to charter schools. The charter may provide for the exclusion of a student who has been expelled from another public school district.
2. If applications exceed the approved enrollment cap, the open-enrollment charter school shall hold an annual random and anonymous public lottery, followed by notifying parents of the enrollment status of all applicants. The waiting list generated by the lottery is valid until the next time the open-enrollment public charter school is required to conduct a random, anonymous student selection in accordance with Ark. Code Ann. §6-23-306 (14) (B)(b)(2).
3. The charter school shall comply with all applicable laws concerning the recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, or termination of its employees.
4. The charter school shall operate in accordance with federal laws and rules governing public schools, applicable provisions of the Arkansas Constitution, and state laws and regulations governing public schools not waived by the approved charter.
5. The charter school shall not use the money that it receives from the state for any unlawful sectarian program, obligations, or activity or as collateral for debt except as allowed by law.
6. Charter schools may enter public-private partnerships where they enter into a lease-purchase agreement for the acquisition or construction of a school building or related facilities built or acquired by private entities exempt from federal taxes under 26 U.S.C. 142(a)(13) as allowed by Ark. Code Ann. 6-20-402(a)(1)(B).
7. The charter school shall not impose taxes or charge students' tuition or fees that are not allowable by law.
8. The charter school shall not be religious in its operations or programmatic offerings in accordance with Ark. Code Ann. 6-23-401(a)(7) or as otherwise allowed by law.
9. The charter school shall ensure that any of its employees who qualify for membership in the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System or the Arkansas State and Public-School Employee Insurance Program are covered under those systems to the same extent required by law.
10. Under applicable state laws, the employees and volunteers of the charter school are immune from liability to the same extent as other public school district employees and volunteers.
11. The charter school shall carefully review the potential impact of its application on the efforts of a public school district or public-school districts to comply with court orders and statutory obligations to create and maintain a unitary system of desegregated public schools in accordance with Ark. Code Ann. §6-23-106 (a).



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12. The charter school shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local health and safety laws, rules, and regulations regarding the facilities and school property.
13. The applicant confirms the understanding that certain provisions of state law shall not be waived. The charter school is subject to any prohibition, restriction, or requirement imposed by Title 6 of the Arkansas Code and any rule and regulation approved by the State Board of Education under this title relating to (a) Monitoring compliance with Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-101 et seq., as determined by the Commissioner of the Department of Education; (b) Conducting criminal background checks for employees; (c) High school graduation requirements as established by the State Board of Education; (d) Special education programs as provided by this title; (e) Public school accountability under this title; (g) Health and safety codes as established by the State Board of Education and state and local governmental entities, pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. 6-23-401(b).
14. No indebtedness of any kind incurred or created by the charter school shall constitute an indebtedness of the state or its political subdivisions. No debts of the charter school shall involve or be secured by the faith, credit, or taxing power of the state or its political subdivisions, pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. 6-23-503. Upon dissolution of the charter school or nonrenewal or revocation of the charter, all net assets of the charter school, including any interest in real property purchased with public funds, shall be deemed the property of the state unless otherwise specified in the charter of the charter school. If the charter school used state or federal funds to purchase or finance personal property, real property, or fixtures for use by the charter school, the authorizer may require that the property be sold. The state has a perfected priority security interest in the net proceeds from the sale or liquidation of the property to the extent of the public funds used in the purchase.
15. The school's curriculum will be aligned with the Arkansas Academic Standards.
16. The school will operate within the statewide assessment system.
17. The Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN) Financial Management System, provided by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, shall be the original and official accounting system of record for the public charter school as required by state law and the rules and regulations of the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education for all financial transaction records and reporting (including, but not limited to, payroll processing and wage and tax reporting to the IRS ATRS, DFA, etc., accounts payable, fixed assets, personnel budgeting, and budgeting). APSCN shall be used to record all private, as well as local, state, and federal revenues and expenditures.
18. The charter school shall comply with Ark. Code Ann. §6-24-105-107 concerning contracting with charter school board members, administrators, and employees.
19. The Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN) Student Management System, provided by the Department of Education, shall be the original and official student management system for the public charter school as required by state law and the rules and regulations of the Department of Education for all student management areas (including, but not limited to, systems administration, demographics, attendance, scheduling, report cards, discipline, medical, Cognos reporting, and Statewide Information System reporting).
20. The facility to be used will comply with all applicable accessibility requirements in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and all other state and federal laws and local zoning ordinances.
21. Should your charter school application be approved, the charter school board must be incorporated as a nonprofit corporation in the State of Arkansas . Additionally, the charter school board will be expected to obtain Federal 501(c)(3) status. A copy of the charter school board's application for Federal 501(c)(3) status must be included with the application. The charter school board must receive formal tax-exempt status under §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 prior to the first day of its operation with students.

To the best of my knowledge, I certify that the information and data contained in the application are true and correct. The applicant will comply with the Arkansas Statement of Assurances for Charter Schools and all State and Federal laws guiding Charter Schools in Arkansas unless granted a waiver. The charter school board and any



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educational service providers affirm and acknowledge the information and affirmations presented in this application.

Q31.

**Type your name.**

Valorie McCleary

Q32.

**Type your job title.**

Superintendent

Q33.

**Verify the above statement by signing.**

Signature



## Section



Sarper Turker

### Ratings

Meets

All elements are met.



## 7. Addendum – Virtual or Blended Operator

Q34.

**Will you be a virtual or blended operator?**

- Yes
- No

Q35.

**Explain the rationale for opening and authorizing the online school.**



The rationale for authorizing an online learning option within SCSD CATA is grounded in the district's responsibility to respond to evolving educational needs while maintaining strong academic outcomes and community connection. As a rural school district, Searcy County faces unique challenges related to geographic isolation, transportation barriers, workforce demands, and increasing competition from statewide virtual charter schools and homeschooling. Families increasingly seek flexibility in how students access coursework, career pathways, and extracurricular opportunities. The proposed online and hybrid learning model allows the district to meet these needs while maintaining accountability to Arkansas Academic Standards and preserving the strong relationships that characterize local public schools.

Over the past several years, SCSD has observed gradual enrollment shifts consistent with statewide trends. Families seeking flexible learning schedules have often chosen full-time virtual charter schools or homeschooling, even when they would prefer their children remain connected to district programs, athletics, and career pathways. Local surveys conducted with families during the charter planning process confirmed this demand. A significant portion of respondents indicated interest in flexible learning structures that would allow students to complete some coursework online while still participating in district programs. Additionally, the district's existing virtual program currently serves 36 students who have expressed interest in a hybrid model that allows them to remain enrolled in virtual coursework while accessing in-person career and elective opportunities.

The proposed online school component within SCSD CATA is therefore designed not as a separate institution but as an extension of the district's existing instructional model. Students will remain fully enrolled in the district and will maintain access to the same academic expectations, instructional supports, and extracurricular opportunities as their peers in traditional classrooms. This approach ensures that flexibility does not come at the expense of academic rigor or community connection.

A key reason for authorizing the online option is to support hybrid learning pathways that integrate academic coursework with career preparation. Through SCSD CATA, students will have the opportunity to complete core academic classes online while participating in Career and Technical Education courses at the North Central Career Center campus or electives at Marshall High School. This flexible scheduling model is particularly valuable for students pursuing industry certifications, internships, or work-based learning experiences. By allowing students to blend virtual coursework with in-person technical instruction, the district can expand access to career pathways without requiring students to choose between online learning and workforce preparation.



The online option also supports students with diverse learning needs. Some students require flexible scheduling due to health conditions, family responsibilities, or employment commitments. Others benefit from the pacing flexibility and independent learning structures that virtual instruction can provide. At the same time, these students often still need the structure, support services, and social connection that a local school district provides. SCSD's model ensures that online students continue to receive access to counseling services, intervention supports, extracurricular activities, and career guidance.

Another critical factor supporting the online school is the district's commitment to improving student retention. When students leave the district for statewide virtual charter schools, the district loses not only enrollment funding but also the ability to support those students academically and socially. By offering a district-based online and hybrid option, SCSD can retain students who might otherwise leave the district while still maintaining accountability under ATLAS and state reporting requirements. Retaining these students strengthens both the district's academic improvement efforts and its fiscal stability.

The online program will also support the district's broader academic priorities. SCSD CATA focuses on strengthening literacy, writing proficiency, and mathematics outcomes while expanding access to conservation leadership programming and career pathways. Online instruction will be aligned to the same curriculum frameworks used in traditional classrooms, including the district's literacy and mathematics programs. Teachers will monitor student progress through formative assessments, virtual conferences, and regular feedback cycles to ensure that online students receive the same level of instructional rigor and support.

Importantly, the online program will operate within a hybrid support structure rather than a fully independent virtual system. Students will have access to on-campus resources such as labs, advising sessions, and career counseling. Teachers will maintain regular communication with families and provide scheduled check-ins to monitor progress and engagement. This structure ensures that students remain connected to the school community while benefiting from the flexibility of online learning.

The online option also strengthens the district's commitment to workforce readiness. By allowing students to complete some coursework remotely, SCSD can provide more flexible scheduling for apprenticeships, internships, and career exploration experiences. This is particularly important in rural communities where transportation distance and scheduling constraints can limit participation in workforce programs.



Finally, authorizing the online school aligns with the district's long-term strategic goals. The charter model allows SCSD to expand instructional flexibility while maintaining strong governance, transparency, and accountability. The online program supports the district's mission to provide innovative educational opportunities while preserving the values of a community-centered public school system.

In summary, the rationale for opening and authorizing the online school within SCSD CATA is driven by the need to respond to changing educational demands, retain students within the district, expand access to career pathways, and provide flexible learning options that support diverse student needs. By integrating virtual instruction with traditional programming, the district ensures that students can access high-quality education while remaining connected to their school, their community, and their future career opportunities.

Q36.

**How will authorizing the online school benefit the current student population of Arkansas?**



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Authorizing the online learning component within SCSD CATA will expand high-quality educational opportunities for students across Arkansas by providing flexible access to rigorous academic instruction while maintaining full accountability to the Arkansas Academic Standards and the Arkansas Teaching, Learning and Assessment System (ATLAS). The proposed online program is designed not as a replacement for traditional instruction, but as an extension of the district's educational framework that allows students to access coursework in ways that better meet their academic, personal, and career development needs. By integrating online learning with in-person academic programs, career pathways, and student support services, SCSD CATA ensures that flexibility does not come at the expense of rigor, accountability, or connection to school communities.

One of the most significant benefits of authorizing the online school is the expansion of equitable access to educational opportunities for students living in rural areas of Arkansas. Rural districts often face geographic and transportation challenges that limit access to specialized coursework, advanced electives, or career training opportunities. Students may live far from school campuses or require flexible schedules due to transportation constraints. A district-supported online learning option allows students to complete academic coursework without being limited by traditional scheduling structures. This model ensures that rural students have access to the same quality academic instruction as students in larger districts while remaining connected to their local schools and communities.

Authorizing the online school also strengthens access to CTE and workforce preparation opportunities across Arkansas. SCSD CATA is designed to allow students to combine online academic coursework with in-person participation in career pathways offered through North Central Career Center. This hybrid structure allows students to pursue industry certifications, technical training, and work-based learning experiences while still meeting graduation requirements aligned to Arkansas standards. Students interested in fields such as healthcare, agriculture, construction trades, automotive technology, or business will have greater flexibility to participate in pathway programs without sacrificing their progress in core academic subjects. By providing scheduling flexibility, the online school ensures that students can access both academic instruction and career training in ways that align with regional workforce needs.

Another benefit of the online school is its ability to support students who require personalized learning environments. Students learn in different ways and at different paces. Some students thrive in flexible learning environments that allow them to work independently and progress through coursework at an individualized pace while receiving targeted support from teachers. Other



students may require scheduling accommodations due to health concerns, family responsibilities, or employment commitments. Authorizing a district-based online school ensures that these students remain connected to Arkansas public education systems rather than seeking alternatives outside the district. Students enrolled in the online program will continue to receive academic support, counseling services, and opportunities for extracurricular participation while benefiting from a learning structure that meets their individual needs.

The online school will also benefit students by strengthening retention within Arkansas public education. Many Arkansas districts have seen students leave for statewide virtual charter schools or homeschooling when flexible learning options are not available locally. Authorizing a district-based online program allows students who require flexibility to remain enrolled within their home district while still accessing innovative instructional models. This approach ensures that students maintain access to school-based supports, extracurricular activities, and career exploration opportunities while continuing to be counted within Arkansas's public education system. Retaining these students strengthens both the academic environment and the financial sustainability of rural districts.

In addition to supporting flexibility and retention, the online school will enhance the development of durable skills that are essential for success in college, careers, and civic life. SCSD CATA integrates the Arkansas Durable Skills framework and workforce readiness competencies into both virtual and in-person instruction. Online students will participate in collaborative digital projects, research assignments, presentations, and problem-solving activities that require communication, critical thinking, and initiative. These experiences mirror real-world professional environments where remote collaboration and digital communication are increasingly common. By embedding these competencies into virtual instruction, the program ensures that students develop the transferable skills needed to succeed in modern workplaces.

The online school will also allow students to pursue a more balanced educational experience by combining virtual coursework with in-person participation in electives, extracurricular activities, and career pathways. Students enrolled in online academic classes will still have the opportunity to attend courses or programs at Marshall High School or NCCC. This hybrid model allows students to remain engaged with their school community while benefiting from flexible academic scheduling. For example, students may complete core courses online while participating in technical labs, athletics, fine arts programs, or career pathway classes on campus. This structure ensures that students remain socially connected and academically supported while accessing a learning environment that fits their needs.



Furthermore, authorizing the online school provides an opportunity for innovation in instructional delivery within rural public education. By combining virtual learning with conservation leadership programming, career pathway participation, and applied learning experiences, SCSD CATA offers a model for integrating online education with hands-on instruction. This approach demonstrates how districts can expand access to flexible learning options while maintaining strong academic expectations and accountability systems. As other districts across Arkansas explore ways to serve diverse student populations and declining enrollment, the SCSD CATA model can serve as an example of how online learning can be integrated into a comprehensive, student-centered educational framework that continues to support the needs of students and families.

Finally, the online school strengthens the district's commitment to preparing students for postsecondary success. By providing flexible learning opportunities that integrate academic rigor, career exploration, and workforce preparation, the program helps students develop the knowledge and skills needed to succeed after graduation. Students will graduate not only with mastery of Arkansas Academic Standards but also with experience in independent learning, time management, digital collaboration, and professional communication—skills that are essential for success in college, technical training programs, and the modern workforce.

Q37.

**Describe the role of the teachers within the online learning environment.**



Teachers in the SCSD CATA online learning environment serve as instructional leaders, mentors, facilitators of student engagement, and primary monitors of academic progress within a structured digital learning framework aligned to Arkansas Academic Standards. Their responsibilities extend beyond simply delivering content. Teachers ensure that online learning maintains the same level of rigor, accountability, and student support that exists in traditional classrooms while also leveraging the flexibility and personalization that online instruction can provide. Through intentional planning, continuous communication, and systematic progress monitoring, teachers guide students toward mastery of course standards and successful completion of graduation requirements.

A primary responsibility of teachers in the online environment is the design and delivery of instruction aligned to the district's established curriculum frameworks and the Arkansas Academic Standards. Online courses will utilize the same core academic programs implemented in face-to-face instruction, including the district's literacy and mathematics curricula. Teachers adapt these materials for the digital platform by incorporating interactive instructional modules, recorded lessons, guided practice activities, collaborative discussions, and digital assessments. Students are expected to engage with complex texts, analytical writing assignments, and problem-solving tasks that mirror the depth of knowledge required by the ATLAS. Teachers structure courses so that students move through content in a logical progression while demonstrating mastery of each standard through formative and summative assessments.

Teachers also serve as the central point of connection between students and the school community. Because engagement is critical to successful online learning, teachers maintain regular communication with students through scheduled virtual class sessions, small-group discussions, individual conferences, and messaging within the district's learning management system. Teachers provide frequent feedback on assignments, clarify expectations, and respond to student questions to ensure that students remain actively engaged in their coursework. For students who demonstrate reduced participation or incomplete assignments, teachers intervene promptly by contacting the student and family, offering additional support, and coordinating with school counselors or administrators when needed. These proactive communication practices help maintain accountability and prevent students from falling behind academically.

Another essential role of teachers in the online environment is continuous progress monitoring and academic intervention. Teachers analyze data from formative assessments, universal screening results, and course assignments to track student mastery of academic standards. When students struggle with specific skills or concepts, teachers adjust instruction, provide additional resources, and schedule targeted support sessions. Students performing below grade level receive additional



support through the district's MTSS. Teachers collaborate with intervention specialists and instructional coaches to design targeted interventions, which may include small-group virtual instruction, additional guided practice, or individualized learning plans. These interventions ensure that online students receive the same level of academic support and responsiveness as students in traditional classrooms.

Teachers also play a significant role in helping students develop strong organizational habits and time-management skills. Online learning requires students to take greater responsibility for pacing and completing coursework independently. Teachers clearly communicate expectations for participation, assignment deadlines, and course progress. They provide students with pacing guides and reminders to help them manage their workload effectively. Teachers review student progress regularly and provide coaching when students need additional guidance in managing their time or prioritizing tasks. This structured support helps students develop the self-regulation and responsibility necessary for success in both virtual learning and future professional environments.

In addition to academic instruction, teachers in the SCSD CATA online program support the district's broader emphasis on durable skills and career readiness. Teachers incorporate collaborative digital projects, research presentations, and problem-solving activities that require students to communicate effectively, analyze information, and demonstrate initiative. Students may work together on shared documents, participate in virtual presentations, or engage in peer review discussions that reinforce communication and teamwork skills. Teachers model professional online communication and encourage students to demonstrate responsibility, respect, and perseverance when completing assignments. By embedding these durable skills within online coursework, teachers help students develop competencies that are essential for both higher education and workforce success.

Collaboration among educators is another important aspect of the online learning environment. Teachers regularly participate in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to review student performance data, share instructional strategies, and refine course delivery methods. These PLC meetings allow teachers to identify trends in student achievement, discuss challenges, and develop coordinated responses to support students effectively. Online teachers also collaborate with counselors, administrators, and career pathway coordinators to ensure that each student's learning plan remains aligned with graduation requirements and career interests. For students participating in hybrid schedules—combining online coursework with in-person electives or CTE programs at NCCC—teachers coordinate closely with on-campus staff to maintain consistent academic expectations and scheduling alignment.



Teachers also play an important role in supporting students' social and emotional well-being. Online instruction can sometimes create feelings of isolation for students if not carefully structured. Teachers address this by creating opportunities for meaningful interaction during virtual class sessions and collaborative activities. They encourage students to ask questions, share ideas, and participate in discussions that build a sense of belonging and community. When teachers observe signs that a student may need additional support, they work with school counselors and administrators to ensure that appropriate services are provided.

Professional development ensures that teachers are well prepared to succeed in the online instructional environment. Training includes strategies for effective virtual instruction, methods for engaging students in digital learning environments, and techniques for using data systems to monitor student progress. Teachers also receive support in integrating technology tools, designing online assessments, and providing high-quality feedback to students in digital formats. Continuous professional learning ensures that instructional quality remains strong and that teachers can adapt to evolving online learning practices.

Q38.

**Verify by your signature below that the proposed school will abide by the following high-quality standards for online instruction:**

- 1. The Online School involves representatives of the Online School's community, as well as staff, in a collaborative process to develop and communicate the Online School's vision, mission, goals and results in a manner appropriate to the online model for that program. The Online School provides leadership, governance, and structure to support this vision, and these supports are used by all staff to guide the decision-making.**
- 2. The Online School has a plan and timeline to accomplish the technological infrastructure capable of meeting the needs of students and staff and supporting teaching and learning. The Online School uses a variety of technological tools and has a user-friendly interface. The Online School meets industry-accepted accessibility standards for interoperability and appropriate access for learners with special needs. Technological support structures and programs are in place to reduce barriers to learning for all students.**
- 3. The Online School has and implements a technology plan that includes (but is not limited to) documentation that all students and Parents know and understand the**



acceptable use of the Internet in accordance with all federal and state statutes. When providing direct services (for example, ISP, computer equipment or "at location") to students, the Online School will use filtering software to prevent access to inappropriate materials.

4. Online Schools must comply with all statutory requirements, including the existing budgetary reporting procedures under state law, as well as being consistent with the format required by the authorizing entity. Budgets and accounting records must be transparent, open to the public, and demonstrate support for student academic achievement.
5. Online School demonstrates levels of attainment of statewide performance indicators that Meet expectations established by the Department's annual performance review.
6. The Online School's Teachers use ongoing, research-based formative and summative assessments to measure student academic performance. Students have varied opportunities to demonstrate mastery of skills, show academic progress, and receive meaningful feedback on their learning.
7. The Online School has a policy regarding course completion.
8. The Online School follows policies for tracking attendance, participation, and truancy. The policy includes documentation of Teacher/student interaction.
9. The Online School has a policy and the infrastructure to store, retrieve, analyze, and report required student, teacher, financial, and other required data collections.
10. The Online School has a policy of providing guidance counseling services as appropriate to grade level and student needs.
11. The Online School has a policy guiding school/home communication about student and program progress, school governance, and school accountability that is relevant, regular, and available in the native language where reasonable.
12. Instructional strategies, practices, and content address various learning needs and styles of students. The Online School uses a body of evidence to identify advanced, under performing, economically disadvantaged, or other special needs students. The Online School will work to ensure that support structures and programs, including but not limited to Title I, ESL, Special Ed. and Gifted and Talented are integrated into the school's instructional program to promote and support student learning.
13. The Online School evaluates the degree to which it achieves the goals and objectives for student learning. There is a systematic process for collecting, disaggregating,



managing, and analyzing data that enables the Online School's leadership, teachers, parents, students, community members, and other stakeholders to determine areas of strength and challenge. The data collected are analyzed using a systems approach, and the analysis includes the use of the school performance reports.

14. The Online School shall ensure that background checks in accordance with law are performed on all volunteers and paid staff, including but not limited to mentors, teachers, administrators or any other persons in unsupervised contact with the student, except parents supervising their children's educational program.

15. The Online School has an established policy to conduct virtual home visits to enhance school-family engagement.

Signature



## Section



Sarper Turker

### Ratings

Meets

All elements are met.

#### Final Status

Reject  Approve

#### Approver Comments