



# Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

*Transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education*

**Jacob Oliva**  
Secretary

**Stacy Smith**  
Deputy  
Commissioner

**State Board of  
Education**

**Dr. Sarah Moore**  
Stuttgart  
Chair

**Kathy Rollins**  
Springdale  
Vice-Chair

**Adrienne Woods**  
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**Randy Henderson**  
Blytheville

**Lisa Hunter**  
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Little Rock

**Ken Bragg**  
Sheridan

**Leigh Keener**  
Little Rock

August 15, 2025

Ms. Rebecca Miller-Rice  
Rules Administrator  
Bureau of Legislative Research  
One Capitol Mall, Fifth Floor  
Little Rock, AR 72201

**Re: For Legislative Council review: Division of Elementary and Secondary  
Education Rule Governing Public School Choice**

Dear Ms. Miller-Rice:

Attached is a copy of the proposed amendment to the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Rule Governing Public School Choice. This filing also contains the financial impact statement, markup version of the rule, post-public comment summary, and public comments with division responses. The Division respectfully requests that the proposed rule amendment be placed on the ALC Administrative Rules Subcommittee agenda in September.

The Governor's Office approved the rule for public comment and the State Board of Education released the rule in its June 12, 2025 meeting. The public comment period ran from July 12, 2024, to August 11, 2025. A public comment hearing was held on July 18, 2025, at the Arch Ford Building, Four Capitol Mall, Little Rock, AR, 72201. On August 13, 2025, the State Board gave final approval for this rule.

Thank you for your assistance. If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to call me at (501) 682-4234.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Daniel Shults  
Chief Legal Counsel  
Arkansas Department of Education

**FINANCIAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS COMPLETELY.**

**DEPARTMENT** \_\_\_\_\_  
**BOARD/COMMISSION** \_\_\_\_\_  
**PERSON COMPLETING THIS STATEMENT** \_\_\_\_\_  
**TELEPHONE NO.** \_\_\_\_\_ **EMAIL** \_\_\_\_\_

To comply with Ark. Code Ann. § 25-15-204(e), please complete the Financial Impact Statement and email it with the questionnaire, summary, markup and clean copy of the rule, and other documents. Please attach additional pages, if necessary.

**TITLE OF THIS RULE** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Does this proposed, amended, or repealed rule have a financial impact?  
Yes                      No
  
2. Is the rule based on the best reasonably obtainable scientific, technical, economic, or other evidence and information available concerning the need for, consequences of, and alternatives to the rule?  
Yes                      No
  
3. In consideration of the alternatives to this rule, was this rule determined by the agency to be the least costly rule considered? Yes                      No

If no, please explain:

(a) how the additional benefits of the more costly rule justify its additional cost;

(b) the reason for adoption of the more costly rule;

(c) whether the reason for adoption of the more costly rule is based on the interests of public health, safety, or welfare, and if so, how; and

(d) whether the reason for adoption of the more costly rule is within the scope of the agency's statutory authority, and if so, how.

4. If the purpose of this rule is to implement a *federal* rule or regulation, please state the following:  
(a) What is the cost to implement the federal rule or regulation?

**Current Fiscal Year**

General Revenue \_\_\_\_\_  
 Federal Funds \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cash Funds \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special Revenue \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other (Identify) \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_

**Next Fiscal Year**

General Revenue \_\_\_\_\_  
 Federal Funds \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cash Funds \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special Revenue \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other (Identify) \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_

(b) What is the additional cost of the state rule?

**Current Fiscal Year**

General Revenue \_\_\_\_\_  
 Federal Funds \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cash Funds \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special Revenue \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other (Identify) \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_

**Next Fiscal Year**

General Revenue \_\_\_\_\_  
 Federal Funds \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cash Funds \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special Revenue \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other (Identify) \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the total estimated cost by fiscal year to any private individual, private entity, or private business subject to the proposed, amended, or repealed rule? Please identify those subject to the rule, and explain how they are affected.

**Current Fiscal Year**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Next Fiscal Year**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is the total estimated cost by fiscal year to a state, county, or municipal government to implement this rule? Is this the cost of the program or grant? Please explain how the government is affected.

**Current Fiscal Year**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Next Fiscal Year**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

7. With respect to the agency's answers to Questions #5 and #6 above, is there a new or increased cost or obligation of at least one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) per year to a private individual, private entity, private business, state government, county government, municipal government, or to two (2) or more of those entities combined?

Yes      No

If yes, the agency is required by Ark. Code Ann. § 25-15-204(e)(4) to file written findings at the time of filing the financial impact statement. The written findings shall be filed simultaneously with the financial impact statement and shall include, without limitation, the following:

- (1) a statement of the rule's basis and purpose;
- (2) the problem the agency seeks to address with the proposed rule, including a statement of whether a rule is required by statute;
- (3) a description of the factual evidence that:
  - (a) justifies the agency's need for the proposed rule; and
  - (b) describes how the benefits of the rule meet the relevant statutory objectives and justify the rule's costs;
- (4) a list of less costly alternatives to the proposed rule and the reasons why the alternatives do not adequately address the problem to be solved by the proposed rule;
- (5) a list of alternatives to the proposed rule that were suggested as a result of public comment and the reasons why the alternatives do not adequately address the problem to be solved by the proposed rule;
- (6) a statement of whether existing rules have created or contributed to the problem the agency seeks to address with the proposed rule and, if existing rules have created or contributed to the problem, an explanation of why amendment or repeal of the rule creating or contributing to the problem is not a sufficient response; and
- (7) an agency plan for review of the rule no less than every ten (10) years to determine whether, based upon the evidence, there remains a need for the rule including, without limitation, whether:
  - (a) the rule is achieving the statutory objectives;
  - (b) the benefits of the rule continue to justify its costs; and
  - (c) the rule can be amended or repealed to reduce costs while continuing to achieve the statutory objectives.



# Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

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## **Proposed Rule – Rules Governing Public School Choice**

### **PURPOSE**

The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education is seeking the Governor's review of the proposed DESE Rules Governing Public School Choice as a result of Act 913 of 2025.

### **BACKGROUND**

Pursuant to Arkansas Code § 6-18-1901 et seq. and § 6-18-227, the Division is charged with promulgating rules for Public School Choice. The purpose of this proposed rule is to set forth the process and procedures necessary to administer the Public School Choice Act of 2015 and the Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act.

### **KEY POINTS**

- Clarifies that a student may transfer from his or her resident district to a nonresident district or another public school within the resident district
- Adds language for the process and procedure for receiving a student's transfer application
- Adds language for the hearing of a student whose application has been rejected
- Requires the school district to report annually to the Secretary of the Department the number of transfer applications, acceptances, denials, and reasons for each denial

### **DISCUSSION**

This rule is promulgated per Act 913 of 2025, codified at Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-1901 and Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-227 for the Department to set forth the process and procedures to administer the Acts.

The rule in its amended form expounds upon the circumstances under which a district may claim lack of capacity, requires that a school district establish a student transfer policy and publicly post the policies and procedures to apply for a transfer, adds language for the proper process and procedure for receiving an application for transfer, and provides that a student may transfer from his or her resident district to a nonresident district or another public school within his or her resident school district.

### **Post Public Comment**

Clarifying language was added to page four of the rule consistent with the original provision regarding the capacity of a grade level. An edit was made to page six of the rule which cause the rule to directly mirror the statutory provision. Finally, language was added on page 24 consistent with the original provision which direct schools to utilize available electronic mail address for military families.

**State Board of  
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# Proposed Rulemaking

## Title

Promulgated by:  
Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

### Title 6. Education

#### Chapter I. Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

#### Subchapter B. Student Enrollment and Choice

#### Part 30. Rules Governing Public School Choice

#### Subpart 1. Purpose and Definitions

##### **6 CAR § 30-101. Purpose.**

The purpose of this part is to set forth the process and procedures necessary to administer the Public School Choice Act of 2015, Arkansas Code § 6-18-1901 et seq., and the Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act, Arkansas Code § 6-18-227.

##### **6 CAR § 30-102. Definitions.**

As used in this part:

(1) "Division" means the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education;

(2) "Lack of capacity" means, as of the date the application is filed, a receiving school ~~district~~ has;

(A) Reached the maximum student-to-teacher ratio allowed under federal law, state law, the ~~rules for the standards for accreditation~~ Rules Governing the Standards for Accreditation for Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts, state rules, or other applicable federal regulations; or

(B) Filled ninety-five percent (95%) or more of the seats at the grade level in which the student would be assigned.

**DRAFT**

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(3) "Nonresident district" means a school district other than a student's resident district to which a student transfers or seeks to transfer;

(4)(A) "Nonresident or receiving school" means the public school to which a student transfers or seeks to transfer under ~~the provisions of Arkansas Code § 6-18-227~~ [this part](#).

(B) A nonresident or receiving school may be a public school within the resident district or a public school within a nonresident district;

(5) "Parent or guardian" means a student's:

(A) Parent;

(B) Legal guardian;

(C) Person having lawful control of the student; or

(D) Person standing in loco parentis;

(6) "Resident district" means the school district:

(A) In which the student resides as determined under Arkansas Code § 6-18-202; and

(B) From which the student seeks to transfer;

(7) "Resident or transferring school" means the public school:

(A) In which the student is enrolled at the time of application; and

(B) From which the student seeks to transfer under ~~the provisions of Arkansas Code § 6-18-227~~ [this part](#);

(8) "Sibling" means each of two (2) or more children having a parent in common by:

(A) Blood;

(B) Adoption;

(C) Marriage; or

(D) Foster care;

(9) "Transfer student" means a public school student in kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) who transfers to a nonresident district through a public school choice option;

(10) "Uniformed service member" means an active or reserve component member of the:

- (A) United States Army;
- (B) United States Navy;
- (C) United States Air Force;
- (D) United States Marine Corps;
- (E) United States Space Force;
- (F) United States Coast Guard;
- (G) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned

Officer Corps; or

- (H) United States Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service; and

(11) "Uniformed service veteran" means a former uniformed service member who has been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

## **Subpart 2. The Arkansas Public School Choice Act of 2015**

### **6 CAR § 30-201. Establishment of public school choice program.**

(a) A public school choice program is established to enable a student in kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) to attend a school in a nonresident district or another public school within the student's resident district, subject to the limitations under Arkansas Code § 6-18-1906 and 6 CAR § 30-204.

(b) (1) Each school district shall participate in a public school choice program that allows students to attend any nonresident school or nonresident district, consistent with the Public School Choice Act of 2015, Arkansas Code § 6-18-1901 et seq. and this part.

(2) Each school district shall:

(A) Establish a policy that allows an enrolled student to transfer to another public school within a student's resident or nonresident district; and

(B) Publicly post the policies and procedures for a student to apply for a transfer as permitted under this subpart.



(c)(1) A school district shall not deny a student the ability to attend a school in the student's school district of choice unless there is a lack of capacity at the school in the student's school district of choice.

(2) A lack of capacity may be claimed by a school district only if

(A) the nonresident school has reached the maximum student-to-teacher ratio allowed under federal law, state law, the Rules Governing the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts, 6 CAR pt. 61, or other applicable federal regulations.

(B)(i) For the purposes of this part, a school district may claim a lack of capacity if, as of the date the application for public school choice is made, ninety-five percent (95%) or more of the seats at the grade level in which the student would be assigned at the nonresident school are filled; and

(ii) The claim is consistent with state and federal law.

(d)(1) The board of directors of a public school district shall adopt by resolution specific standards for acceptance and rejection of applications under the Public School Choice Act of 2015, Arkansas Code § 6-18-1901 et seq. and this part.

(2) The standards:

(A) Shall comply with the requirements of this subpart; May include without limitation the capacity of a:

- \_\_\_\_\_ (i) Program;
- \_\_\_\_\_ (ii) Class;
- \_\_\_\_\_ (iii) Grade level; or
- \_\_\_\_\_ (iv) School building;

(B)(i) May include a claim of a lack of capacity by a school district only if the school district has reached the maximum student-to-teacher ratio allowed under:

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) Federal law;
- \_\_\_\_\_ (b) State law;
- \_\_\_\_\_ (c) The rules for standards of accreditation; or
- \_\_\_\_\_ (d) Other applicable rules or regulations.

~~(ii) A lack of capacity claim must be consistent with state and federal law.~~

(B) Shall include a provision regarding the denial of an application due to lack of capacity consistent with subsection (c) of this rule;

(C) Shall include a statement that priority will be given to an applicant who has a sibling or stepsibling who:

- (i) Resides in the same household; and
- (ii) Is already enrolled in the nonresident ~~district~~ school by choice;

(D) Shall not include an applicant's:

- (i) Academic achievement;
- (ii) Athletic or other extracurricular ability;
- (iii) English proficiency level; or
- (iv) Previous disciplinary proceedings, except that an expulsion from another district may be included under Arkansas Code § 6-18-510; and

(E) A school district or school -receiving transfers under the Public School Choice Act of 2015, Arkansas Code § 6-18-1901 et seq., and this part shall not discriminate on the basis of:

- (i) Gender;
- (ii) National origin;
- (iii) Race;
- (iv) Ethnicity;
- (v) Religion; ~~or~~
- (vi) Disability; or
- (vii) Residential address.

(e) Each school district shall have a policy stating the method by which a parent or guardian of a student may submit a school choice application, including without limitation:

- (1) Regular mail;
- (2) Email; and
- (3) Hand delivery.

(f) A public school district shall not require an in-person filing of an application.

(g) A nonresident district and nonresident school shall:

(1) Accept credits toward graduation that were awarded by another district;  
and

(2) Award a diploma to a ~~nonresident~~ student who transfers to the nonresident district or nonresident school if the student meets the nonresident district's or nonresident school's graduation requirements.

(h) The superintendent of a school district shall cause public announcements to be made over the broadcast media and either in the print media or on the internet to inform parents of students within the school district and in adjoining districts of the:

- (1) Availability of the program;
- (2) Application deadline;
- (3) Requirements and procedure for nonresident students to participate in the program; and
- (4) The primary point of contact at the district for school choice questions.

## **6 CAR § 30-202. General provisions.**

(a)(1) The transfer of a student under ~~the Arkansas Public School Choice Act of 1989, Arkansas Code § 6-18-206 [repealed], or the Public School Choice Act of 2013 2015, 6-18-1901 et seq. [repealed],~~ is not voided by ~~the Public School Choice Act of 2015, Arkansas Code § 6-18-1901 et seq., and~~ this part and shall be treated as a transfer under the Public School Choice Act of 2015 and this part.

(2) Districts that are subject to a federal court order requiring the districts to abide by the provisions of the Arkansas Public School Choice Act of 1989 [repealed] and the corresponding rules are not subject to the requirements of the Public School Choice Act of 2015 or this part.

(b)(1) A student may accept only one (1) school choice transfer per school year.

(2) A student who accepts a public school choice transfer may return to his or her resident district or the public school within his or her resident district from which he or she transferred during the school year.

(3) If a transferred student returns to his or her resident district, [resident school](#), or enrolls in a private or home school:

(A) The student's transfer is voided; and

(B) The student shall reapply if the student seeks a future school choice transfer.

(c)(1) A transfer student attending a nonresident school under the Public School Choice Act of 2015 and this part may complete all remaining school years at the [nonresident school or](#) nonresident district.

(2) A present or future sibling of a student who continues enrollment in the nonresident district [or nonresident school](#) under subdivision (c)(1) of this section and applies for a school choice transfer under Arkansas Code § 6-18-1905 may enroll in the nonresident district [or nonresident school](#) if the district [or school](#) has the capacity to accept the sibling without:

(A) Adding teachers, staff, or classrooms; or

(B) Exceeding the rules and standards established by law.

(3) A present or future sibling of a student who continues enrollment in the nonresident district [or nonresident school](#) and who enrolls in the nonresident district [or nonresident school](#) under subdivision (c)(1) of this section may complete all remaining years at the nonresident district [or nonresident school](#).

(d)(1) The transfer student or the transfer student's parent is responsible for the transportation of the transfer student to and from the school in the nonresident district where the transfer student is enrolled.

(2) ~~The~~ [If a student transfers to a nonresident district under this subchapter,](#) [the](#) nonresident district may enter into a written agreement with the student, the student's parent, or the [transfer student's](#) resident district to provide the transportation.

(e) For purposes of determining a school district's state aid, a transfer student is counted as part of the average daily membership of the nonresident district where the transfer student is enrolled [if the student transfers to a nonresident district under this subchapter](#).

(f) A student who transfers to a nonresident school ~~or district~~ ~~district~~ under this subpart shall not be:

(1) Denied participation in an extracurricular activity at the nonresident school ~~or district~~ ~~district~~ to which he or she transfers based exclusively on his or her decision to transfer to the nonresident school ~~or district~~ ~~district~~; or

(2) Disciplined in any manner based exclusively on the exercise of his or her right to transfer to another nonresident school ~~or district~~ ~~district~~ under this part.

(g) A student who transfers to a nonresident school ~~or district~~ ~~district~~ under this section shall complete a Changing Schools/Athletic Participation form pursuant to the requirements of Arkansas Code § 6-18-1904(f)(2), if applicable.

### **6 CAR § 30-203. Application for transfer.**

(a) If a student seeks to attend a nonresident school in his or her resident district or a school in a nonresident district, the student's parent or guardian, or student ~~over the age of~~ ~~eighteen (18)~~ years of older, shall submit an application:

(1) To the nonresident district, if applying to attend another district, and to the student's resident district;

(2) On the form approved by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education; and

(3) Postmarked or delivered no earlier than January 1 and no later than June 1 ~~May 1~~ of the year in which the student seeks to begin the fall semester at the nonresident ~~district~~ school or district, except as otherwise provided for dependents of uniformed service members and uniformed service veterans in Subpart 4 of this part.

(b) Both the resident district and the nonresident district ~~shall~~, or only the resident district if a student applies to transfer to a nonresident school shall, upon receipt of the application, place a date and time stamp on the application that reflects the date and time ~~each district received~~ the application is received.

(c)(1) Before accepting or rejecting an application, a ~~nonresident~~ district in which the nonresident school is located shall determine whether the limitations of 6 CAR § 30-204 apply to the application.

(2) Nothing in this part shall be construed to require a student transfer before the end of the school year.

(d)(1) Except as provided in Subpart 4, for each application received under this part, the ~~nonresident~~ district in which the nonresident school is located shall notify the applicant in writing as to whether the student's application has been accepted or rejected within fifteen (15) calendar days of the ~~nonresident~~ district's receipt of the application.

(2) If the application is rejected, the superintendent of the ~~nonresident~~ district in which the nonresident school is located shall state in the notification letter the reason for the rejection.

(3) A transfer under this subpart is effective at the time the:

(A) Nonresident district or nonresident school provides notice that the application is accepted; or

(B) Application on appeal is approved by the State Board of Education.

(4) A student who has an effective transfer under this chapter may:

(A) Immediately transfer to the nonresident district or nonresident school ~~new district~~; or

(B)(i) Transfer to the nonresident district or nonresident school ~~new district~~ at the beginning of the following school year.

(ii) If the student elects to remain at the ~~district the student attended at the time the application was filed~~ resident school for the remainder of the school year, the:

(a) ~~District-Resident school~~ shall continue to provide all educational services for that student for the remainder of the school year; and

(b) Student shall continue to be counted towards the ~~district's~~ resident school's average daily ~~attendance-membership~~ for the remainder of that school year.

## **6 CAR § 30-204. Limitations.**

(a)(1) If the provisions of the Public School Choice Act of 2015, Arkansas Code § 6-18-1901 et seq. ~~and this part~~ these rules conflict with a provision of an enforceable desegregation court order or a district's court-approved desegregation plan, either of which explicitly limits the transfer of students between schools or school districts, the provisions of the order or plan shall govern.

(2) Annually by January 1, a school district that claims a conflict under subdivision (a)(1) of this section shall submit proof from a federal court to the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education that the school district has a genuine conflict under an active desegregation order or active court-approved desegregation plan that explicitly limits the transfer of students between school districts.

(3) A school district shall provide the information required under subdivision (a)(2) of this section to:

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Attn: Legal Services Unit  
Four Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201

(4) Proof submitted under subdivision (a)(2) of this section shall contain the following:

(A) Documentation that the desegregation order or court-approved desegregation plan is still active and enforceable; and

(B) Documentation showing the specific language the school district believes limits its participation in the school choice provisions of the Public School Choice Act of 2015.

(5)(A) Within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of proof submitted under subdivision (a)(2) of this section, the division shall notify the school district whether it is required to participate in the school choice provisions of the Public School Choice Act of 2015.

(B) The division may reject incomplete submissions.

(C) If the division does not provide a written exemption to the school district, then the district shall be required to participate in the school choice provisions of the Public School Choice Act of 2015.

(6) The division shall maintain on its website a list of school districts that are not required to participate in the school choice provisions of the Public School Choice Act of 2015.

(7) The State Board of Education may:

(A) Review a decision of the division upon written petition of the affected school district; and

(B) Affirm or reverse the decision of the division.

#### **6 CAR § 30-205. Appeal and reporting.**

(a)(1) A parent or guardian, or student if the student is ~~over~~eighteen (18) years of age or older, whose application for a transfer under Arkansas Code § 6-18-1905 and 6 CAR § 30-203 is rejected may request a hearing before the State Board of Education to reconsider the application for transfer.

(2) A request for a hearing before the state board shall be in writing and shall be postmarked no later than ten (10) calendar days, excluding weekends and legal holidays, after the student or the student's parent or guardian, hereafter "appealing party", receives a notice of rejection of the application under Arkansas Code § 6-18-1905 and 6 CAR § 30-203 and shall be mailed to:

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Attn: Legal Services Unit  
Four Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201

(3) Contemporaneously with the filing of the written appeal with the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education's Legal Services Unit, the appealing party must



also mail a copy of the written appeal to the superintendent of the nonresident school district.

(4) In its written appeal, the appealing party shall state its basis for appealing the decision of the ~~nonresident~~ district in which the nonresident school is located.

(5) The appealing party shall submit, along with its written appeal, a copy of the notice of rejection from the ~~nonresident school~~ district in which the nonresident school is located.

(6)(A) Upon receipt of the written appeal, the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall notify the nonresident, if applicable, -and resident districts of the appeal.

(B) Both districts may submit, in writing, any additional information, evidence, or arguments supporting its rejection of the student's application by mailing such response to the state board.

(C)(i) Such response shall be postmarked no later than ten (10) days after the districts receive notice of the student's or parent's appeal.

(ii) Any response shall be mailed to:

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Attn: Legal Services Unit  
Four Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201

(7) The division shall notify the appealing party, the nonresident district, if applicable, and the resident district of the date, time, and location of the hearing before the state board.

(8) As part of the review process, the appealing party may submit supporting documentation that the transfer would be in the best educational, social, or psychological interest of the student.

(9) If the state board overturns the determination of the nonresident district on appeal, the state board shall notify the appealing party, the nonresident district [if applicable](#), and the resident district of the basis for the state board's decision.

(b) An applicant is not permitted to request a hearing before the state board if his or her application for a transfer is rejected due to the application not being timely received by both the:

(1) Resident district; and

(2) Nonresident district, [if applicable](#).

(c) The deadlines under this section may be waived by the state board upon a finding that there was good cause for the failure to meet the deadline.

#### **6 CAR § 30-206. State Board of Education hearing procedures.**

The following procedures shall apply to hearings conducted by the State Board of Education:

(1) All persons wishing to testify before the state board shall first be placed under oath by the Chair of the State Board of Education;

(2)(A) Each party that wishes to participate in the hearing may take up to fifteen (15) minutes to present its case, beginning with the nonresident school district, [if applicable](#), followed by the resident school district, and then the appealing party.

(B) The chair may, for good cause shown and upon request of the party, allow additional time to present its case;

(3)(A) The state board, at its discretion, shall have the authority to require any person associated with the application to appear in person before the state board as a witness during the hearing.

(B) The state board may accept testimony by:

(i) Affidavit;

(ii) Declaration; or

(iii) Deposition;

(4) The state board will grant or deny the appeal based upon the totality of evidence presented;

(5)(A) The state board may:

(i) Announce its decision immediately after hearing all arguments and evidence; or

(ii) Take the matter under advisement.

(B) All discussion shall take place in an open meeting.

(C) The state board shall provide a written decision to the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, the appealing party, the nonresident district, if applicable and the resident district within fourteen (14) days of announcing its decision under this section.

### **Subpart 3. The Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act**

#### **6 CAR § 30-301. General requirements.**

(a) Upon the request of a parent or guardian, or the student if the student is eighteen (18) years of age or older, a student may transfer from his or her resident district or public school to another-a nonresident school district or nonresidentpublic school under opportunity school choice if, at the time of the request either:

(1)(A) The resident public school district has been classified by the State Board of Education as a public school district in need of Level 5 — Intensive support under Arkansas Code § 6-15-2913 or § 6-15-2915; or

(B) The resident public school in which the student is enrolled has a rating of "F" under Arkansas Code §§ 6-15-2105 and 6-15-2106; and or

(C) The parent, legal guardian, or student, if the student is eighteen (18) years of age or older, believes it is in the best interest of the student to transfer to a nonresident school district or nonresident school; and

(2) Except as provided in Subpart 4 of this part, a parent or guardian, or the student if the student is over-eighteen (18) years of age or older, has notified both the resident and nonresident school districts, if applicable, of any request to transfer no earlier than January 1 and no later than May 1 June 1 of the school year before the school year in which the student intends to transfer.

(b) For each student enrolled in or assigned to a public school district that is classified by the state board as a public school district in need of Level 5 — Intensive support or a public school within the resident district that has a rating of “F,” the school district shall:

(1) Timely notify the parent or guardian, or the student if the student is ~~over~~ eighteen (18) years of age or older, as soon as practicable after the designation is made of the options available under Subpart 3 of this part; and

(2) Offer that person an opportunity to submit an application no earlier than January 1 and no later than June 1~~May 1~~, except as provided in Subpart 4 of this part, to enroll the student in the upcoming school year in ~~any:~~

~~—————(A) Public school district that is not classified as in need of Level 5 — Intensive support; or~~

~~—————(B) Public school within the resident district that does not have a rating of “F”~~ a nonresident school district or nonresident school.

(c) If a student is enrolled in or assigned to a public school district that is classified by the state board as a public school district in need of Level 5 — Intensive support or a public school within the resident district that has a rating of “F,” the parent or guardian, or student if the student is ~~over~~ eighteen (18) years of age or older, may choose to:

~~—————(1) Apply apply to enroll the student in a legally allowable public school district that is not classified as a public school district in need of Level 5 — Intensive support; or~~

~~—————(2)(A) Apply to enroll the student in a public school within the resident district that does not have a rating of “F” and that is nearest the legal residence of the student.~~

~~—————(B) If there is no public school within the resident district that does not have a rating of “F,” the parent or guardian, or the student if the student is over eighteen (18) years of age, may apply to enroll the student in a nonresident public school district and, if accepted, be placed in a public school that does not have a rating of “F”~~ nonresident school district or nonresident school.

(d)(1)(A) Except as provided in Subpart 4 of this part, by July 1 of the school year in which the student seeks to enroll in a nonresident district, the nonresident district

shall notify the applicant and the resident district in writing as to whether the application has been accepted or rejected.

(B) If the applicant has applied to attend a school within the student's resident district, the resident district shall notify the applicant in writing as to whether the student's application has been accepted or rejected by July 1.

(C) The notification shall be sent via first-class mail to the address on the application.

(2) If the application is accepted, the superintendent of the ~~nonresident~~ district in which the nonresident school is located shall state in the notification letter the deadline by which the student must enroll in the receiving school.

(3) If the application is rejected, the superintendent of the ~~nonresident~~ district in which the nonresident school is located shall state in the notification letter the specific reasons for the rejection.

(4) A school district shall not deny a student the ability to transfer to a nonresident school under this part unless there is a lack of capacity at the nonresident school.

(5)(A) A lack of capacity may be claimed by a school district only if the nonresident school has reached the maximum student-to-teacher ratio allowed under federal law, state law, the Rules Governing the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts, 6 CAR pt. 61, or other applicable federal regulations.

(B) For the purposes of this part, a school district may claim a lack of capacity if, as of the date the application for opportunity school choice is made, ninety-five percent (95%) or more of the seats at the grade level at the nonresident school are filled.

(6) A school district receiving transfers under this part shall not discriminate on the basis of:

(A) Gender;

(B) National origin;

(C) Race;

- (D) Ethnicity;
- (E) Religion; ~~or~~
- (F) Disability; or
- (G) Residential address.

(7) An applicant may appeal a school district's decision to deny a student admission to a school in the student's school district of choice due to a lack of capacity to the state board by postmarking or delivering the appeal within ten (10) days after the applicant receives written notice from the ~~nonresident~~-district that admission has been denied.

(8) If any provision of this part conflicts with a federal desegregation court order applicable to a school district, the federal desegregation court order shall govern.

(e) For the purposes of continuity of educational choice, a transfer under this subpart shall:

(1) Operate as an irrevocable election for each subsequent entire school year; and

(2) Remain in force until:

(A) The student completes high school; or

(B) The parent or guardian, or student if the student is ~~over~~-eighteen (18) years of age or older, timely makes application under a provision of law governing attendance in or transfer to another public school within the student's resident school district or a nonresident school district ~~other than the student's assigned school or resident district.~~

(f) Except as provided in Subpart 4, a transfer under this subpart is effective at the beginning of the next school year.

(g)(1) Students with disabilities who are eligible to receive services from the transferring school district under federal or state law, including students receiving additional funding through federal title programs specific to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89-10, and who participate in the Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act program, shall remain eligible to receive services from the receiving school district as provided by state or federal law.

(2) Any funding for the student shall be transferred to the school district to which the student transfers.

(h)(1) The receiving public school or school district may transport students to and from the transferring public school or school district, and the cost of transporting students shall be the responsibility of the transferring public school or school district except as provided under subdivisions (h)(2) and (3) of this subsection.

(2) A transferring public school or school district shall not be required to spend more than four hundred dollars (\$400) per student per school year for transportation required under this subsection.

(3) Upon the transferring public school district's removal from classification as a public school district in need of Level 5 – Intensive support or the transferring public school's receipt of a rating other than "F", the transportation costs shall no longer be the responsibility of the transferring public school or school district, and the student's transportation and the costs of transportation shall be the responsibility of the parent or guardian or of the receiving public school district if the receiving public school district agrees to bear the transportation costs.

(i)(1) Unless excused by the school for illness or other good cause:

(A) Any student participating in the opportunity public school choice option shall:

(i) Remain in attendance throughout the school year; and

(ii) Comply fully with the receiving school's code of conduct; and

(B) The parent or guardian of each student participating in the opportunity public school choice option shall comply fully with the receiving school's parental involvement requirements.

(2) A participant who fails to comply with this section shall forfeit the opportunity school choice option.

(j) A receiving district [or receiving school](#) shall accept credits toward graduation that were awarded by another district.

(k) The receiving district [or receiving school](#) shall award a diploma to a student transferred under this part if the student meets the receiving district's [or public school's](#) graduation requirements.

(l) A district under the opportunity public school choice program shall request public service announcements to be made over the broadcast media and in the print media at such times and in such a manner as to inform parents or guardians of students in adjoining districts of the:

- (1) Availability of the program;
- (2) Application deadline; and
- (3) Requirements and procedure for nonresident students to participate in the program.

(m) A student who transfers to another public school or a nonresident school district under this subpart shall not be:

- (1) Denied participation in an extracurricular activity at the public school or nonresident school district to which he or she transfers based exclusively on his or her decision to transfer to the public school or nonresident school district; or
- (2) Disciplined in any manner based exclusively on the exercise of his or her right to transfer to another public school or a nonresident school district under this part.

(n) A student who transfers to a nonresident school district under this section shall complete a Changing Schools/Athletic Participation form pursuant to the requirements of Arkansas Code § 6-18-~~1904(f)~~[227\(m\)\(2\)](#).

### **6 CAR § 30-302. Reporting requirements.**

(a) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall develop an annual report on student participation in public school choice and opportunity school choice and deliver the report to the State Board of Education, the Governor, the House Committee on Education, the Senate Committee on Education, and the Legislative Council at least sixty (60) days prior to the convening of the regular session of the General Assembly.

(b) The annual report shall include without limitation:



- (1) The number of public school students participating in:
- (A) Public school choice under the Public School Choice Act of 2015, Arkansas Code § 6-18-1901 et seq.; and
  - (B) Opportunity school choice under the Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act, Arkansas Code § 6-18-227, disaggregated by whether the transfer was from within a public school district or outside a public school district; and
- (2) Aggregate data of the race and gender of students participating in:
- (A) Public school choice; and
  - (B) Opportunity school choice.
- (c) Each public school district shall annually report to the division:
- (1) The number of students applying for a transfer receiving a transfer, being denied a transfer, including the reason for each denial, to a nonresident school within the resident district under public school choice;
  - (2) The number of students applying for a transfer, receiving a transfer, being denied a transfer, including the reason for each denial, to a nonresident district under public school choice;
  - (23) The number of students applying for a transfer, receiving a transfer, being denied a transfer, including the reason for each denial, to a nonresident school within the resident district under opportunity school choice; and
  - (34) The number of students applying for a transfer, receiving a transfer, being denied a transfer, including the reason for each denial, to a nonresident ~~school outside of the resident~~ district under opportunity school choice.
- (d) The school district shall report the data required by subsection (c) of this section through its cycle reports as prescribed by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- (e) The data received under subsection (c) of this section shall be reported annually on the division website.

## **6 CAR § 30-303. Funding considerations.**

(a) For the purposes of determining a school district's state funding, the nonresident student shall be counted as a part of the average daily membership of the receiving district.

(b) The maximum opportunity public school choice funds granted for an eligible student shall be calculated based on applicable state law.

(c) The public school that provides services to students with disabilities shall receive funding as determined by applicable federal and state law.

#### **6 CAR § 30-304. Appeal procedures.**

(a) A parent or guardian, or the student if the student is ~~over~~ eighteen (18) years of age or older, may appeal a school district's decision to deny admission to a nonresident school due to a lack of capacity to the State Board of Education pursuant to this ~~section~~ part.

(b)(1) The appealing party must present a written appeal to the state board via certified mail, return receipt requested, no later than ten (10) calendar days, excluding weekends and legal holidays, after the appealing party receives notice of rejection from the superintendent of the ~~nonresident~~ district in accordance with 6 CAR § 30-301(e).

(2) The written appeal should be sent to:

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Attn: Legal Services Unit  
Four Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201

(3) Contemporaneously with the filing of the written appeal with the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education's Legal Services Unit, the appealing party must also mail a copy of the written appeal to the superintendent of the ~~nonresident~~ school district that denied admission.

(4) In its written appeal, the appealing party shall state its basis for appealing the decision of the ~~nonresident~~ district.

(5) The appealing party must submit, along with its written appeal, a copy of the rejection letter from the ~~nonresident~~ district.

(6) Any request for a hearing before the state board must be made in the written appeal.

(c)(1) The ~~nonresident~~ district may submit, in writing, any additional information, evidence, or arguments supporting its rejection of the student's application by mailing such response via certified mail, return receipt requested to the state board no later than ten (10) days after receiving the appealing party's written appeal.

(2) Any response from the nonresident district should be sent to:

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Attn: Legal Services Unit  
Four Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201

(3) Contemporaneously with the filing of the written response with the unit, the ~~nonresident~~ district must also mail a copy of the written response to the appealing party.

(4) If the appealing party did not request a hearing before the state board, the ~~nonresident~~ district may request a hearing in its response.

(d) If a hearing is requested by either party, the state board shall schedule the hearing at or before ~~for~~ the next regularly scheduled state board meeting in accordance with its procedures for the submission of agenda items.

(e) If no hearing is requested by either party, the state board shall consider the appeal during its next regularly scheduled state board meeting in accordance with its procedures for the submission of agenda items.

(f) State board hearing procedures shall be the same as set forth in 6 CAR § 30-206.

(g) An applicant is not permitted to request a hearing before the state board if his or her application for a transfer is rejected due to the application not being timely received by the nonresident [or resident](#) district.

(h) The deadlines under this section may be waived by the state board upon a finding that there was good cause for the failure to meet the deadline.

#### **Subpart 4. School Choice for Uniformed Service Members**

##### **6 CAR § 30-401. School choice for students of uniformed service members.**

(a) A child shall be eligible for enrollment in the public school district of his or her choice if he or she is a dependent of a:

- (1) Uniformed service member in full-time active duty status;
- (2) Surviving spouse of a uniformed service member;
- (3) Reserve component uniformed service member during the period six (6) months before until six (6) months after a Title 10 or Title 32 of the United States Code or state active duty mobilization and service; or
- (4) Uniformed service veteran who is returning to civilian status at the conclusion of the uniformed service veteran's active duty status.

(b) If a student eligible under subsection (a) of this section seeks to attend a [nonresident](#) school ~~in a nonresident district~~, the student's parent, legal guardian, or person standing in loco parentis to the student shall submit an application approved by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education by regular mail, electronic mail, or in person to the student's nonresident district, [if applicable](#), and resident district, which includes a copy of the:

- (1) Identification card of the student's parent, legal guardian, or person standing in loco parentis that qualifies the student under this section; and
- (2) Official orders, assignment notification, or notice of mobilization of the student's parent, legal guardian, or person standing in loco parentis.

(c) An application deadline required under this part shall not apply to a school transfer under this [chapterpart](#).

(d) A student eligible for a school transfer under this subpart shall be permitted only one (1) school transfer per school year under this part.

(e) The parent, legal guardian, or person standing in loco parentis to a student eligible for a school transfer under this part shall be responsible for the transportation of his or her child to and from a nonresident district [if the student transfers to a nonresident district under this part](#).

(f)(1) For each application received under this subpart, the ~~nonresident~~-district shall notify the applicant in writing as to whether the student's application has been accepted or rejected within fifteen (15) calendar days of the ~~nonresident~~-district's receipt of the application.

(2) The notification shall be sent via first-class mail to the address on the application [and to any electronic mail address that is available](#).

## **Subpart 5. Reporting Requirement**

### **6 CAR § 30-501. General provisions.**

(a)(1) A school district shall submit a report to the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, satisfying the requirements of subsection (b) of this section, if the total number of students who have transferred to a contiguous school district using a school choice or legal transfer provision is greater than twenty percent (20%) of the current number of students attending the district.

(2) A student will not be included in the calculation required under subdivision (a)(1) of this section or the report required under subdivision (a)(1) of this section if, according to the school district's records, that student is eighteen (18) years of age or older.

(b) A report required under subdivision (a)(1) of this section shall include the following information:

(1) The total number of students who have transferred to a contiguous school district using a school choice or legal transfer provision;

(2) The number of students who have transferred to each contiguous school district using a school choice or legal transfer provision; and

(3) The age and approximate geographic area of each student who has transferred to a contiguous school district using a school choice or legal transfer provision.

(c) A report required under subdivision (a)(1) of this section shall be submitted in writing to the Office of School Choice by mail using the information provided:

Arkansas Department of Education

Attn: Office of School Choice

Four Capitol Mall

Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

**DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION RULES  
GOVERNING PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE  
PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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**Commenter Name and Organization (if applicable):** Don K. Berry, Military Officer  
Association of America – Arkansas Council

**Comments:**

**Subpart 4. School Choice for Uniformed Service Members**

**6 CAR § 30-401. School choice for students of uniformed service members.**

...

(f)(1) For each application received under this subpart, the district shall notify the applicant in writing as to whether the student's application has been accepted or rejected within fifteen (15) calendar days of the district's receipt of the application.

(2) The notification shall be sent ~~via first class mail to the address~~ by the means identified for this purpose on the application.

Justification: A transferring military family will more likely make a school choice application ahead of leaving their prior duty station. While in transit families are unable to receive first class mail service until they establish a new address. Email is more reliable to timely communicate with military families than first class mail. The application should ask by what means the family requests to be notified in writing.

DoD recognizes Arkansas leadership of their 'Open Enrollment Flexibility' priority.

DoD's Best Practices document places Arkansas first on its list:

<https://download.militaryonesource.mil/StatePolicy/pdfs/2025/best-practices-open-enrollment-flexibility.pdf>

**Division Response:** Comment considered, a non-substantive change was made consistent with the comment. The added language directs the school to utilize an email address that is provided in addition to the physical address currently required by the rule.

**Commenter Name and Organization (if applicable):** Tina Seidel, CPS Admin Assistant – Student Services

**Comments:** I am writing in opposition to the additional wording that would include inter-district school to school transfers in the School Choice Law that currently applies to district to district transfers.

I am the Admin Assistant for Student Services in Cabot School District and as part of my duties I help oversee the School Choice process for district-to-district transfers and our parent request process for in-district school-to-school transfers.

Over my years in this position, our district has worked diligently on our inter-district transfer requests to get our process where it is today. I would invite any officials considering this change to the law to first visit with us and see our process first hand.

After years of fine-tuning our process, we currently fulfill nearly all the requirements that the new wording requests. We have an automated system for a parent to submit a google form in order to be added to our parent request list. For the last two years we have allowed students who are attending a school on an approved waiver to remain in that school and to simply roll up with their peers. We have prioritized siblings and approved them to attend the schools that their elder sibling is currently attending. We have continually had a placement success rate of 90 – 95%.

The use of the school choice form would negatively impact our current process. It would increase our workload from the very beginning of the process. The school choice application would not self-populate our request spreadsheets as our current system does. The specific wording in the revision that the district cannot “discriminate based on an applicant’s residential address” would mean that we could no longer use our parent waiver requests to help balance our building numbers over the summer. Currently when a school fills up in a grade level we can refer to our parent requests and use them to move students around to make space for incoming families. If we cannot make moves based on residential addresses, we would not be able to prioritize moves that help with overall numbers.

Also, under this wording no priority could be given to families that live and pay property taxes to the district over families that are coming to us from outside of our district. This situation in itself would cause more friction with our in-district parents. While school choice families are welcome to the district, we do currently prioritize in-district parent requests where slots are limited.

Currently school choice for out-of-district families opens in January. This is before families in the district are thinking about new student enrollments which typically starts in March. If no priority can be given based on residential address, then based on the timing alone, out-of-district families would end up with an advantage.

Finally, while we do allow for parent waivers and have a process in place, the expectation is that students will usually attend their zoned school. Typically, parents reach out that have an issue with attending their zoned school due to daycare etc. and are directed to the parent waiver request process that is linked to our main web page. The process is not heavily advertised, as



would be required by the school choice wording. We found in prior years before we allowed students to remain in their approved school for subsequent years, that the number of parent waiver requests had risen from the initial 30-40 requests to process over the summer to over 150 and increasing each year. The amount of time and effort to process these requests was fast becoming unattainable. As we now allow students to remain in their approved building for subsequent years, we anticipate that the number of requests this year will remain similar to last summer which was in the 60-70 range. If this process were to be advertised, as required in the new wording, we anticipate it would encourage parents to submit requests for reasons that were not a necessity. If the number of requests again reached into the hundreds it could again become more than could be reasonably maintained by district staff.

Again, we as a district are currently achieving the intent behind the proposed wording for school to school transfers. Our parents are for the most part happy with the process and we have a very high success rate for placements. I ask again that you visit with a district that is successfully working the issues and consider that your proposed changes would significantly impact our current process and would result in more manhours, less efficiency and potentially more unhappy parents.

**Division Response: Comment Considered, no changes made. This comment raises policy concerns which are governed by the controlling statute and are outside the scope of rulemaking.**

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**Commenter Name and Organization (if applicable):** Tripp Walter, Arkansas Public School Resource Center

**Comments:**

Page 4, Section (c)(2)(B)(i), Line 3: Add the words “in which the student would be assigned” after the word “grade level”.

**Division Response: Comment considered, a non-substantive change was made consistent with the comment which added clarity to the provision of the rule.**

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**Commenter Name and Organization (if applicable):** Tripp Walter, Arkansas Public School Resource Center

**Comments:**

Page 4 : Add “Each school district shall determine for each school within the school district the capacity of each school and grade level” after Section (c)(2)(B)(i).

**Division Response: Comment considered, no changes made.**

**Commenter Name and Organization (if applicable):** Tripp Walter, Arkansas Public School Resource Center

**Comments:**

Page 5, Section (d)(2)(B): Insert the letter “a” between “include” and “provision”.

**Division Response:** Comment considered, a non-substantive change was made consistent with the comment.

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**Commenter Name and Organization (if applicable):** Tripp Walter, Arkansas Public School Resource Center

**Comments:**

Page 14, Section (a)(1)(B): Add “and state board rules” after “6-15-2106”.

**Division Response:** Comment considered, no changes made. This change was not made on the basis that the rules are created and referenced by the code which is referenced in the rule.

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**Commenter Name and Organization (if applicable):** Tripp Walter, Arkansas Public School Resource Center

**Comments:**

Page 15, Section (b)(2): Keep the stricken language in (A) and (B); it is the language in the statute.

**Division Response:** Comment considered, no changes made. Prior to the 2025 session, this statutory language established an exception to the general rule which prohibited intra-district transfer. Because the general prohibition to intra-district transfers has been removed, the language establishing the exception is enveloped by the general authority to transfer to any school with capacity. The deviation in language made by the rule clarifies the implications of A.C.A. 6-18-227(b)(1)(A)(iii).

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**Commenter Name and Organization (if applicable):** Tripp Walter, Arkansas Public School Resource Center

**Comments:**

Page 15, Section (c): Keep the stricken language in (1) and (2); it is the language in the statute.

**Division Response:** Comment considered, no changes made. Prior to the 2025 session, this statutory language established an exception to the general rule which prohibited intra-district transfer. Because the general prohibition to intra-district transfers has been removed, the language establishing the exception is enveloped by the general authority to transfer to any school with capacity. The deviation in language made by the rule clarifies the implications of A.C.A. 6-18-227(b)(1)(A)(iii).

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