The mission of the Fort Smith Public Schools is to ensure academic and personal success for each student – today and in the future.

Success may be defined somewhat differently for each in the Fort Smith Public Schools – a number that hit almost 1,500 in the 2015-16 school year. Every student has a unique set of skills, experiences, and aspirations. It is the responsibility of the administration, teachers and classified staff to foster a culture that allows all of our students to pursue their goals. Our mission statement creates a framework for understanding the work of the school district.

Ensuring Academic Success

Fort Smith students have access to a wide variety of academic opportunities. High school students may choose from several Advance Placement (AP) courses which conform to a College Board specified curriculum. These courses qualify students for credit at most colleges and universities upon passage of a rigorous AP exam. The AP curriculum also helps develop study habits that prepare students for college level work. Other students may take classes that offer a head start on higher education by providing college as well as high school credit. These offerings allow students to graduate from high school with college credit already on their transcript before they set foot on a college campus.

Enrollment in the Western Arkansas Technical Center (WATC) gives students access to 10 program fields ranging from computer engineering to welding technology, from graphic design to a variety of health science specialties. Students attend these programs for half their high school day during junior and senior years and can earn as many as 40 credit hours toward a degree as well as earning advanced technical certificates in many fields. Each one of these programs provides a range of options after high school including direct entry into employment or admission to a college degree program. This center is located at the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith.

Preparation for these choices begins in elementary school as students engage in a focused curriculum of basic skills, enrichment activities and artistic experiences to meet various interests and needs. Students in 2015-16 took the third different state assessment to be administered in the last three years. The rapidly changing measurement tools make it difficult to draw hard and fast conclusions about academic trends. The Arkansas Department of Education classifies two campuses as achieving, 21 campuses as needs improvement, one campus as focus and two campuses as priority. The district is classified as needs improvement. The state also uses letter grades to classify schools. Fort Smith is assigned six B’s, 12 C’s and 7 D’s. (The state classification system is not applied to the Adult Education Center.)

Another academic indicator – ACT scores – shows Fort Smith seniors outperforming their peers within the state and nation. In the latest reporting, Fort Smith seniors achieved a composite score of 21.1 compared to 20.8 nationally and 20.2 within the state of Arkansas.

Ensuring Personal Success

It is important that Fort Smith Public School students graduate on time with high level academic skills. It is also critical those students be equipped with skills that will allow them to be successful in their life after high school. Fort Smith offers 11 different sports for both boys and girls as well as a broad range of other activities such as music, art, drama and journalism. Our award winning JROTC program is growing every year. This does not include an array of clubs and leadership groups that offer opportunities for involvement.

Extracurricular activities provide more than just fun and engaging time away from core academic pursuits. Students who are actively engaged in wholesome and challenging activities tend to perform better academically. These activities emphasize teamwork and instill a work ethic that colleges, military officials and local employers will attest are essential skills in today’s work environment.

The Fort Smith Public Schools are 27 campuses serving the citizens of our community from pre-kindergarten to adult. There is a diversity of student population within those 27 campuses as well as a diversity of opportunities available for each student. We believe in academic and personal success for all students. Our mission is challenging, but it is one to which we are fully committed.

Gordon C. Floyd, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools

With an increasing demand for scientists and rapid technological advances, the need to fill STEM-based jobs continues to grow. As a result, college undergraduates look toward degrees in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) at an exponential rate. Stimulating the leaders of tomorrow is a priority for educators in the Fort Smith Public School District who have joined thousands across the United States to implement modern, forward-thinking criteria into science lessons.

Courtney Mastin, a teacher at Tilles Elementary School, believes one advantage of STEM is students must think in new ways to problem solve challenges.

“Because STEM lessons are so hands-on, the students are much more engaged which causes them to make real world connections,” Mastin said. “All of these skills are essential to students as they transition to college and/or careers.”

Three-sided display boards showcasing lengthy hypotheses, scientific method steps and conclusions of the traditional “Science Fair” project are less prevalent in the district’s elementary classrooms as teachers turn to modern day project based activities.

Enter STEM Wars – the new science fair.

Students throughout the Fort Smith Public School District worked hard throughout the 2015-2016 school year relating tried and true concepts to real-life scenarios, working on projects they could use to compete in STEM Wars.

In doing so, teachers prepared students to make the connection between knowledge and application.

Though STEM Wars is similar to a science project, students were asked to solve a variety of age-appropriate STEM problems as a team.

Students did not have to shop for supplies for their projects. Most of the challenges incorporated common household items like aluminum foil, plastic spoons, paper, Popsicle sticks and paper plates, which the schools supplied. They did not spend hours at home working on a project. They worked in teams during school hours. Parents did not stay up late the night before a “science fair” perfecting or completing their student’s project. Teachers facilitated the teams as they worked through their projects.

For this year’s STEM Wars, students will tackle new challenges. They will compete at the school level, and those winners will move on to the district-wide STEM Wars.

For Cavanaugh Elementary School teacher Natasha Shoate, the best part of converting from traditional practices to STEM design challenges is her students’ eagerness to take responsibility for their own learning.

“I have been amazed with the creative solutions my students have found to solve problems and their willingness to take risks,” said Shoate. “STEM is an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the teaching of multiple disciplines into a cohesive learning model based on real world applications.”
Digital Conversion Enters Phase 2

In the fall of 2014, Fort Smith Public Schools began a digital conversion project that would put a laptop computer in the hands of every primary student in the district. In 2014, students at Sunnymede and Morrison elementary schools received Dell laptops. Along with the computers, technology instruction facilitators to show educators how to adapt their teaching style to a more digital format.

Students received backpacks for the computers as well as everything needed to charge the computers at home. Though Cox Communications offered students who qualify for free or reduced lunches a discounted internet package – Connect2Compete – in order to access internet at home, students had all the necessary programs on their computers to allow them to complete all homework assignments without internet connection.

The purpose of the program was to build foundations in citizenship, creativity, communication, critical thinking and collaboration. The benefits of the program include:

- Students demonstrate digital citizenship by learning and following responsible behavior.
- Using technology allows students to learn at their full potential and prepares them for the real-world applications of their learning in college and the workplace.
- Digital learning integrates technology into the curriculum anytime, anyplace.
- Learning results from the dynamic interaction among students, educators, parents and the extended community.
- Digital learning encourages students to solve problems and think critically by stimulating analytical thinking.
- Technology transforms the teacher from a director of learning to a facilitator of learning.

Students turned their computers in at the end of the school year, so they could be serviced, updated and reformatted over the summer. They were issued their original computer when school started in the fall.

The district chose a two-year cycle to see how the program would succeed. What they learned? The digital conversion project is everything they hoped it would be.

“We have been extremely pleased with our students in their ability to be responsible for their devices – use, keeping them charged, being fully prepared with them each day,” said Dr. Barry Owen, assistant superintendent for instructional services.

After the first year, district personal met with students, parents and teachers and asked what worked, what didn't and how it could be improved.

“The overwhelming response was positive,” Owen said.

Parents did ask for help being better prepared to help their children on the devices, Owen said, which led the district to scheduling workshops for parents.

And now it is time for Phase Two of the project: All third- and fourth-graders in the school district were issued Google Chromebooks the beginning of the 2016–17 school year. Phase Three will put Chromebooks in the hands of fifth and sixth-graders across the district.

These devices and the ability to take them home allows students the opportunity to practice deficit, extension and enrichment skills and receive immediate feedback on their progress. And it allows Fort Smith Public Schools to better prepare our students for bright future.

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Teachers Honored

LaDawna Dillman was named 2016 Arkansas Secondary Level Art Educator of the Year by the Arkansas Art Educators Association. She is a fine arts teacher at Northside High School.

Aimee Brinkley received the 2016 Outstanding Biology Teacher Award from the National Association of Biology Teachers, in conjunction with Carolina Biological Supply Company, Leica Microsystems. This honor, given annually since 1961, identifies a teacher from each of the United States, its possessions, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and Canada who has made valuable contributions to the profession and to his/her students. She is a biology teacher at Northside High School.

Gary Udouj was named the 2015 Arkansas Adult Education Outstanding Administrator of the Year by the Arkansas Association for Continuing Adult Education. He is the director of the Fort Smith Adult Education Center.

Dr. Ginni McDonald was named the 2016 Arkansas Association of Secondary School Principals Principal of the Year. This award is given each year to an Arkansas secondary level principal who has succeeded in providing high-quality learning opportunities for students, and has been acknowledged by peers for exemplary contribution to the profession. She is in her fifth year as Northside High School principal.
Transportation

Fort Smith Public Schools was selected as one of six school districts to be awarded the AAPT School Bus Safety Award at the annual Arkansas Association of Pupil Transportation (AAPT) annual conference June 28, 2016.

AAPT is an association of transportation professionals from the school districts of Arkansas. Its purpose is to assist the members in staying up to date with the newest and safest equipment and procedures for transporting students to and from school and school-related activities.

Fort Smith School District transportation department has:

- 89 buses in the fleet
- 55 daily bus routes
- 3,300 routes mile per day
- 2,922 students riding the bus each day
- 100,080 gallons of diesel used each year
- 2,322 activity trips taken last year
- 175,000 activity trip miles last year

The first bus departs the Service Center at each 6:15 a.m. each school day. The last bus returns to the Service Center at 4:50 p.m. each school day.

Facts and Figures

Highly Qualified Staff

- Fort Smith Public School teachers participate in a rigorous program of content-focused professional development each year. Arkansas licensure requirements mandate 36 hours annually, but teachers accumulate many more than what is required.
- In 2015-2016, 100 percent of the 1,177 educators in the District were fully licensed to teach in their subject areas.
- $54,253.38 was the average teacher salary in 2015-2016.
- In 2014-2015, 105 FSPS teacher had earned the prestigious national Board Certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. More than 20 are in the process of obtaining this certification.
- Two principals have earned the prestigious Arkansas Master Principal designation. Seven are in varying stages of the process seeking this professional credential.
- During the 2014-2015 school year, the certified staff education data demonstrated that 52.42 percent of District educators hold a bachelor’s degree. This number includes teachers who have accumulated up to 36 additional credit hours beyond their undergraduate degree. Educators holding a master’s through master’s plus 30 hours make up 45.60 percent of the certified staff population. Educators who have earned a doctoral degree equal 1.99 percent of the certified group.

Child Nutrition

FSPS served 1,577,991 lunches in the 2015-16 school year:
- Free: 1,294,803
- Reduced: 24,639
- Paid: 158,549

FSPS served 751,322 breakfasts in the 2015-16 school year:
- Free: 620,616
- Reduced: 57,619
- Paid: 73,087

Because all students can eat a free breakfast each school day, the district covers the remaining cost of reduced and free breakfasts.

The summer feeding program provided 47,043 meals in 2016:
- Summer Breakfasts: 10,925
- Summer Lunches: 36,118

Fort Smith seniors had a composite score of 21.1 on the ACT test, compared to 20.8 nationally and 20.2 statewide.

ACT prep is offered to all ninth- through 12th-grade students four times a year — October, December, April and June. The free course is supported by a grant from the Arkansas Department of Education’s The College and Career Readiness Program in a consortium with Alma, Van Buren and Greenwood.

Students are given access to free materials, teacher support for all subjects tested on the ACT and college and career planning resources. Students who participate in a certain amount of hours receive incentives such as calculators, Chromebooks and Beats headsets.

In 2015-16, 211 Fort Smith students participated in the program. They raised their composite ACT scores an average of 1.34 points and first time test takers averaged a 20.9 composite.
As the educational needs in the Fort Smith Public Schools grow, the challenge of a limited revenue base and a tax rate unchanged since 1987 makes it essential to balance revenue sources against rising costs. From facility needs to staff salaries, making school dollars stretch to cover demands requires a balanced approach, which uses many options.

Using a combination of funds from local property taxes, state revenues and federal categorical funds to address the instructional support demands of a complex school program requires the careful attention to detail to assure compliance with all federal and state rules while ensuring an efficient operation. The graphical representation of how revenues and expenditures are allocated reveals the prudent use of resources within mandatory parameters.

The use of a variety of financing tools to support capital needs have allowed FSPS to address facility requirements within the available revenue stream. This practice has maintained and improved the community investment in school buildings while keeping buildings appropriate for today’s needs.

In 2015-2016, the District received an unmodified opinion (the best rating possible from independent auditor Przybysz & Associates).

FSPS received a total of $41,030.28 from commissions based on a competitive beverage-vending contract during 2015-16. These revenues continue to decline as restrictions on the sale of beverages by schools become tighter.
When the Partners in Education Advisory Board envisioned the **See, Think, Build Award**, it was as one that is not given year after year, but as one that is presented when something spectacular is accomplished.

The **Fort Smith Roundtable** and the **Golden Knights Program** is just this kind of See, Think, Build Award winner. Mentors work with individual students, students that with the persistent guidance of their mentors learn to work with and learn from one another in a self-governing organization that begins in upper elementary and continues through junior high school. When these young men reach Northside High School, they are ready to participate in the school community as **Young Brothers Leading**. These young men then serve as role models for the younger Golden Knights. The Fort Smith Roundtable has organized and nurtures the growth and development of a new generation of leaders.

Congratulations to the Gentlemen of the Fort Smith Roundtable, Golden Knights, Young Brothers Leading, and representatives from Spradling, Northside, Kimmons and Howard on receiving the 2016 Chairman’s “See, Think, Build” Award.

- This year’s **Norma Shaffer Partnership of the Year Awards** go to Weldon, Williams & Lick, Inc. and Howard Elementary School for the elementary partnership and Trane and Chaffin Junior High School for the secondary partnership.

- The **2016 Cathy Williams Partner of the Year Award** was awarded to Brea Frantz and David Israel. Frantz is seen as a leader within the Chaffin Partners in Education team. She has helped organize and arrange student incentive gifts for attendance and testing, welcome back gifts for teachers, Student of the Month luncheons, food for the Edge and GEMS mentoring programs, Career Orientation field trips and lunches and prizes for classroom projects. She is a key adult mentor in the GEMS program and has worked hard to recruit new adults to be a part of the program. Israel volunteers at Howard Elementary School every single day. He attends every Partners in Education meeting, helps with school events and projects, works with Chess Club students, assists with after-school dismissal and pick-up and mentors an at-risk student at Howard.

- Fairview Elementary and Partners were awarded this year’s **Bud Jackson Teamwork Award**.
In November 2015, Fort Smith schools held the first iCan Career Expo at the Fort Smith Convention Center. Ninth-graders from the four junior highs attended with 120 adults from 45 companies and organizations and five post secondary institutions providing 1,058 students information on careers at personal level. Students spend 2/12 hours at the event, rotating through 10 minute presentations from the various professionals.

### FSPS Activities

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
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<td>Band</td>
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<td>Cheerleading</td>
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<td>Choral Music</td>
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<td>Drill Team</td>
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<td>Orchestra</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,544</strong></td>
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</table>

Fort Smith Public Schools offer a variety of activities that encourage students to become a part of a group or groups that develop and refine personal and team skills and habits. These activities also make school more memorable.

### School Board Fact

Fort Smith Public School Board members documented 152 hours in Arkansas School Board training. Arkansas ACA 6-13-629 requires that each member attend at least six hours per year. All seven board members have completed this requirement.

### FSPS Board Meetings

The Fort Smith Public School District is governed by a seven-member Board of Education. Four members are elected by zone while three are elected in at-large positions. School board meetings are held on the fourth Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m. in the Service Center Auditorium, located in Building B of the Service Center Complex, 3205 Jenny Lind Road.

### 2015-16 School Board

- **Deanie Mehl**, Ph.D., President
- **Jeannie Cole**, Vice-President
- **Yvonne Keaton-Martin**, Secretary
- **Wade Gilkey**
- **David Hunton**, M.D.
- **Bill Hanesworth**
- **Susan McFerran**

### Administration

- **Gordon C. Floyd**, Ed.D.
  Superintendent of Schools

- **Annette Henderson**, Ed.D.
  Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Support Services

- **Barry Owen**, Ed.D.
  Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services