

Little Rock city officials are announcing new initiatives aimed at boosting access to online learning during the coronavirus pandemic. Mayor Frank Scott Jr. announced today (Thurs) the city is planning on installing high-speed broadband internet at five community centers to be used by students for remote learning. Little Rock's Chief Education Officer Dr. Jay Barth said the project will be funded by the \$2 trillion dollar CARES Act.

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"...in a safe environment."

Barth said the school district is also partnering with the Central Arkansas Library System and ARKids (are-kids) Read to offer enhanced tutoring services for math and reading. Additionally, the Arkansas Regional Innovation Hub will offer free virtual classes in both English and Spanish aimed at parents looking to increase their digital literacy skills. Little Rock School Superintendent Mike Poore said the district has also purchased 25-hundred portable hot spots students can use to access broadband internet at home.

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"...taking care of needs."

Poore said the hot spots are supplemented by an additional 500 received from the state, and that the district procured them at a cost of roughly \$20 dollars per device. The Psychiatric Research Institute at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences is also rolling out a free telehealth service to address mental health and substance abuse issues. Called A-R Connect, the service is available 24/7 by calling (501) 526-3563 or emailing [arconnect@uams.edu](mailto:arconnect@uams.edu).