

OFFICIAL MINUTES FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING OF THE
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND

The Board of Trustees for the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind met for their monthly meeting September 16, 2025, in Woolly Auditorium.

Mr. Fagan called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Mr. Fagan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Fagan announced there was a tragedy that happened this week and Mrs. Walsh would give details. Mrs. Walsh said on Friday afternoon a very beloved 11th grader at School for the Blind who has been battling a terminal illness for a long time took his first breath in Heaven. She said Lori Cole, Teresa Doan and herself were blessed to have a few minutes with him and his mother in the hospital. He was such a joy and always had a smile on his face. His only goal he talked about was to graduate high school. The school community has embraced this time. There were counselors available for students and staff on Monday. She said service information would be made available. She asked for a moment of silence for him. Mr. Fagan said all he wanted to do was graduate. He asked if he was a junior. Mrs. Walsh said he was because he had missed so much school, but his graduating class is actually at World Services. She said they want to have an honorary graduation for him at the end of the year.

Mr. Fagan called roll.

Present: Robert Fagan, Chair; Dr. John McAllister, Vice Chair; Cary Smith, Secretary; Jerry Belew, Board Member, Philip Powell, Board Member, K. Nicole Walsh, ASD Superintendent; Interpreters; Members of the community. **Absent:** Phillip Miller.

The next meeting will be October 21, 2025, in Woolly Auditorium on the ASBVI campus. There will be a board workshop on October 21st from noon to 4:00pm in the Leopard Spot (formerly the Tornado Shelter).

Joint Agenda

25-J-49 Motion to Approve Joint Meeting Minutes for September 16, 2025.

Mr. Powell made a motion to approve. Mrs. Smith seconded. Motion carried.

Action Items:

25-J-50 Motion to Approve Annual Equity Compliance 2025-2026

Mrs. Walsh said it is a form submitted indicating we are abiding by federal guidelines Title 1 – 9. Mrs. Smith asked if both schools were now under this coop. Mrs. Walsh said yes, it moves both under Arkansas River and adjusts the new LEA number (6093).

Mrs. Smith made a motion to approve. Mr. Powell seconded. Motion carried.

25-J-51 Motion to Approve Act 802 District Resolution to Appoint Member to Arkansas River Education Service Cooperative Board of Directors

Mrs. Walsh said this is to appoint a person as part of the Board of Directors of the Arkansas River Cooperative. You can appoint a person or the position. She said it is a very small coop.

Mrs. Smith made a motion to appoint the superintendent position to the Arkansas River Board of Directors for ACT 802. Mr. Poell seconded. Motion carried.

25-J-52 Motion to Approve Outside Events Policy

Mrs. Walsh said it is establishing a protocol for any outside event to come on campus, how they are going to do that, they are required to have liability insurance, provide an event agenda/logistics and follow our rules. Mr. Fagan asked for examples of who might rent the facilities. Mrs. Walsh said the Special Olympics Flag football team, Indian heritage evening, Chakraborty event, birthday parties, Department of Education or Health, church groups. Mrs. Smith asked if it would apply to alumni groups. Mrs. Walsh said they would have to work out specifics related to alumni groups.

Mr. Powell made a motion to approve. Mr. Belew seconded. Motion carried.

25-J-53 Motion to Approve Braille Proficiency Policy

Mrs. Walsh said you will see the braille proficiency policy and then the ASL proficiency policy. She said she would sync them together because they are consistent across the board. The intent is to ensure that staff members have adequate braille or sign language proficiency to instruct or interact with students. You will be given a period of time for the braille policy for those who are in instructional positions to reach your proficiency level. The goal is not to terminate someone who does not gain proficiency, but to transfer to a less student facing position. Mr. Powell asked how you certify someone is fluent in braille. Mrs. Walsh said they will be given a generalized assessment in-house. She said blind department staff have not received pay differentials for braille proficiency, and they should. Mrs. Smith said for teachers who have been here a long time, are they able to just take the test. Mrs. Walsh said yes and if there are costs associated with it, it will be taken care of. Mrs. Smith asked even for contractors. Mrs. Walsh said not for contractors, just state employees (braille and ASL). Mr. Powell asked if a person wanted to go above the level required, could they get the appropriate increase. Mrs. Walsh said yes. Mrs. Smith said the differential has been as the dead school a long time and it is great that the blind side will now get it. Mr. Fagan asked if the staff knows about the policy. Mrs. Walsh said once it is passed, it will be confirmed with them. They do know it is an expectation. She said there have been lots of blind staff go into ASL class on Monday night. Mr. Belew said if the parents don't want their students to learn braille, will the parents have the ability to decide. Mrs. Walsh said none of this is related to students. She said this is for staff only. If students want to learn, they will be provided with the opportunity to learn. Mrs. Smith asked who will keep up with this. Mrs. Walsh said a staff member – probably admin assistant. We will have to have someone in both blind and deaf departments that will receive a stipend. Mr. Fagan said he thinks when they complete the final state, they should come to the board for recognition.

Mrs. Smith made a motion to approve. Mr. Powell seconded. Motion carried with a vote of 2 – 1.

25-J-54 Motion to Approve ASL Proficiency Policy

Mr. Fagan said the ASL proficiency policy is basically the same. Mrs. Walsh said this policy was a little more intensive because sign language is communication. It is important that every person on campus has some familiarity with sign language. This is to ensure it is established for all staff as well. She said this is not for students. Mrs. Smith asked if the levels were standardized across the board. Mrs. Walsh said yes, they use the SLPI and those are the levels that are established within their proficiency interview. She said they are very targeted and specific about what each one means. Mr. Fagan said do other deaf schools around the country do this. Mrs. Walsh said absolutely. Mrs. Smith made a motion to approve. Mr. Belew seconded. Motion Carried.

Discussion Items: None

ARDB Agenda

25-DB-55 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

Mr. Powell made a motion to approve. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion carried.

Action Items – None

Discussion Items – None

ARDB Superintendent Report

Mrs. Walsh said she was going to go through her report quickly. The projector is set up to go over the plans for the playground. She said she had included a draft of the ARDB organizational chart drafted by her.

- Construction project is going great. Finished pouring footings today. Will be pouring foundation on schedule.
- Held a student advisory meeting today and took the students out and showed them. Students thought it was awesome. She said she learned a lot about the dorms today, things that are going on that she did not know, some maintenance things that need to be addressed. They complained about the hot water – it takes about 5 minutes to get hot water in the shower.
- Sewer pipe rotted out in Breeding Cafeteria which is the only current working cafeteria. It will have to be replaced.
- Several leaks in Helen Keller that have been taken care of.
- Second bus breakdown. The charter bus broke down last weekend on the way to Minnesota. This weekend the blind department were at Missouri for a track event. On the way back to the hotel, the bus quit working.
- MAP testing went well and should have data by the board workshop in October.
- Have had a lot of hires, lot of changing and a couple of resignations.
- Blind Department has 24 in elementary and 26 in secondary.
- Deaf Department has 54 in elementary and 38 in secondary.
- Great sports participation – have one blind student playing football.

- Behavioral data looks good – had first suspension – better than last year
- PBIS is working in both departments
- Nursing/Health Services documented 185 student visits for August
- One staff member required emergency transport
- Two students were dismissed to guardians with instructions to go to ACH
- New LEA started yesterday – LeAnn Brazeale is a rehire
- Moved 2 contractors to full-time
- 100% of staff are CPR/First Aid/CPI certified
- Since combining deaf & blind statewide services, serving 79 families across the state
- Four speech pathologist interns
- Dire need of interpreters – working with ADE to get positions

Mrs. Walsh showed slides of the playground plans provided by the playground architect who worked with our architect (SCM). There was some discussion on the playground.

Mr. Powell asked about the FAA chapter. Mrs. Walsh said they lost their agricultural teacher and are working hard to find a new teacher. She said as soon as they get a teacher, they will make it happen, not going to lose their chapter. She signed up to be a school conservation leadership through the Arkansas Game & Fish. Working with them to get equipment and it will support the FAA component as well.

Mr. Fagan reminded the board of the ASBA Conference held in December and registration is open. He recommended attendance as it is a good way to get the required board hours and a lot of good information.

Mr. Fagan asked for a motion to adjourn.

25-DB-56 Motion to Adjourn

Mr. Powell made a motion. Mrs. Smith seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Fagan adjourned the meeting.



Robert Fagan, Chair



Cary Smith, Secretary