

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

The Board of Trustees for the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Arkansas School for the Deaf met for their monthly meeting December 12, 2023, at the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

Present: Susan Pack, Chair; Robert Fagan, Vice Chair; Dr. John McAllister, Secretary; James Caton, ASBVI Superintendent; Dr. Gretchen Cobb, ASD Interim Superintendent; Dr. Priya Gupta, ASBVI Parent Representative; Holley Mott, ASD Parent Representative; Will Gorum and Sydney Morris, Interpreters; Members of the Deaf Community; Members of the Blind Community

Absent: Philip Garner, Board Member; Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Board Member

Mrs. Pack called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm. The January board meeting will take place on January 16, 2024, at the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Joint Agenda

23-J-047 Motion to Approve Joint Meeting November 2023 Minutes

Mr. Fagan made a motion to approve. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion Carried.

Action Items – None

Discussion Items

Arkansas School for the Blind Superintendent

Mrs. Pack stated this will be addressed at the end of the agenda.

Arkansas School for the Deaf Superintendent

Mrs. Pack stated at this time there is nothing new to report on the Superintendent search. The search will resume in January 2024. Mr. Fagan will be the new board chair and will work with the previously established Superintendent search committee.

ASBVI Agenda

23-B-044 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

Dr. McAllister made a motion to approve. Mr. Fagan seconded. Motion Carried.

Action Items – None

Discussion Items – None

Superintendent Report

Abbreviated report,
Science, RA, Cook, and Skilled Tradesman position available.
Enrollment at 71 students, down from 74 last month.
Achievement Report – student support is decreasing and ready categories increasing.
EAST students traveled to Jonesboro Magnet school to assist with 3D printing project.
ASBVI Cheer weekend this month. Annual tradition.
Wrestling and Cheer competition in January 2024 at Illinois School for Blind
Wrestling traveled to TN School for Blind last month for Invitational.
Immunization report is posted for 2022-23 SY. No students missing required vaccines, one exemption.
Food pantry does phenomenal job. Runs all year thanks to church, community, and staff donations.
Mount Saint Mary students volunteer and work study students help with food pantry.
25-Students receive service from the pantry on weekends and holidays.
Hill Cottage down to punch list, estimated move-in January 2024.
Infirmary to receive final cleaning Christmas break.
Prewitt Hall cosmetic painting completed.
Three door installations over Christmas break.
Christmas Concert this Thursday at 6:30pm. Then Christmas break is next week.
December newsletter about things happening around the school.
Mr. Caton final board report.

Mrs. Pack asked about the flu increase. Nurse Crump stated that we are seeing some, but the numbers haven't been too high. Keeping flu vaccines.

ASD Agenda

23-D-048 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

Dr. McAllister made a motion to approve. Mr. Fagan seconded. Motion Carried.

Action Items – None

Discussion Items – None

Superintendent Report

Christmas lunch and program this Thursday.
The Thanksgiving meal last month was the absolute best to date. Approximately 60 families attended.
Tree lighting in Parnell.
Notification from the state, tested over 1% of students who take alternative assessment.

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State notification being addressed by LEA S. Kratky.
Working on corrective action plan for state complaint. Training with Teachers by S. Kratky.
Mr. Barnes, OCSS, helping with licensure and other technical matters.
New security, campus feels more secure.
UPAR assessment to determine students need for modification or accommodations for ATLAS.
Three middle school students went to Huntsville, AL.
Lyon College Deaf Education Certification Program pushed through. Awaiting Stipend.
The program is estimated to begin Fall 2024. Some ASD Staff will teach in the program.
864 books circulated through the library this year, so far.
The lower school library closed temporarily due to mold issue.
Enrollment pre-k-12: 113; ADCC: 8; Prospective students: 9. Statewide services are down.
Foundation accepting monetary donations for Angel Tree.

Dr. Cobb begins the presentation for recognition of Mrs. Pack, and Mr. Caton. ASD Staff and Student video played for Susan Pack.

Mr. Williams and Principal Doan presented Mr. Caton with a plaque of service. Mr. Caton wish the very best to the school.

Mrs. Pack presented Mr. Caton with a gift from the board in honor of his retirement.

Dr. Cobb presented Mrs. Pack with gifts from both School for the Deaf and School for the Blind. Thanked and asked for applause to be given to both Mrs. Pack and Mr. Caton for the great work they have done.

Mrs. Pack stated the board will go into Executive Session to speak with Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams indicated an interest in serving as Interim Superintendent at School for Blind.

Executive Session

Mrs. Pack provided results from the Executive Session. Mr. Williams is announced as the new Interim Superintendent for School for the Blind.

Mrs. Pack stated these are very different times and people you have, and support will appreciate even more support in the future. There are changes being planned and as a board it's been very difficult to make decisions. Mrs. Pack asks all to support the board, schools, and Superintendents.

Dr. McAllister recognized Mr. Caton for his service and a great job as Mr. Caton met the standard. Dr. McAllister addressed the people of ADE, stating for shared services to work, these are the people to make it happen. Dr. McAllister acknowledged that changes are going to happen mostly due to people's opinions, highlighting the rich history of both schools. Dr. McAllister expressed his apprehension of outside, unfamiliar individuals making decisions regarding students, facility, and staff and the future implications. Strongly believe that education should be left to educators, not government politicians.

Dr. McAllister stated the direction the schools are headed is terrible and most often doesn't work. Additionally expressed his deep sadness to see Mrs. Pack leave the school board.

Mr. Fagan wished Mr. Caton nothing but the best in his retirement and asked that he come back often. Congratulated Mr. Williams on being named Interim Superintendent and well wishes on behalf of the board.

Mrs. Pack announced Mr. Fagan as the new Chairperson effective January 2024.

Mrs. Mott is sad about the retirement of Mr. Caton and Mrs. Pack and thanks Mr. Caton for the service to the school and students.

Dr. Gupta stated she learned a lot in the past five years and met new people. Has seen a lot of development in the school and, just like Dr. McAllister, Dr. Gupta is also disheartened by the future of these schools. Encourages teachers, parents, and community members to remain strong and support these schools. Dr. Gupta stated the Blind School will miss Mr. Caton and well wishes going forward. Congratulate Mr. Williams and know he will keep everyone positive.

23-J-049 Motion to Adjourn

Mrs. Pack asked everyone to keep going and if they pray, to keep praying for the schools.

Dr. McAllister made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Fagan seconded. Motion carried.

Robert Fagan, Chair

Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Secretary