

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 November 28, 2023, at the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Present: Susan Pack, Chair; Robert Fagan, Vice Chair; Dr. John McAllister, Secretary; Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Board Member; 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

Mrs. Pack called the meeting to order at 4:08 pm. The December board meeting will take place on December 12, 2023, at the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

The board meeting was moved from December 19 to December 12 due to the Christmas Holiday break.

Joint Agenda

23-J-043 Motion to Approve Joint Meeting October 2023 Minutes

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

Action Items – None

Discussion Items – None

ASD Agenda

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

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

Action Items –

Submission of Updated Transportation Policy

Dr. Cobb stated it is part of the corrective action plan in response to a previous complaint made to the state. Will be striking the following statement, “Students with extenuating circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis”, due to lawyer concerns with the terminology. The other thing, the last sentence that states “Transportation to and from schools, students who have lost their bus

transportation privileges, is the responsibility of the parent or guardian.” According to guidelines, can not do that. Dr. Cobb stated they are making a lot of effort to work with parents to transport the student.

Dr. Cobb would like to receive board involvement in the development of policies and have opportunities to work together. Dr. Cobb met with the educational leadership team to develop a calendar for policy review.

Mrs. Pack inquired about the impact of the updated transportation policy on ASB as transportation is a shared service. Dr. Cobb stated this is to satisfy the corrective action plan. Dr. Cobb and Mr. Caton agreed the two schools can look to see if the transportation plans align.

Dr. Atcherson made a motion to approve the update as presented. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion Carried.

Addendum to Student Handbook

Dr. Cobb stated the language in the student handbook is not up to date. The handbook states SPC or Separate Programming Conference, which is no longer a type of IEP meeting, it is not an IEP meeting. The other differentiation in the addendum, if a student is suspending the goal is to get them back in school. If an SPC or IEP meeting, a fourteen-day notice must be given, and ultimately delays the return to school. For chronic suspension of a child, it will be looked at in a mental or behavioral health way. To move forward immediately, the language of separate programming conference needed to be removed. Also, the second part was suggested in the correction action plan, that if a child is suspended how continued services will be provided. It states that out of school suspension will be provided with instructional material either hardcopy or through learning management system.

Mr. Fagan asked if in-school suspension is utilized. Dr. Cobb stated yes.

Dr. Atcherson made a motion to approve. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion carried.

Discussion Items –

ASD Superintendent Search Update

Mrs. Pack provided brief statement on the superintendent search. The superintendent’s search was placed on hold until after the first of the year in hopes of getting more people looking for employment to get a bigger pool of applicants. After January 1, it should start being advertised again.

Superintendent Report

Surprise visit from the Governor and Secretary Oliva.

The Governor toured the buildings previously toured by the legislatures.

Recently discovered pre-k programs need to be licensed by DHS.

Interviewed by DHS case manager and toured pre-k programs.

Submitted all licensure documents the Friday before Thanksgiving.

Licensure submission accepted. Tentatively licensed to operate pending 30-day review.

12 pre-k program students pending acceptance. Trying to open a second classroom.

Moving teacher and will 2nd grade class position.

Monitoring report – no errors!

Looking at growth scores this Friday. Hope to have for board next month.

ASD Angel Tree

Secretary Oliva asked to address the board between school updates. Secretary Oliva stated there has been a lot of interest surrounding both schools and wants to provide a little update, answer board questions, and receive feedback to ensure collaboration. The state of the State on what is the master plan for the vision for ASD and ASB for academic programs, being number one making sure students are safe being a high priority and investing in high quality facilities has not been a new conversation with leadership. There have been some ideas for updates and renovations for different buildings, but Secretary Oliva doesn't believe it has been well thought out as a comprehensive master plan. Going back to previous Superintendents and discussing challenges that this facility has faced due to consolidation, re-organization of state government, feeling challenges related to budget, personnel, and staff positions. A lot of pieces are starting to move along and getting streamlined. Been having a conversation about efficiency and a campus, and if we reimagined the school campus could we do that in a unified building that's safe and has a secure facility. That's partly school for the deaf and school for the blind, common areas, common cafeteria, common office space, common media center, and some shared services. Been having this conversation and researching other campuses and have found some nice models other states have invested in. When looking at how the new health clinic fits into the master plan, looked at the condition of facilities and adding another building on top of a campus with a lot of buildings that aren't coordinated or unified doesn't make strategic sense. A pause was placed on the project and said is there a better way to look at this campus and have a unified vision. Collectively with leadership there could be some opportunities but would need board, legislative, and Governor support. There have been some very public meetings hosted with legislators to attend and establish a vision for moving forward and providing high-quality academic services and support for students, we need the facilities that support that. There have not been any decisions made on a master plan at this time. Legislators have asked to gather information, survey parents, and input from board members on moving forward and addressing challenges.

Mrs. Pack mentioned in the paper that Arkansas was one of the only schools in the US not operating as dual school for blind and deaf. Mrs. Pack and Secretary Oliva agreed that was not true. There are only eleven schools in the US that are deaf and blind.

Dr. Cobb thanked Secretary Oliva for speaking on the matter. Dr. Cobb asked if the media on campus will continue or will they stop. Secretary Oliva encouraged Dr. Cobb to direct them to ADE Media Department.

Secretary Oliva stated he wanted to start with the board, make sure they are informed of the options, and receive board support before decisions are made.

Mr. Fagan asked if there is an outline or timeframe for the meetings. Secretary Oliva stated that the Governor has met with some legislative leadership. For a timeline, getting ready to go into budget season, pre-meetings or committee type meetings are happening as legislators look at mapping out a state budget. Mr. Fagan inquired about being part of the meetings as the new board chair in January 2024.

Secretary Oliva mentioned with the LEARN's initiative able to significantly increase teacher salary up to 50k annually.

Secretary Oliva introduced Mary Perry to coordinate the different board and commissions, and will be a liaison with the Superintendent's, board chairs, and staff as setting up meetings and notices.

ASBVI Agenda

23-B-045 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

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

Action Items – None

Discussion Items – None

Superintendent Report

Recognized Dr. McAllister as outstanding school board member from ASBA.

Reminder of training hour deadline for board members. Annual school board conference upcoming.

Welcome kids back from Thanksgiving break, already ready for Christmas break.

Process of implementing safety features; Raptor visitor system and Stop-It anonymous reporting app.

Visit from Learning Ally representatives. Access to their digital offerings at no charge.

Filled RN position. Infirmary back at full staff.

Filled FACs and Science teacher positions.

New 10th grade student.

M. Smith received recognized at the AER Conference.

Completed second round of NWEA testing. Charts in main hallway.

School level spelling bee

Science fair

Red Ribbon week. Homecoming parade through hillcrest.

Special Olympic bowling, students received first, second, third place medals.

Goalball team competed at the Missouri competition. Did very well.

FBLA upcoming basic training events this Friday at ASU-Beebe

Annual Turkey trot on the 16th.

Good turn out for thanksgiving lunch by parents.

Health services will be clinic site for UCA nursing students beginning in January.

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Second chance flu clinic.

Prewitt Hall began painting the front porch and exterior doors over holiday break.

Cottage renovations are almost finished. Punchout meeting tomorrow.

Infirmery building remediation completed. Scheduling final ANW cleaning.

Computer science and math night this Thursday.

Christmas concert December 14th

Alumni Association still has Christmas trees available.

Existing security contract expiring Thursday. New security team starting Friday, same team used by ADE.

All security guards are veterans. Two guards on a 3-month contract from 6p to 6a (12-hr shifts).

Executive Session – Personnel

Accepted the retirement of James Caton as of December 29. Now having two open positions, do not know what route to take moving forward. Hope to know more by the next meeting.

Mr. Caton publicly thanked the board for their confidence in him over his Superintendents role. Mr. Caton stated it's not always been an easy role and certainly has its challenges, but it's been very rewarding. Mr. Caton thanked the school leadership team. Mr. Caton will miss everyone, but feels it is the best thing for him at this time.

23-J-046 Motion to Adjourn

Mrs. Pack made a motion to adjourn. Motion carried.

Susan Pack, Chair

Dr. John McAllister, Secretary

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