

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 September 19, 2023, at the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

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

Mrs. Pack called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm. The October board meeting will take place on October 17, 2023, at the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

Mrs. Pack asked that ASBVI provide update first, followed by ASD due to Executive Session for ASD Superintendent Search Update.

### **Joint Agenda**

#### **23-J-035 Motion to Approve Joint Meeting August 2023 Minutes**

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

Ms. Pack stated the Superintendent Search Report should not be listed under the joint action item. No update was provided, and no action taken for Superintendent Search Report.

#### **Action Items –**

##### **Federal Statement of Assurances for ASBVI & ASD**

Mr. Caton stated these are the annual assurances that are signed for the federal programs, mainly related to the title funds the schools receive. No board signature required.

Mr. Fagan made a motion to approve. Mr. Garner seconded. Motion carried.

##### **Equity Compliance Report for ASBVI & ASD**

Mr. Caton stated it's an annual report that is done with the Cycle 2 submission. Gives assurances that each school is equitable in all programs and services.

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

## **Discussion Items –**

### **Health Services Center Update**

Mr. Caton reached out to Mr. Watson, Cromwell Architect, for updates. Based on a conversation between Mr. Watson and ADE this month, it is currently still under review. Awaiting decision on the revised bid before moving forward with the project. Mrs. Pack stated the end date is December 2024.

Mrs. Pack met with Ms. Whitlow and Mr. Barnes, and they indicated they would attempt to gather additional information on the status of the project.

### **Safety Improvement Budget Update**

Mr. Caton stated it is still resting with the department on when allowed to expend some of the funds. Mr. Caton thinks part of it is trying to assess the facilities as they are and determine where to invest money. This includes working on some of the schools' more immediate need projects, such as campus fencing and the ASBVI door and re-keying project.

Dr. Cobb stated after speaking with Ms. Raney, ADE, Dr. Cobb feels positive will be able to go forward with the Health Service Building. Dr. Cobb recognized the hard work of Ms. Raney on ASD, ASBVI behalf.

Mrs. Pack asked Ms. Raney if there was funding in each of the school's accounts. Ms. Raney stated that is incorrect, but that there is money set aside by the former Governor. Ms. Raney added that after ADE staff toured campus facilities, ADE expressed concerns proceeding with fencing around buildings with poor infrastructure. Ms. Pack inquired about the potential of future building replacements on the campuses. Ms. Raney asked Ms. Pack to address any further questions to the Secretary of Education.

### **Presentation by Guest Speaker, Captain Kurt Banta**

Mr. Kenreich introduced Captain Kurt Banta, owner of Emergency Response Training, LLC. Emergency response training focuses mainly on CSSO program training to help school districts provide an added layer of preparedness for active threat events. The CSSO program utilizes school staff as a "Security Guard" to provide an extra level of security without hiring a School Resource Officer (SRO) or security guard. The school staff would continue to operate under normal conditions unless an active threat event occurs.

CSSO stands for Commissioned School Security Officer comprised of current school staff members or hired personnel to act as a CSSO. One advantage of utilizing school staff is that staff is vested in the students, district, and community. The program is very discreet, with no exposed weapons or uniforms, staff will conceal carry. No law enforcement duties will be performed. CSSO members will receive initial sixty-hour training over six-days that will consist of active shooter training through the ALERT program, firearm training, medical training, defensive tactics training, discussions of legal issues involving use of force, use of deadly force and then discretion and good judgement. Annual twenty-four continued education training to requalify of firearms and refresh on active shooter training. The Ark. State police (ASP) are the regulatory agency for the CSSO program. ASP issues the commission to CSSO, develop and

mandate training. Emergency Response Training, LLC is a private trainer that provide the training after submitting outlines with ASP curriculum to get licensed to teach the program at the school.

For many school districts, the cost of hiring a single SRO, a school could equip up to twelve staff members to serve as CSSO. Average response time for law enforcement is approximately three minutes, and most events are approximately two minutes. The State of Ark. encourages districts through the school safety committee report to improve campus security and recommend armed security with SRO or CSSO.

### **Commissioned School Security Officer (CSSO) Q&A**

Mrs. Pack asked the number of schools in Ark that are using the CSSO program. Captain Banta stated that the does not have an exact number for Arkansas, but his company is one of many companies and have trained into the double digits.

Mr. Garner asked how the administration approached the staff to “recruit” the staff. Captain Banta said generally the administration would send out an email notifying the staff, gauging interest, and conducting interviews before determining team members. The selection process is the most important process as it’s not for everyone.

Mr. Garner asked if a classroom teacher volunteers, is there any compensation. Captain Banta stated that is up to the district, but some provide an annual stipend of varying amounts where others do not compensate for a program that is voluntary. A district may provide a stipend to an individual team member to purchase equipment initially.

Mrs. Mott asked who ultimately decides which members are chosen and the number of members. Captain Banta recommends starting with ten or twelve members and can expand as necessary. The final decision on the members generally falls to the Superintendent.

Dr. Atcherson inquired about any minimum requirements / qualifications or recommendations for potential team members. Captain Banta doesn’t want to set minimums that may overlook anyone. No previous firearm minimum or experience. Maybe years of service with the district. No recommendations for minimums.

Mr. Fagan what additional costs are associated with the required annual training. Captain Banta stated the initial cost of training is two-thousand-two hundred for each member up to ten members with the eleventh and twelfth members free of charge. A seventy-five-hundred-dollar annual fee is charged per team, not per person. The initial fee is higher due to the timeframe and overhead costs including training materials, whereas the follow-up annual training, the district supplies the ammunition.

Dr. Gupta asked if a psychological evaluation would be conducted. Captain Banta stated that it is not a requirement, but one is recommended and can assist with a recommendation to a doctor to complete the psychological evaluation. A background check is a part of the training.

Mrs. Pack asked if a drug test is included in the training. Captain Banta recommends a drug test be completed, but a drug screen is not included in the training.

Dr. Cobb asked Captain Banta to reiterate that zero negative events have occurred with the CSSO program at any of the schools they have provided training including accidental discharges and exposed weaponry.

Mr. Kenreich inquired if parent or staff feedback on the establishment of a CSSO Program is recommended. Captain Banta does not recommend soliciting feedback due to lack of understanding about the program. The CSSO program could become controversial, and it would be hard and lengthy to educate all parents and staff.

Mrs. Pack thanks Captain Banta for his time and presentation. Mrs. Pack touched on the importance of safety.

Superintendent Mr. Caton expressed his opinion on the CSSO program. Mr. Caton does not recommend that ASBVI move forward with the CSSO program currently, as he feels it's a bit premature. Mr. Caton believes there is another opportunity to submit the request again for SRO before arming school staff. Mr. Caton has concerns about mixing the roles between teachers and security guard. ASBVI will continue to explore the benefits of the CSSO program.

Interim Superintendent, Dr. Cobb, agrees with the views of Mr. Caton and shares many of the same concerns. After speaking with Captain Banta, Dr. Cobb believes the CSSO is an extra layer of protection. Dr. Cobb stated that after speaking with and hearing from many staff members, there is an outcry to do something.

Mrs. Pack asked Ms. Raney if there is funding for training. Ms. Raney stated there is funding, however bids must be obtained from additional companies. Mr. Kenreich stated that he has contacted additional companies and Captain Banta's fees were more reasonable than other companies.

Dr. Atcherson inquired about the campus alert system and how quickly notifications are sent out for active threats. Mr. Kenreich stated the approximate response time of law enforcement from when the notice is sent out is approximately five minutes.

Mrs. Mott asked if parents would be informed, to which Mrs. Pack responded that she has heard it's made known to parents that a school will implement the CSSO program.

Mr. Fagan made a motion to speak with ADE for Funding and Logistics. Dr. Atcherson seconded. Motion carried.

### **ASBVI Agenda**

## **23-B-036 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)**

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

### **Action Items –**

#### **Foreign Exchange Student Approval**

A former student at Catholic High School for boys. World Services for the Blind CEO is the student host family and feels Ark. School for the Blind would be a better fit. A sixteen-year-old, male, from Turkey.

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

### **Discussion Items –**

#### **Budget Financials**

Mr. Caton provided an update as of the end of August for line items salaries and operating expenses.

Mr. Garner inquired about the Health Services replacement supplies and medication due to power outage / failure. Inquired about plans and improved liability. Mr. Caton stated the tree trimming has helped eliminate power outages. Mr. Caton is hopeful Entergy will be willing to take back ownership of the lines in the future. Currently, the Schools have ownership and are responsible for all repairs before Entergy restores power. Dr. Cobb stated that she believes there is a cost analysis, Entergy is comparing the cost of ownership versus school repair responsibility, that is impacting negotiations.

### **Superintendent Report**

Literacy Night is upcoming Thursday.

August and September newsletter highlights.

Flu clinic on October 5<sup>th</sup> and October 26<sup>th</sup>.

Upcoming covid clinic.

Currently 84 positions are filled.

Open positions include our science teacher, skilled tradesman, and RN advertised.

Filled three RA positions.

Mrs. Williams recently retired.

Requested to fill a cook position.

Mrs. Faught accepted the Special Education Supervisor designee position.

Requested to fill the Family and Consume Science teacher position.

HR manager is an ADE shared service position, waiting how ADE will proceed with filling position.

Mr. Pfeffer, IT, started full-time today at the school.

74 students including the exchange student. Referrals in process.

Educational theme "let the adventure begin; we will soar in 2023-24".

EAST students attend several training courses at EAST headquarters in LR currently.

Mrs. C. Smith has agreed to be the school's Safety Coordinator. Plans to attend the safety coordinator conference and training and the behavioral threat assessment training.

J. Weatherly, ADE safe school unit, will be doing an upcoming sight/safety assessment.

N. Finney and B. Tanner will be attending the handling with care student restraint training.  
S. Pepper, UALR, orientation and mobility intern.  
Student teacher. B. Webb, with social studies teacher.  
Track team competed at the Ohio school for the blind. Students did well.  
Next weekend, track team go to Tennessee School for the blind for track championship.  
Conducted first NWEA assessment. Gather learning gap data on kids.  
Two additional NWEA assessments throughout the year.  
April 2023 ASPIRE assessment aggregated data by K. Ketcher, district test coordinator.  
Health Services temporarily relocated to the learning center.  
Mold and Water remediate crawl space under health service building this Thursday.  
Trane working on health service building AC unit.  
The cottage renovation is going well, completion date approximately November.  
Buildings continue to be assessed by ADE.

### **ASD Agenda**

#### **23-D-037 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)**

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

#### **Action Items –**

##### **Admissions Policy**

Dr. Cobb stated that the policy was discussed in August by Ms. Smith. The process was streamlined and removed any confusion from the policy and utilized requirements for disability category of deafness and hearing impairment. Align the policy with the federal IEA regulations.

Mr. Garner made a motion to approve. Mr. Fagan seconded. Motion carried.

##### **IT Security & Privacy Policy**

Dr. Cobb stated no changes were made to the previous IT Security & Privacy Policy from the previous year.

Mr. Garner made a motion to approve. Mr. Fagan seconded. Motion carried.

##### **Transportation Policy**

Dr. Cobb stated the required transportation policy was developed based on corrective action plan. The policy is interconnected with other policies. The policy states that students outside a fifty-mile radius will stay on campus and be transported.

Mr. Garner made a motion to approve. Mr. Fagan seconded. Motion carried.

## **Discipline Policy**

Dr. Cobb provided a list of changes included outdated language that were made to the original policy accepted in approximately 2018. Received feedback from the education department on terminology and changes to out of school suspension policy.

Dr. Atcherson made a motion to approve. Mr. Garner seconded. Motion carried.

## **Discussion Items –**

### **Superintendent Report**

Very busy month getting students and staff back into the swing.

Visit two or three schools each day and departments throughout the day.

Dr. Cobb been teaching an English class.

First meeting with the Co-op. Very interesting, an eye-opening experience.

Legislatures on campus October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Recently met with Gallaudet University Rep. Hosts of Gallaudet Quiz bowl – Midwest regional Feb 2024.

Shared services have worked double, triple time.

Last year, spirit rallies were implemented, did the first small one and plan to do more.

L. Jones, audiologist student, started an internship.

Speech pathologist team stepped in to help in lower school.

Advertising, opening positions for paraprofessional.

Tough time recruiting teachers, current shortage of teachers.

Curriculum / Instruction coordinator working with para's to potentially get certification / licensure.

Filled overnight dorm supervisor position.

Full Prof. development schedule. Making progress.

DESE monitoring team came and monitored SPED folders. Pulled 24 folders. Reviewed classroom structure. Awaiting written report with corrections.

Met with K. Scott, coordinator of Early Hearing Detection and Intervention.

Apart of work group to merge 0-3 program under LEARNS Act versus ADH-early connection.

Hired K. Berry as Service Coordinator.

Volleyball team is amazing. So fun to watch.

Cross country team is doing amazing. Recently attended Heber Springs meet.

Upcoming weekend is leopard spike out.

Librarian started book club with high school students.

ADCC director and transition teacher met with ADE transition consultant.

Current 112 enrollment. 8 or 9 in the queue.

Analyzed positions. Hope to hire an early childhood education teacher.

### **Superintendent Search Update**

Board went into Executive Session for Superintendent Search Update.

Board returned from Executive Session. Due to small pool of Superintendent application, the Superintendent position will be closed and re-opened in December 2023 or January 2024.

**23-J-038 Motion to Adjourn**

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

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Susan Pack, Chair

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Dr. John McAllister, Secretary