

**Minutes
State Board Meeting
March 13, 2025**

Present: Dr. Sarah Moore, Chair; Kathy Rollins, Vice-Chair; Dr. Gary Arnold; Ken Bragg; Randy Henderson; Lisa Hunter; Leigh Keener; Jeff Wood; Adrienne Woods; Beau McCastlain, 2024 Arkansas Teacher of the Year; Jacob Oliva, ADE Secretary.

The Arkansas State Board of Education (State Board) met Thursday, March 13, 2025. Dr. Sarah Moore called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM, followed by a moment of silence.

Recognition

III.1. Batesville High School Student Kaylee Montgomery Helps Another Runner Cross the Finish Line

Item III.1. was presented by Secretary Jacob Oliva. Also present were Ms. Kaylee Montgomery and her parents, Mr. Robert & Mrs. Amy Montgomery. Additionally, present from the Batesville School District were Kaylee's track coach Stan Fowler and district athletic director Stu Smith.

Hoping to achieve her personal best, Batesville High School Senior Kaylee Montgomery stopped in the final stretch of the State Cross Country Meet, the last race of her high school career, to help another runner. Kaylee took the arm of a fallen runner, who was struggling, and together they crossed the finish line. Kaylee's father caught his daughter's actions on video.

Changes to Agenda

None

Action Agenda

V.1. Ashdown Waiver Request of Standard 4-B.1

Item V.1. was presented by Ms. Hope Worsham, Assistant Commissioner – Office of Public School Accountability. Also present via Zoom was Ms. Debbie Greathouse, Interim Superintendent, Ashdown School District.

The Ashdown School District requested a waiver of Standard 4-B.1, "Each public school district shall employ a full-time superintendent or charter school executive officer to oversee all operations of the public school district. (D/P)."

A motion to approve the Ashdown waiver request was made by Mr. Jeff Wood and seconded by Ms. Kathy Rollins. The motion unanimously passed.

V.2. Heber Springs Waiver Request of Standard 4-F.1 and Ark. Code Ann. § 6-25-104

Item V.2. was presented by Ms. Hope Worsham, Assistant Commissioner – Office of Public School Accountability. Also present was Ms. Stacy Smith, Deputy Commissioner. Additionally, present via Zoom from Heber Springs School District were Ms. Rita Lee, Assistant Superintendent – Curriculum and Instruction and Ms. Shannon Martin, High School Principal.

Heber Springs requested a waiver of Standard 4-F.1, which states the following:

“Each public school district shall employ library media specialists that meet the licensure requirements in accordance with the laws of the State of Arkansas and the rules of the Division or are working under a licensure exception in accordance with the laws of the State of Arkansas and the rules of the Division. (D/C)”

Heber Springs also requested to waive Ark. Code Ann. § 6-25-104 (a):

“(1) Only trained and certified library media services program personnel shall be assigned to carry out duties of the library media specialist.

(2) Library media clerks may carry out clerical duties supervised by the library media specialist.

(b) Duties that interfere with library media center responsibilities may not be assigned outside the library media center for the library media specialist.

(c) Equipment and personnel shall be available for the developmentally appropriate production of a wide range of media for students and faculty.”

A motion not to grant the Heber Springs waiver request was made by Dr. Gary Arnold, seconded by Ms. Leigh Keener. The motion unanimously passed.

V.3. North Little Rock Waiver Requests for Alternate School Calendar

Item V.3. was presented by Ms. Stacy Smith Deputy Commissioner. Also present was Dr. Jacob Smith, North Little Rock Human Resources Director.

Due to inclement weather in the state, the school district asked the State Board to waive Ark. Code Ann. § 6-10-106(g) to allow a mid-year change from a traditional school calendar of 178 days to an alternative calendar of 1,068 hours.

A motion to grant the North Little Rock waiver request was made by Ms. Adrienne Woods, seconded by Ms. Lisa Hunter. The motion unanimously passed.

V.4. Consideration of Request to Approve the Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) FY26 - Agency Grant Awards

Item V.4. was presented by Ms. Tonya Williams and Ms. Leigh Keener.

Secretary Oliva left the meeting and Ms. Stacy Smith, Deputy Commissioner, joined.

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) - Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) respectfully requested State Board approval of the Arkansas Better Chance Program Renewal Grants for the 2025-2026 school year in the total amount of \$105,277,280.00.

The requested funds for the ABC renewal grants will provide early childhood services for children birth to 5 years old through 225 agencies serving 22,827 children in both center-based and home-visiting settings.

ABC also requested to support foster children, as well as homeless/displaced children as the need arises. ABC provides waivers for the identified children to receive immediate services. The placement of a foster child and/or displaced child in an ABC program would add a per child award above the total awarded number of slots for that program during the 2025-2026 school year.

A motion to approve the Arkansas Better Chance Program FY26 Renewal Agency Grant Awards was made by Ms. Kathy Rollins, seconded by Mr. Randy Henderson. The motion unanimously passed.

New Business

None

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes – Draft 11-07-24
2. Report on Waivers to School Districts for Teachers Teaching Out of Area for Longer than Sixty (60) Days, Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-309
3. Review of Loan and Bond Applications
4. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case 25-120 Bradley Quillen
5. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case 25-003 Janice Reddick
6. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case 25-044 Rachel Lepper
7. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case 25-061 Andrew Ellifrits
8. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case 25-078 Juan Day
9. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case 25-069 Kelly Simon
10. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case 25-118 Rory Davis
11. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case 24-051 Nancy Anderson
12. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case 25-091 Edward Butler
13. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case 25-058 Kyle Orsburn
14. Consideration of Charter Contract Extension Requests
15. Consideration of the Amendment Request by Friendship Aspire Academies of Arkansas to Add an Additional Campus

Ms. Anita Freer, Fiscal & Administrative Services, answered State Board members' questions regarding Item 3 of the Consent Agenda: Review of Loan and Bond Applications.

A motion to approve the Consent Agenda, with the exception of item 11, was made by Mr. Jeff Wood, seconded by Ms. Leigh Keener. The motion unanimously passed.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment

Dr. Sarah Moore, Chair, adjourned the State Board meeting at 10:59 AM.

Minutes recorded by Angela Scaife.

Jacob Oliva, Secretary
Arkansas Department of Education

Dr. Sarah Moore, Chair
State Board of Education

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