

**Minutes
State Board Meeting
September 10, 2026**

Present: Randy Henderson, Chair; Dr. Gary Arnold, Vice-Chair; Dr. Aaron Abbott; Lisa Hunter; Leigh Keener; Dr. Gary Starks; Jeff Wood; Jacob Oliva, ADE Secretary.

Absent: Ken Bragg; David Peacock; Stephanie Williams, 2026 Arkansas Teacher of the Year

Call to Order

The Arkansas State Board of Education (State Board) met Thursday, September 10, 2026. Randy Henderson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM, followed by the presentation of colors, a moment of silence, Pledge of Allegiance, and the National Anthem sung by the Pinnacle View Middle School Choir III Select Ensemble, Directed by Briya Alford, Head Director of Choirs, and sung by grade 8 students: Carther Caruthers, Nora Wallace, Sophie Helmich, Elsa Cooper, Zuri parsons, Molly Carter, Shnika Khajanchi, AlyssaMarie Simmons, Jett Vinson, Kennedy Williams, Ka'Moree Thompson, and Jayla Willingham.

Recognition

V.1. Presentation of Colors

Item V.1. was presented by Secretary Oliva.

Benton High School JROTC Members Anna Flynn, Jace Clayton, Jace Barton, Alan Hanson, Bo Tankersley presented the colors. Their advisor, Mr. Jason Brashears, was in attendance with them.

V.2. 25th Anniversary of September 11, 2001

Item V.2. was presented by Secretary Jacob Oliva. Present was Brigadier General Chad Bridges.

Brigadier General Chad Bridges provided special recognition of the 25th Anniversary of September 11, 2001, and the service and sacrifice of the members of the armed forces who served in the years that followed.

V.3. Arkansas Excellence in Teaching Fellowship 2026-27 Cohort Introduction

Item V.3. was presented by Secretary Jacob Oliva. Present were Brendan Lowe, Director of Fellows Program; and Fellow Stephanie Fiori, Paulette Smith Middle School, Fouke, Arkansas.

The Arkansas Excellence in Teaching Fellowship is a nine-month program launched in summer 2025 to recognize and support some of the State's top educators, particularly those earning merit pay, while highlighting exemplary teaching for the public. For the 2026-27 Cohort, thirty educators were recognized. Brendan Lowe, president of Each Day Communications, and facilitator of the Arkansas Excellence in Teaching Fellowship, introduced the 2026-2027 cohort.

2026-27 Cohort Fellows Present were: Jessica Baggett; Deja Avery; Mallory Dingler; Jennifer McFarland; Allyse Whitmore Gibbons; Mackenzie Oliver; Amanda Cardenas; James Perry; Chae Coan; McKenzie Outlaw; Chelsea Johnson; Sara Carr; Allison Heffington; Lauren Landers; Kiera Scott; Erin Green; Jason Campbell; Matthew Jimerson; Jessica Roush; Becky Turnbough; Desiree Stokes; Joseph Beck; Jennifer Stoesz; and Landon Davis.

IV.4. President and CEO of Academies of Central Arkansas Foundation

Item IV.4. was presented by Secretary Jacob Oliva. Present was Markous Jewett, President & CEO - Central Arkansas Foundation.

The Academies of Central Arkansas is a regional education initiative that aligns high school education with post-secondary and workforce opportunities through college- and career-focused academies and industry partnerships. The model prepares students for successful transition to enrollment, enlistment, or employment.

Changes to Agenda

Pulled

Consent Agenda Item IX.2. Correction to the Ozarks Unlimited Resources Educational Cooperative 2026 Annual Report

A motion to pull IX.2. Correction to the Ozarks Unlimited Resources Educational Cooperative 2026 Annual Report for discussion was made by Leigh Keener, seconded by Jeff Wood. The motion unanimously passed.

Action Agenda

VII.1. Waiver Request for Kingston School District

Item VI.1. was presented by Hope Worsham, Assistant Commissioner – Public School Accountability. Present was Bryan Law, Superintendent.

A motion to approve the waiver request 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."

A motion to approve the Kingston School District waiver request was made by Jeff Wood, seconded by Dr. Gary Arnold. The motion unanimously passed.

VII.2. Request for Final Approval of the Rules Governing Student Special Needs Funding

Item VI.2. was presented by Courtney Salas-Ford, Chief of Staff.

The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education requested that these rules be adopted and submitted to the General Assembly for review. This rule is being promulgated pursuant to the requirements of Act 911 of 2025. A public comment period ran from August 2nd to September 2nd and a public hearing was held on August 21st.

A motion for final approval of the Rules Governing Student Special Needs Funding was made by Dr. Aaron Abbott, seconded by Lisa Hunter.

Pulled Consent Item: IX.2. Correction to the Ozarks Unlimited Resources Educational Cooperative 2026 Annual Report

The State Board took up discussion of Consent Agenda Item IX.2. Ozarks Unlimited Resources Annual Report. Present was Greg Rogers, Chief Fiscal Officer - Fiscal & Administrative Services.

A motion to approve the Ozarks Unlimited Resources Annual Report was made by Leigh Keener, seconded by Lisa Hunter. The motion unanimously passed.

New Business

None

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes
2. Correction to the Ozarks Unlimited Resources Educational Cooperative 2026 Annual Report. – Pulled for separate action
3. PLSB Case 25-293 Derrick Cook — Written Reflections
4. Review of Loan and Bond Applications

A motion to approve the remaining Consent Agenda items was made by Leigh Keener, seconded by Dr. Aaron Abbott. The motion unanimously passed.

Public Comments

The State Board heard public comments from:

- Charline Wright

Adjournment

Randy Henderson, Chair adjourned the State Board meeting at 11:07 AM.

Minutes recorded by Angela Scaife.

Jacob Oliva, Secretary
Arkansas Department of Education

Randy Henderson, Chair
State Board of Education