Minutes

Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind Board of Trustees Meeting

October 20, 2026

Present: Dr. John McAllister, Chair; Jerry Belew, Vice Chair; Robert Fagan, Board Member; Phillip Miller, ASD Parent Rep; Nicole Walsh, Superintendent; Alysson Tate, Board Liaison; Caitlynn Cochran, Attorney; Interpreters; Members of the Community

Absent: Philip Powell, Cary Smith

Call to Order

The Board of Trustees for the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind met Tuesday, October 20, 2026, in Woolly Auditorium. The next meeting will take place on November 17, 2026. Dr. McAllister, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30pm and the student of the month led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comments

None

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes

2. Financial Statements

3. Personnel Items

26-DB-89 Approval of Consent Items

26-DB-89 Superintendent Walsh introduced four new employees: Meredith Wilson, Occupational Therapist; Laurel Sloter, Speech Language Pathology Assistant; Meranda Upshaw, Paraprofessional; and Kaitlyn Patterson, Residential Advisor.

Robert Fagan made a motion to approve the minutes, financial statements, and personnel items, seconded by Jerry Belew. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Agenda

26-DB-90 Approval of the 2027-2028 Calendar Draft

26-DB-90 Superintendent Walsh introduced the proposed 2027-2028 calendar draft to the Board to allow families time to plan ahead. This calendar reaches 184 school days, along with the required five plus one inclement weather days.

Robert Fagan made a motion to approve the 2027-2028 calendar, seconded by Jerry Belew. The motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent Report

- Philip Powell has been named the November Board Member of the Month.
- Looking into an informational booth at the upcoming Arkansas School Board Association (ASBA) Conference.
- ARDB Lions Track and Field team traveled to Ohio for the North Central Association of Schools for the Blind (NCASB) Track and Field Championship where our girls' team won first place and one of our seniors won Outstanding Track Athlete.
- Residential Advisor Sheri Buddenberg was recognized for her exceptional dedication to our students and her commitment to supporting dorm life and student successes.
- Campus lockdown drill conducted to evaluate emergency response procedures and campus preparedness.
- Our senior class has launched fundraising efforts to support their senior trips.
- Leopard volleyball and football teams seasons are ongoing with students benefiting from both home and away game experiences with football benefiting from our partnership with Jacksonville Christian Academy (JCA) as their coaches sign fluently.
- ARDB staff and students are looking forward to several upcoming events, including the annual Northwest Arkansas trip to Crystal Bridges, Camp War Eagle, and the University of Arkansas, as well as our Homecoming activities including our parade, dance, and Trunk or Treat; we are also celebrating Red Ribbon Week during the week of Homecoming.
- Instructional administration attended the Meaningful Access and Participation Training of Trainers that was centered around meaningful access and provision of specific student needs and accommodation through the planning process.
- Dorm study meetings are underway. These meetings are held to review current conditions, student needs, and the feasibility of renovation or rebuilding.

- Completed the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing providing only the required IEP-required accommodations and our students showed growth as well as areas for targeted intervention.

Jerry Belew asked if the Homecoming Parade would take place on campus, and Superintendent Walsh explained the parade route leaving campus and proceeding down Kavanaugh and Lee Streets and back to campus, with lineup starting at 9:00am and the parade starting at 10:00am.

26-DB-91 Motion to Adjourn

Robert Fagan made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Jerry Belew. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. John McAllister, Board Chair

Cary Smith, Board Secretary