



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MINUTES Charter Authorizing Panel

December 18, 2025

Arkansas Department of Education Auditorium
4 Capitol Mall, Little Rock, AR 72201
9:00 AM

I. Call to Order

The December 18, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel (CAP) was called to order by Chair Dr. Sonja Wright-McMurray at 9:04 AM.

Present in person were:

- Chair Dr. Wright-McMurray,
- Dr. John Bacon,
- Dr. Tina Moore, and
- Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan.

Ms. Toyce Newton attended via Zoom.

Absent were:

Mr. Phil Baldwin
Ms. Edie Stewart

II. Changes to Agenda

Chair Dr. Wright-McMurray stated a change to the order in which the district conversion charter applications would be considered with Pulaski County Special School District DRIVEN School of Opportunity first, followed by Little Rock School District Hall High.

III. Action Agenda

III.1. District Conversion Charter Applications

III.1.a. Pulaski County Special School District DRIVEN School of Opportunity

Pulaski County Special School District staff Rachel Blackwell, Nina Holub, Todd Esota, and Dr. Justin Lutrell appeared before the panel, delivered a presentation about the proposed charter, and answered panel member questions.

It was moved by Dr. Tina Moore, and seconded Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan to approve the application for charter. The motion passed 4-0.

III.1.b. Little Rock School District Hall High

Little Rock School District staff Dr. Jermall Wright, Dr. Shay Loring, and Carlton McGee appeared before the panel, delivered a presentation about the proposed charter, and answered panel member questions.

It was moved by Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan and seconded by Ms. Toyce Newton to approve the application for charter. Dr. Beshears-Duncan then moved to rescind the motion, and Dr. Tina Moore seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Additional discussion on the application followed.

Ms. Newton left the meeting.

The chair deferred the decision on the application until January.

III.2. Review of Landscape Analyses for Charters that Received an "F" Letter Grade

Assistant Commissioner Dr. Darrell Smith led a discussion of the accountability profiles created by charter staff and the current landscape documents submitted by charter leaders whose charters received an "F" letter grade.

III.2.a. Friendship Aspire Academy Network

It was moved by Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan and seconded by Dr. Tina Moore to approve the Friendship

Aspire Academy Network reports as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

It was moved by Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan and seconded by Dr. Tina Moore to request that leaders of Friendship Aspire Academy Network appear before the panel in January 2026 for a probationary hearing. The motion passed unanimously.

III.2.b. Future School of Fort Smith

It was moved by Dr. Tina Moore and seconded by Dr. John Bacon to approve the Future School of Fort Smith reports as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

It was moved by Dr. Tina Moore and seconded by Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan to request that leaders of Future School of Fort Smith appear before the panel in January 2026 for a probationary hearing. The motion passed unanimously.

III.2.c. Garfield Scholars Academy

It was moved by Dr. John Bacon and seconded by Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan to approve the Garfield Scholars Academy reports as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

It was moved by Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan and seconded by Dr. Tina Moore to request that leaders of the Garfield Scholars Academy appear before the panel in January 2026 for a probationary hearing. The motion passed unanimously.

III.2.d. Institute for the Creative Arts

It was moved by Dr. Tina Moore and seconded by Dr. John Bacon to approve the Institute for Creative Arts reports as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

It was moved by Dr. John Bacon and seconded by Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan to request that leaders of the Institute for Creative Arts appear before the panel in January 2026 for a probationary hearing. The motion passed unanimously.

III.3. 2026 Charter Authorizing Meeting Dates

It was moved by Dr. Tina Moore, and seconded by Dr. John Bacon to approve the following third Thursdays in 2026 as meeting dates for the Charter Authorizing Panel:

- January 15, 2026,
- February 19, 2026,
- March 19, 2026,
- April 16, 2026,
- May 21, 2026,
- June 18, 2026,
- July 16, 2026,
- August 20, 2026,
- September 17, 2026,
- October 15, 2026
- November 19, 2026, and
- December 17, 2026.

The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Consent Agenda

November 20, 2025 Minutes - Draft

It was moved by Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan and seconded by Dr. John Bacon to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2025 Charter Authorizing Panel Meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

V. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

VI. Adjournment

It was moved by Dr. Tina Moore and seconded by Dr. John Bacon to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 12:58 PM.

Minutes prepared by Mary Perry.

Minutes Approved By:

Dr. Sonja Wright-McMurray, Chair
Charter Authorizing Panel
Arkansas Department of Education

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