



Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education

May 14, 2025

Jacob Oliva
Secretary

Stacy Smith
Deputy
Commissioner

Interim Superintendent Jennifer Blankenship
Board President Desmond Hammett
Blytheville School District
405 Park Street
Blytheville, AR 72315

State Board of
Education

Re: HEARING NOTICE: Recommendation to Classify the Blytheville School District as in Need of Level 5—Intensive Support

Dr. Sarah Moore
Stuttgart
Chair

Dear Interim Superintendent Blankenship and President Hammett:

Kathy Rollins
Springdale
Vice-Chair

The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (the Division) has reviewed the progress and performance of the Blytheville School District (the District) resulting from the instability in leadership that has occurred over the past year. After a thorough analysis, the Division has determined that the District continues to demonstrate deficiencies in the following areas:

Adrienne Woods
Rogers

- **Absence of Coherent Leadership:** The vacancy in the superintendent position, delayed staffing decisions, and stalled hiring processes have created organizational instability, weakened strategic planning efforts, and impeded the district's capacity to effectively support students and staff.
- **Inconsistent Governance Structure:** A lack of cohesive governance practices, including unclear board protocols and blurred boundaries between governance and management roles, has resulted in operational disruptions, diminished trust, and inefficiencies in decision-making across the district.
- **Chronic Student Underachievement:** The District has experienced a sustained pattern of loss of enrollment and low academic performance, as evidenced by consistently poor outcomes on state assessments, signaling systemic instructional challenges and an urgent need for comprehensive academic improvement strategies.

Dr. Gary Arnold
Little Rock

Randy Henderson
Blytheville

Lisa Hunter
White Hall

Jeff Wood
Little Rock

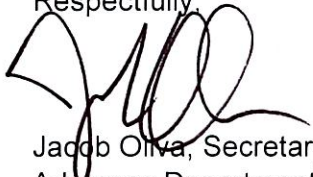
Ken Bragg
Sheridan

Leigh Keener
Little Rock

To promote stability in leadership as a means of ensuring students have the greatest opportunity to benefit from instruction, the Division will recommend that the State Board of Education classify the Blytheville School District as in need of Level 5-Intensive Support under the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act, Ark. Code. Ann. § 6-15-2901 et seq. The Division will make this recommendation to the State Board of Education at a special meeting on May 29, 2025, which will be held at the Blytheville High School auditorium, 600 N. 10th Street, Blytheville, Arkansas, at 9:00 a.m.

Pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2915(c)(1) and the Rules Governing the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act ("Rules"), 6 CAR § 60-120(a)(2), the District may appeal the Division's recommendation to the State Board by filing a written appeal with the Office of the Secretary of Education via certified mail, return receipt requested, within twenty (20) calendar days of the receipt of this written notice. If the District files an appeal, the State Board will conduct a hearing at its May 29, 2025, meeting in accordance with 6 CAR § 60-120(a)(5). A copy of the Rules can be found on the Division's website at: www.codeofarrules.arkansas.gov.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jacob Oliva', written over the printed name.

Jacob Oliva, Secretary
Arkansas Department of Education