

OFFICIAL MINUTES FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING OF THE  
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED  
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

The Board of Trustees for the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Arkansas School for the Deaf met for their monthly meeting April 15, 2025, at the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Woolly Auditorium.

**Present:** Robert Fagan, Chair; Dr. John McAllister, Vice Chair; Cary Smith, Board Member; Philip Powell, Board Member; Jerry Belew, Board Member, and Holley Mott, ASD Parent Representative, K. Nicole Walsh, ASD Superintendent; Dr. Chris Barnes, ASBVI Interim Superintendent; Interpreters; Members of the community.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm.

ASD student led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ASD seniors were introduced and shared their plans for after graduation.

Mr. Fagan called roll - all board members were present.

The next meeting will be May 20, 2025, in Woolly Auditorium on the ASBVI campus. All members agreed on the date. Mrs. Walsh said Nabholz wants to grill for the next meeting.

**Joint Agenda**

**25-J-18 Motion to Approve Joint Meeting Minutes for February 25, 2025.**

Dr. McAllister made a motion to approve. Mr. Belew seconded. Motion carried.

**Action Items:**

Superintendent Evaluation – Mr. Fagan asked if they wanted to postpone the evaluation to the end of the meeting since they go into Executive Session to complete it. It was agreed to postpone the evaluation until the end of the meeting.

**Discussion Items:**

Legislative Updates:

Mrs. Walsh said she was not going to read the entire document. She gave a website to see all the updates on bills passed related to education. Some of them apply to ASB/ASD and some are just for public schools. She said the session is wrapping up, tomorrow is the last day and closing on Thursday.

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:9bea4304-9bc1-4ee0-88d3-54bde82a8d47>

Mrs. Walsh said HB 1810 passed in the House/Senate and will be signed by the Governor April 17, 2025.

The meeting moved to the ASB agenda.

### **ASB Agenda**

#### **25-B-19 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)**

Mrs. Smith made a motion to approve. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion carried.

**Action Items** – None

**Discussion Items** – None

#### **ASB Superintendent Report**

- Severe Weather/Flooding
  - Flooding in Helen Keller Building 1<sup>st</sup> Floor
  - Limbs/Trees down on campus
- ATLAS testing started today-first time for this specific test-working out bugs
- Art Show April 11<sup>th</sup> for both schools in the Leopard Spot
- DSB Transition Fair held at Hilton Garden Inn April 10<sup>th</sup>
- Two students accepted to Arkansas Governor's School
- Students of the Month selected for elementary and secondary
- Staff Shout Outs
  - Paraprofessional Appreciation Day April 2<sup>nd</sup> – ASB has 11 paraprofessionals that work hard each day and play a vital role in supporting students/staff
  - Three paraprofessionals working to become teachers/graduate in May
- Upcoming Events
  - ATLAS Summative Window – April 14<sup>th</sup> – April 29<sup>th</sup>
  - Spring Easter Beeper Egg Hunt (with ASD) – April 17<sup>th</sup>
  - ASBVI Prom for grades 9-12 – April 23<sup>rd</sup>
  - Grades 10-12 tour of Crystal Bridges and the University of Arkansas- April 29-30; Overnight stay at Camp War Eagle
  - Spring Dance for K-8 Thursday, May 1<sup>st</sup>
- Human Capitol

ASBVI is looking to hire staff for the upcoming school year. The following positions are currently open and advertised

  - Teacher-Special Education -Interviewed prospective candidates; recommendation made
  - Teacher-Gifted & Talented/Special Education (shared with ASD) recommendation made
  - Teacher-Elementary (3) – Moving some elementary staff to fill vacant positions
  - Nurse-Registered Nurse (1) and LPN (2)
  - Residential Advisors (4)

Dr. Barnes stated he thought everyone already knew about the building projects and Legislative updates have been discussed previously. He asked if there were any questions.

Mrs. Smith asked what was being done if down 4 RA's. Dr. Barnes said working with ASD to fill in and have paraprofessional that are earning comp time. He said there 18 applications they looked through today and have 9 or 10 that meet the qualifications and will start interviewing soon. Mr. Fagan asked when applicants are selected, will they start immediately or wait for the new school year. Mrs. Walsh said they would start immediately.

Mrs. Smith said with the recent weather is the last day of school still going to be the same. Mrs. Walsh said they do not want to extend the school year if it can be helped. She said they have talked about it extensively. They considered taking this Friday. They thought Good Friday was an important holiday for many people and did not want to do that. She said there is one more long weekend in May – the Friday before Memorial Day. The plan now is to take use that Friday. Parents will be advised soon.

Mrs. Smith asked if the PTO days have been approved. Mrs. Walsh said they are still waiting to hear from OPM. Everything was put on hold because of the Legislative session.

Mrs. Smith asked why there is only one week for summer camp. Mrs. Walsh said it is two weeks, one for elementary and one for secondary. Mrs. Smith said typically her son would go for 3 weeks, then changed to 2 weeks, and now it is one. The biggest concern was staffing. After much discussion and debate, they concluded that it would be one week for elementary and one week for secondary. She said it was a team decision. Dr. McAllister said he didn't think programming for children should ever be cut. He said working summer camp was a way for paraprofessionals to earn time to be paid for the rest of the summer. Mrs. Walsh said if they are taking their comp time for the summer, they will be paid for working summer camp. Mr. Fagan asked about Jump Start. Mrs. Walsh said it is continuing. Mrs. Lori Cole said Jump start will be 1 week virtual and 2 weeks in person. Mr. Fagan asked about ASD's summer program. Mrs. Walsh said it is the same. She said they have several students that attend NTID Regional Stem Center Camp for a three-week program put on by the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. It is free for students 15 and up. If the student completes the 3 weeks of camp they earn a \$5000 scholarship. Mr. Fagan said his issue is that a lot of camps have been lost for blind and visually impaired. Mrs. Walsh said it was something that could be addressed moving forward. Dr. McAllister said in the past, summer camp was used as a recruiting tool to increase enrollment. He would like to see it return to 3 weeks in the future. Mrs. Walsh said it is important to note that summer is a time when a lot of renovation and maintenance issues are completed that can't take place during the school year.

The agenda moved to the ASD agenda.

### **ASD Agenda**

#### **25-D-20 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)**

Mr. Powell made a motion to approve. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion carried.

**Discussion Items** – None

**Action Items** –None

**ASD Superintendent Report**

- Weather Update
  - Several trees down on campus
  - Large tree leaning at 45-degree angle where the buses come through and behind it were the electrical boxes. Roy and his team did a great job dealing with all of these issues.
- Chrystal Bridges Trip
  - April 29<sup>th</sup> both campuses are traveling to Bentonville to Crystal Bridges Art Museum
  - 10 – 12 grades will have a day of art beyond sight and sound
  - Art Making Time
  - The event was shared with students across the state
  - Geared toward career development – everything from maintenance/custodial to being an art curator
  - Students will stay overnight at Camp War Eagle
  - Tour of the University of Arkansas/Eat in the cafeteria
  - ASB Alumni donating \$1,500 for the trip
- Prom – May 1<sup>st</sup>
- Human Capitol
  - Food Prep Coordinator posted
  - IT position offered and accepted (Jackson Brannon) – Starting April 28<sup>th</sup>
  - Several positions posted
  - Sent out Intent to Return to teachers
  - Principals attended Career Fair at UCA
- Shout Outs
  - Maintenance Department – Operations Hero shows improvement in requests being completed
- Celebrated Read Across America Day
- Students enjoying interacting with Nabholtz
- Suspensions have improved – one in lower school and none in upper school
- April 17<sup>th</sup> – Governor signing the bill, Egg hunt, Deaf History Month presentation at the Capitol
- The algorithm calculates the reimbursement for meals has changed and increased reimbursement numbers for meal programs
- CAP – Not fully approved- have more corrective resolutions-should be wrapped up by June
- Nursing Team- Deana Shields has done an excellent job in her new role

She asked if there were any questions. Mr. Powell said he wanted to hear about the FFA Chapter. Mrs. Walsh said it was put on pause this year. She said she thought they were ready to move forward again.

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Mrs. Walsh shared grant information.

Mrs. Smith asked with the new calendar the teachers return the last week of July, and the students come the next week. Since the teachers come in the last week of July, it is still part of the previous school year. Mrs. Walsh said no, the school year ends June 30<sup>th</sup>, and the new one begins July 1<sup>st</sup>. Mrs. Smith said she knows they do not have a contract. Mrs. Walsh said they are state employees. Mrs. Smith said so it is not a duplicate week. Mrs. Walsh said no it is not, in a public school there would be a contract that would state from this date to this date you will be paid. Mr. Powell asked about the calendar since he missed that meeting. Mrs. Walsh said it is a more balanced calendar; it starts the last week of July for teachers and students return the first week of August and allows for a full week in October for a fall break.

Mrs. Mott asked when both graduations were, and Mrs. Walsh answered May 22<sup>nd</sup>. ASB in the morning and ASD in the evening in Woolly Auditorium.

Mr. Fagan asked if there were any other questions for Superintendent Walsh. There were no other questions.

He said the board would move into the Executive Session to complete the superintendent evaluation. He asked the audience to move outside.

Mr. Fagan called the meeting back to order. He said they presented Mrs. Walsh with her evaluation.

Mr. Fagan asked for a motion to adjourn.

#### **25-D-21 Motion to Adjourn**

Mrs. Smith made a motion. Mr. Belew seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned.

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Robert Fagan, Chair

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Cary Smith, Secretary