

# Hearing Notice



# Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Deputy  
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*Little Rock*

June 30, 2023

Timothy Robinson  
[REDACTED]

Dr. Jeremy Owoh, Superintendent  
Jacksonville North Pulaski School District  
jowoh@jnpsd.org

Charles McNulty, Superintendent  
Pulaski County Special School District  
cmcnulty@pcssd.org

## **Re: Appeal Under the Public School Choice Act – Jayden Ward**

Everyone:

This letter is to notify you that the Arkansas State Board of Education is scheduled to hear the above-referenced appeal(s) on **Thursday, July 13, 2023**. The action item is set for **9:00 a.m. in the Auditorium of the Arch Ford Education Building, Four Capitol Mall, Little Rock, Arkansas 72201**. Any additional materials any party chooses to submit should be provided to my office **no later than 12:00 noon on Friday, July 7, 2023**.

**The Arkansas State Board of Education has requested the parent, the non-resident district, and the resident district attend this meeting and be available for questions.**

The above-referenced appeal(s) will be conducted pursuant to the legal authority and jurisdiction vested in the State Board by the Public School Choice Act and the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Rules Governing the Public School Choice Act. You may find copies of these references on the DESE website at <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/legal/school-choice>.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact the Arkansas Department of Education's Legal Services Division at (501) 683-0087 should you require additional information.

Sincerely,

/s/Shastady Wagner

Shastady Wagner  
Attorney Supervisor  
Division of Elementary and Secondary Education  
shastady.wagner@ade.arkansas.gov

# Appeal Packet

# TIMOTHY D. ROBINSON



RECEIVED  
LEGAL SERVICES

June 16, 2023

JUN 21 2023

Legal Service Unit  
Attn: School Choice Appeal  
Mail Slot 4  
4 Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Dear Madam/Sir:

I am writing to formally request that the decision to reject Jayden Ward's application for admission into Sylvan Hills High School tenth grade (due to capacity for that grade) be reconsidered and reversed. Should a formal request for a hearing before the State Board of Education be required on Jayden's behalf, this letter furthermore serves as that formal request.

As I have spent several hours thinking through the process of submitting a request for Jayden to attend a nonresident school, my primary concern has been and remains, "What would be in Jayden's best interest from an educational standpoint?" There are many reasons I could list, but for the sake of time, I will only list three here. However, I will gladly share the full list of why he should be allowed to attend Sylvan Hills High School if you would like.

First is the difference in the daily school schedule between the two schools. Currently his residential school (Jacksonville High School) splits classes between two days, an A Day and a B Day. While this type of class schedule may work well for some students, Jayden struggled throughout his entire freshman year with the split longer class period schedule. He performs much better when he is allowed to take all his classes on a single day for a shorter period per class. Jayden has shown that he learns better when instruction is given on a constant daily repeated schedule. For example: English II class occurring Monday – Friday at 11am each day versus it being taught Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Tuesday, Thursday, ETC. at 11am. And this does not even account for when school closers occur and how that further shift of a stable retain further disrupts him. These types of holiday closes have no effect on schools where students attend all their classes on a single day.

Second, I would like to address the quality of education and the student demographics between the two schools. According to ADE Data Center (a government website), Jacksonville High School had a school performance, ESSA School Index Score of 55.25 for 2022 for all students while Sylvan Hills High School scored a 62.6 during the same year. If one were to look only at white students (which is Jayden's race) Jacksonville High School students scored 58.43 which is over 10.5 points below Sylvan Hills High School students (69.04) and over nine points below the State average of 67.64. Comparing the graduation rate between the two schools, Jacksonville High School has a rate of 78% compared to Sylvan Hills High School graduating 86% of its students. While having a graduation rate of 78% may seem acceptable, the college going rate at Jacksonville High School is a mere 25%. Sylvan Hills High School's college going rate is 16% higher at 41%. Finally, are the average years of teaching experience between the two schools. Sylvan Hills High School teachers' average experience is 6.31 years compared to teachers at Jacksonville High School which is only 3.19 years average of teaching experience.

## TIMOTHY D. ROBINSON

And finally, the third reason does not revolve around the quality of the school itself; but more from a social aspect. The church that we have been attending is located within the Sylvan Hills High School district. Many of the youth group attend Sylvan Hills. It would be nice if Jayden could have the opportunity to interact with students throughout the day at also attend his same church.

As I stated earlier in this letter, submitting a request for Jayden to attend a nonresident school is not something that I took lightly. Much research and thought went into my decision before making this request. In closing, I ask that he not be refused the opportunity to attend a better school whose daily schedule better aligns with his learning style simply based on our address.

I look forward to hearing from you soon, and I appreciate your time and consideration in considering reversing my son's rejected application to attend Sylvan Hills High School tenth grade for the 2023-2024 school year.

Sincerely Yours,



Timothy D. Robinson

CC:

Dr. Charles McNulty  
Superintendent of Schools  
Pulaski County Special School District  
925 East Dixon Road  
Little Rock AR 72206

Encl: Appeal Letter from DHS (1), Rejection Letter (2)



**Division of Children & Family Services**

P.O. Box 2620, Little Rock, AR 72203

501-682-9332

FSW Jessica Meilke 870-940-9576

[Jessica.meilke@dhs.arkansas.gov](mailto:Jessica.meilke@dhs.arkansas.gov)

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this to formally request that the decision to reject Jayden Ward's application for admission into Sylvan Hills High School be reconsidered. Jayden Ward is currently in foster care with the state of Arkansas. I am his current caseworker and have been since November of 2022. As the department we are only concerned about what we believe is in the best interest of Jayden.

The educational department at Sylvan Hills is one of the best in the area. Jayden is an excellent student and keeps his grades at acceptable standards. However, the schedule at his current school Jacksonville poses a challenge for Jayden and his learning. Jayden struggles with switching back and forth on different days with classes. While at Sylvan Hills offers a set schedule of the same classes before taught daily all week Monday- Friday. We believe Jayden would soar academically more than he already is if given this opportunity.

In addition to the excellent educational department is the amazing athletic department that Sylvan Hills has to offer. Jayden is very athletic and has a love for sports. Sports have been a huge outlet for Jayden to deal and process with the traumatic changes that have happened in his life. We have heard very great things about the sports department at Sylvan Hills and how great they work with their children. We heard the school offers a superior athletic program that would be beneficial to Jayden's emotional and mental wellbeing for the future. We would like to see Jayden placed in a program like this that can meet all of his needs and challenge him as well.

I have also spoken with Michael Graham, who is his CASA representative, and his attorney Jasmine Starnes who is appointed to represent him. They are also in agreement that we believe that Sylvan Hills is the best fit for Jayden. We would love to have Jayden attend Sylvan Hills as it would benefit him in so many ways. We greatly urge you to reconsider making a position open for Jayden because not only does Sylvan Hills have a lot to offer Jayden, but it would also greatly benefit the school as well. Jayden is a sweet kid with great potential. Life has not been easy on him but he has always soared even in the worst of times. He is currently being cared for by an amazing Resource Dad Tim Robinson who also would be a huge asset to have.

Michael Graham CASA  
870-530-1448  
[Michael.graham@neacasa.org](mailto:Michael.graham@neacasa.org)

Jasmine Starnes Attorney Ad Litem  
901-497-5914  
[Jasmine.starnes@arcourts.gov](mailto:Jasmine.starnes@arcourts.gov)



# PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

925 East Dixon Road, Little Rock, AR 72206 • 501.234.2000 • Website: pcssd.org

June 7th, 2023

**Timothy Robinson**

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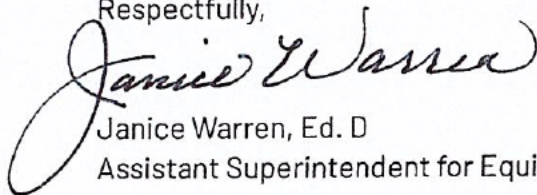
Parent/Guardian:

Pulaski County Special School District (PCSSD) is in receipt of the Application for Transfer to a Nonresident District "Arkansas Public School Choice Act of 2015" that you submitted.

We regret to inform you that the application you submitted for **Jayden Ward** **Sylvan Hills High- 10th Grade**, has been **rejected** based on capacity at the grade level requested for the 2023-2024 school year.

Thank you for taking the time to submit your application.

Respectfully,



Janice Warren, Ed. D

Assistant Superintendent for Equity and Pupil Services

# District Response