



# Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

*Transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education*

June 22, 2022

**Johnny Key**

Secretary

Assistant Superintendent Joyce Anderson

Ms. Sanetta Davis, President

**Dr. Ivy Pfeffer**

Deputy

Commissioner

Helena-West Helena School District

305 Valley Drive

Helena-West Helena, AR 72342

**Stacy Smith**

Deputy

Commissioner

Re: HEARING NOTICE: Recommendation to Classify the Helena-West Helena School District as in Need of Level 5 – Intensive Support

**State Board of  
Education**

Dear Assistant Superintendent Anderson and President Davis:

**Ouida Newton**

*Poyen*

Chair

The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (the Division) has reviewed the Helena-West Helena School District's (the District) Act 1240 waiver request concerning teacher licensure. After a thorough analysis, the Division has determined that the District's human capital system is still experiencing instability with staffing and irregularities in the master scheduling process.

**Dr. Sarah Moore**

*Stuttgart*

Vice Chair

The staffing at the elementary school is particularly concerning, with some grade levels having no licensed teachers currently assigned to students. It is unclear whether unlicensed employees will be enrolled in preparation programs that align with their assigned grade level or whether they are being assigned to grade levels outside of their area of preparation. There are multiple vacancies that still need to be filled at both the elementary and high schools. Based on information reported by the District, there is concern that the Board of Directors is not considering qualified applicants; and it is unclear whether a high school counselor has been employed.

**Charisse Dean**

*Little Rock*

**Dr. Fitz Hill**

*Little Rock*

The data does not show that the granting of blanket waivers of licensure has provided the District the avenue to attract and retain quality applicants that result in a stable workforce. It is doubtful, however, that the District can find licensed candidates for the 2022-2023 school year given the late date for hire and shortage of prepared candidates. There are several candidates at your District are in various stages of preparation and license completion that provides some flexibility needed to move forward. However, the situation must be closely monitored to ensure that stability is returned to the District's staffing.

**Kathy McFetridge**

*Springdale*

**Steve Sutton**

*Marion*

**Adrienne Woods**

*Rogers*

**Dr. Beth Anne**

**Rankin**

*Magnolia*

To find this balance and to provide students with the best chance of having a well-prepared teacher providing oversight for instruction, the Division will recommend that the State Board of Education classify the Helena-West Helena 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 its July 14, 2022 meeting, which will be held in the ADE Auditorium, Four Capitol Mall, Little Rock, Arkansas, at 10:00 a.m.

**Randy Henderson**

*Blytheville*

The main focus of the Division's classification recommendation will be ensuring District human capital system improvements. The Office of Coordinated Support and Service (OCSS) will lead the support for the District. The Division will recommend that a plan of support be developed to outline the roles and responsibilities of the Division and District, which will include but not be limited to the following:

- The OCSS will assign a deputy state superintendent to oversee the day-to-day human capital work and liaise with the District and Division concerning staffing decisions. The OCSS deputy will review all applications for vacant positions prior to recommendations for hire. Division staff members will provide technical assistance for staffing support. The Division will work with the District to implement a teaming structure that will include at least one lead teacher for each elementary grade level to provide equitable access to effective teachers.
- The Division and OCSS will monitor the master schedule and student schedules throughout the year to ensure stability of scheduling of students and staff. The Division will provide technical support for teacher and student scheduling, and all teacher and student schedules must be complete by August 8, 2022.
- The District's Teacher and Administrator Recruitment and Retention Plan (TARRP) will be comprehensive and included as part of the District Plan of Support. As a central part of the TARRP, the District will implement an Educators Rising Chapter and the Pre-Educator Program of Study as part of its Career and Technical Education program. If the District does not have staffing for the courses, the OCSS and Division will work with Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas to ensure that a Memorandum of Understanding and Concurrent agreements are in place for students. The TARRP will include support from the Great River Education Service Cooperative's Recruitment and Retention Coordinator.

Pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2915(c)(1) and Section 8.09 of the Division's Rules Governing the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act ("Rules"), 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 July 14, 2022 meeting in accordance with Section 8.09.5 of the Rules. A copy of the Rules can be found on the Division's website at [Final AESAA Rules \(Effective May 31, 2022\) Legal.pdf \(arkansas.gov\)](#).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Stacy Smith at 501-683-4783.

Respectfully,



Johnny Key, Secretary  
Arkansas Department of Education