

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 March 18, 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.

ASBVI students sang the National Anthem and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Mr. Fagan asked for a Moment of Silence for a former ASB student, Ashton Duke. She was 20 years old. Mr. Fagan said when something like that happens, it is very sad.

The next meeting will be on April 15, 2025, in Woolly Auditorium on the ASBVI campus. He said there was a workshop that day at 12 noon in the Tornado Shelter. He asked if everyone would be able to make it and they answered yes. He said he thought the architects would be there to discuss plans so it would be important for everyone to show up.

Joint Agenda

25-J-14 Motion to Approve Joint Meeting Minutes for February 25, 2025.

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

Action Items: None

Discussion Items: None

The meeting moved to the ASD agenda.

ASD Agenda

25-D-15 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

ASD Superintendent Report

- She & Dr. Barnes have been working with Crystal Bridges Art Museum since September. They have developed a field trip related to Career & Technical Ed for secondary students to go to Crystal Bridges, take a tour related to arts and museum management.
- The leadership team has been working on the student handbook for 25/26 school year. They are working to pursue a common handbook for both schools. It will allow everyone to be on the same page and support one another.
- ASD received \$998.80 reimbursement from AR River Educational Coop for being a phone free school. It covers both schools.
- Met with Representative Carr again to talk about the draft of the merger bill. It was filed Monday, it is not on the agenda yet. She said she didn't know if it would be on Thursday or after Spring Break. The suspicion is that it will be on Thursday, and she let the board members. She will let them know if something changes.
- She and Kevin, Director of Development, attended the ArkaNSPRS School Communications Conference. They have heard from parents and staff that communication is so important.
- Successful walkthroughs were completed by ADE's literacy specialist department leading to some support as a result of Atlas scores.
- Construction & demolition work is ongoing.
- Demo Day celebration was March 12 and will be completed by the end of April.
- Leon Allen, a skilled tradesman, resigned. He found a better paying job.
- She said in Session the other day, a new pay scale was provided, and a Bill was sent, but it did not pass. She thinks it is being revised.
- New hires, Madison, is a Paraprofessional; Deana Shields is our Nursing Supervisor, and Tiffany Lambert is pursuing her bachelor's degree, so she moved to an Extra Help position.
- Carson Lamar Raper, Director of Transportation, started Monday.
- Positions posted: Maintenance Tech, RN, & an IT person. RA positions will be coming also.
- Shout Out to Tommy Varner for organizing an incredible tournament.
- Shout Out to Sharon Smith for her outstanding efforts to provide top quality service.
- Shout Out to Kris Miller. She is a great teacher. Kris Miller and Tammy Harrison (2nd grade teachers at ASD and ASB) recently partnered for a unit on Charlotte's Web.

- Legislative Updates: Several bills that were impacting the schools – Bell to Bell No Cell Act, Free Breakfast program. Mr. Fagan asked about Bill 1810 (Merger Bill). She had copies for the board.
- Interpreting services: ASD has the only mental health certified interpreter in the state of Arkansas on staff – Clayton Higgins.
- Facilities Department – Continuing campus improvements and maintenance work. Mr. Depriest has done a phenomenal job.
- Minor conflicts between 3-5 grade girls – Behavioral Health team and Speech Pathology teams are doing great work with Social Emotional Learning classes where students are learning coping and listening skills.
- Challenges – Language is always a concern.
- Action Plan for Improvement – HQIM has been a huge topic the last several months. Walk throughs were completed by Instructional Leadership teams.
- Elementary Play Yard – Very small area and the students are getting bored, so they are voting on what ballgames and activities the students want to do during recess time. Hoping to purchase and get installed by the beginning of school.
- Special Education – Tour for a 4th grade student was held. IEP meetings are being held.
- Dean of Students is actively addressing student issues throughout the day.

Mrs. Smith asked what Directed Reading Support is. Mrs. Walsh said Directed Reading Support is where the state will provide funding for professional development, additional materials, etc. directly related to ELA and Literacy.

Mr. Powell said on the Free Breakfast program, he assumes the schools already provide breakfast. Mrs. Walsh said yes, they do. Mr. Powell asked if the state would be paying for it instead of coming out of the school budget. Mrs. Walsh said the school will be reimbursed for more of it. She said currently the schools are only reimbursed by a very small percentage for the students that are on the reduced or free breakfast and lunch program. The new bill includes all students so every breakfast served will be reimbursed by the state. Mrs. Smith asked if it would change the menu that is offered, like more protein. Mrs. Walsh said it should not negatively impact what is provided.

Mrs. Smith asked how many open nursing positions there are now. Mrs. Walsh said she thought it was two. Mrs. Smith asked if it was covered by contractors now. Mrs. Walsh said yes. She said the positions are posted and hoping to get them filled soon. She said they wanted Nurse Shields to have input in the hiring process now that she has been hired as the supervisor. Mr. Belew asked what shifts were covered. Mrs. Walsh said it is typically two during the day and one overnight. He asked if they slept here. Mrs. Walsh said they absolutely should not be sleeping. They get a shift differential for working those hours to be here for the students.

Mrs. Smith asked what ECC stands for. Mrs. Walsh said Early Childhood (2 ½ - 4 years old).

Mr. Fagan asked how many students would be lost from graduation. Mrs. Walsh said ASD has 16 seniors. Dr. Barnes said ASB has several super seniors that Mrs. Cole is working on to see if they have the requirements to graduate. ASB has 6 seniors that will graduate.

Mrs. Mott asked what is a super senior. Dr. Barnes said they are seniors that chronologically have made it to senior but may not have met the requirements of their IEP. He said they graduate students on proficiency on their standards, they obtain their level of credits, but also have they met their level of ECC (standards for independent living skills, expanded core curriculum).

The agenda moved to the ASB agenda.

ASB Agenda

25-B-16 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

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

Discussion Items – None

Action Items –None

ASB Superintendent Report

- ASB has had a fantastic, busy month full of activities in preparation for being ready for the Summative Assessment.
- Getting into testing season. After spring break will be starting the ATLAS assessment in April.
- There are changes necessary to meet the components of what the student chooses.
- ASB Black History Month celebration was held on February 26th at 1:30 pm. Dr. McAllister was the guest speaker. He stressed the importance of unity through diversity.
- Mrs. Walsh and Dr. Barnes presented informational updates to the Little Rock Founders Lion's Club on February 26th.
- Dental Hygiene Awareness – To promote good oral health habits, the elementary students received a visit from a local dentist.
- Read Across America Week (March 3-7) – ASB had a great celebration for the week promoting literacy by encouraging students to develop lifelong reading habits.
- National School Breakfast Week (March 3-7) – Mrs. Barbara Cole did a fantastic job of showcasing what nutrition looks like, starting the day with a balanced meal. Parents were invited to breakfast March 6th.
- ASBVI students (grades 3-6 & some secondary students) participated in the Arts Advocacy Day at the Capitol March 10th.
- The ASBVI music department hosted Quaver Music Madness. Ms. Reddick put together a fun March Madness style competition through Quaver Music programs.
- The annual Candy Bar Meet was held on March 6th for the ASB wrestling program. The cheerleaders participated by cheering on the wrestlers.

- The talent show was held March 13th – Dr. Barnes said he could not say enough about the talent showcased in the program. He thanked Ms. Reddick and Mr. Staskevicius for their guidance and support.
- One of our seniors participated in the state level Poetry Out Loud competition. Poetry Out Loud is a national program that encourages students to engage in poetry through memorization.
- Staff Shout Out to Mrs. Abigail Jones (Assistive Technology Teacher) – She is in her first year in this position. She has done a very good job at coming in and learning/growing. She works closely with students familiarizing them with technology. She helps in training the elementary students. She organizes volunteers, gathers materials/supplies for events such as Valentines, bingo and dances. Her dedication and hard work are truly making a difference.
- Upcoming Events – Parent/Teacher Conferences on 3/21, Spring Break March 24 – 28, Art Show on 4/4, DSB Transition Fair on 4/10, ATLAS Summative Assessment Window begins 4/14, and the ASBVI prom 4/17.
- Human Capital – In addition to what Mrs. Walsh said, ASB needs Special Education teacher, Gifted and Talented (share with ASD), and two Residential Advisors.

ASBVI is working with ASD on the master schedule planning. This is the time of year to start that process, deciding what to offer and who can teach it. He said they are also looking at the Career and Technical programs, trying to see which are good avenues for our students to go into. He said they are looking at how to partner with other schools – Pulaski Tech, UALR. Career and Technical offerings are changing throughout the state.

Legislative Updates – Bill 1810 has been filed and moving through the legislative process. Bills that have gone through Session: Act 247, the requirements for cardiac arrest prevention (coaches and volunteers must have CPR training) and Act 197 provides an avenue for local boards to wave failed background checks for classified employees and not have to continue to renew the process once it has been waved. That employee remains in good standing.

Mrs. Mott said she came to the talent show and she left feeling such a sense of encouragement and excitement. She said it was so well done. The kids are so legitimately talented. She said she thought about the kids on the deaf side and what it could be like and bring together in the future.

Mrs. Smith said their family had been talking about all the activities recently and felt they had more to be involved in on campus. She said to be able to interact with the parents was nice because they don't see each other very often, if at all.

Mrs. Smith asked if the board could be given updates on the grants and things Kevin Lentz is working on. Mrs. Walsh said absolutely. She said grants usually come in waves.

Dr. McAllister asked about the fencing and will look like the fencing on the ASD campus. Mrs. Walsh said yes, and it is built into the budget.

Mrs. Smith asked about the automated gate on the Little Street entrance, if it is still happening. Mrs. Walsh said she understands they are just waiting for things to come in. She said they are also working on card access at ASD with the auto gate on the back side.

Mr. Fagan asked if either of them had heard anything on the project of tearing the overpass down. Mrs. Walsh said it is a Little Rock City project. They are going to connect the bike path because this is the only section that does not have a bike path from Pinnacle Mountain to downtown. Mr. Fagan asked who the director is for our school. No one knew the answer. Mrs. Walsh said she would look into it. She said she thought they needed to get a plan in place on what they wanted to happen. She said the students need additional spaces to practice O&M. Dr. McAllister said as an O&M instructor, in reality they need real life experiences. Mrs. Walsh said she thought it was good for the older kids, but for younger ones that aren't quite ready for that, having practice spaces available here would be good. Dr. McAllister said ASB students must be able to navigate around campus before going off campus.

Mr. Fagan reminded the members of the board workshop on April 15 at noon in the Tornado Shelton and the regular meeting in Woolly at 5:00 pm. He said that the Bill 1810 is coming up maybe Thursday. He asked if they knew what room it would be held in. Mrs. Walsh said as of now it will be in Room 138 and need to be there at 9:45.

Mr. Fagan asked for a motion to adjourn.

25-B-17 Motion to Adjourn

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:20pm.

Robert Fagan, Chair

Cary Smith, Secretary