



MARVELL-ELAINE SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 1870
Marvell, AR 72366
870.829.2101

February 28, 2023

Via certified mail and email

State Board of Education
Four Capitol Mall
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Re: Marvell-Elaine School District Consolidation Plan

Dear State Board of Education:

As you know, on December 8, 2022, the State Board of Education made the decision to close the Marvell-Elaine School District due to the district having fewer than 350 students and being recently moved to Level 5 Intensive Support. Marvell-Elaine currently has 316 students and is due to close at the end of the 2022 – 2023 school year. Almost all of our students are economically disadvantaged.

In preparation for the district closure, our local board held a number of community meetings seeking input from students, parents, and other stakeholders. Almost all of the feedback that we received indicated that the communities want to see all of the students from both the Marvell and Elaine communities merge with the same district. Stakeholders also strongly advocated for a merger plan that was least disruptive to students and families.

At the direction of the Board, I met with superintendents and board members from 8 other school districts. The least disruptive approach would be to merge with the Barton-Lexa School District as it is only 8 miles away from Marvell, and it was the preference of the students, parents, and community members from both Marvell and Elaine. Unfortunately, that district indicated that it was unwilling to accept students from Marvell or Elaine. Although two districts indicated interest in accepting the students from Marvell, none of the districts indicated their willingness to accept students from Elaine.

Currently, 69 students attending our district live in the Elaine Community. Elaine is very remote and already creates significant challenges in delivering an appropriate educational experience to the students. As it stands now, all of the current options that the Board is considering will place an undue burden on our families and significantly disrupt the learning options for our students. Putting it bluntly, breaking up two communities and requiring longer commutes to and from school is not in the best interest of our students.



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It is our understanding that a bill has been filed in the state legislature that could potentially repeal the mandatory district closure. In light of this development, we are requesting that the Department suspend any obligations we may have to finalize a consolidation plan until after the legislature considers the bill. If the Department cannot or will not extend the time, we are requesting assistance from the Department to help us develop a fair and equitable consolidation plan that does not pose an undue hardship on our students and families. As noted above, there are school districts in close proximity to Marvell-Elaine that could easily accept all of our students. Since we have no authority to force a school district to accept our students, we are faced with several bad options for our families. We are respectfully requesting assistance from the Department to help develop a student-focused plan that limits disruption and places students in the best position to succeed.

If you have any thoughts or questions, do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to discussing this matter with you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Katina Ray,
Superintendent

Mr. Clyde Williams,
Board President