

BEFORE THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**Petition to the Arkansas State Board of Education for the Closure of Grades 7-12 to Onsite Learning at the Sparkman Campus, in the Harmony Grove School District, Pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602**

Petitioner, Harmony Grove School District of Ouachita County ("District"), acting by and through the Superintendent and the President of the District's Board of Directors, duly authorized as indicated by their signatures below, and for its petition to the State Board of Education to partially close the Sparkman campus (grades 7-12), hereby submit this petition pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602:

1. The District is located in Ouachita county and serves students on two campus—the Sparkman Campus and the Harmony Grove Campus, both serving grades K-12.
2. The Sparkman School is located at 325 W. Main St., Sparkman AR 71763. Sparkman and its local education agency number is 5205012. The Sparkman Campus is approximately 25 miles from the Harmony Grove Campus.
3. Sparkman Campus had 97 students enrolled during the 2021-22 school year: 57 in grades K-6 and 40 in grades 7-12.
4. On April 26, 2022, the District Board of Directors voted 5-2 to partially close the Sparkman Campus to grades 7-12, relocating those students to onsite learning at the Harmony Grove Campus. Grades K-6 will remain at the Sparkman campus. The District Board of Directors adopted a resolution further outlining its plan at its regular meeting on June 9, 2022.
5. The closure of grades 7-12 at the Sparkman Campus is necessary to adequately provide an appropriate education for the students of the District.
6. The cost of operating the Sparkman Campus is \$1,127,426.52, annually. This is approximately \$11,622.95 per pupil, well over the per pupil state allotment. Enrollment has declined ever year at the Sparkman Campus, from 118 in 2019-20 and 97 in 2020-21.
7. In addition to the high cost of maintaining the Sparkman Campus, the small enrollment greatly limits educational opportunities. All 7-12 students at Sparkman Campus must receive some virtual instruction to obtain core credits, as it is not feasible to have onsite teachers. There is limited live instruction 7-12 grade students, with 9-12 grade students only receiving live instruction in English and math this past year. Everything else was virtual. Students access virtual instruction on campus with the supervision of a classified employee. Instead, Sparkman students desiring onsite instruction are transported to the Harmony Grove Campus.

8. Of the 40 Sparkman Students in grades 7-12 this past year, as many as fifteen traveled to the Harmony Grove Campus as some point in the day for a live class, an extracurricular activity or to attend vocational training.

9. The Sparkman Campus has no extracurricular activities. All Sparkman students who want to participate are transported to the Harmony Grove Campus. It is very common for Sparkman students who begin attending Harmony Grove for extracurricular activities to ultimately transition to the campus full time, where more classes and learning options are available.

10. It is difficult to maintain teachers at the Sparkman Campus because teachers are required to teach numerous courses. For instance, the Sparkman Campus counselor, media center director and principal all teach classes.

11. The Sparkman High School (grades 7-12) is a failing school. It received the following letter grades for recent school years:

2016-2017 D

2017-2018 D

2018-2019 D

No Grade for 2019-2021 because of Covid-19.

12. The Sparkman Campus continues to decrease in enrollment. Many students in the Sparkman zone school-choice to neighboring Arkadelphia School District. For next year, no kindergarteners are registered. Total enrollment at the Sparkman Campus for next year is expected to fall below 80. The trend is clear; Sparkman is losing enrollment and educational services cannot be adequately delivered at the Sparkman Campus.

13. Harmony Grove Campus has sufficient space to hold all Sparkman Campus 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Transporting Sparkman students will be done in a way to minimize inconvenience for the approximately twenty-five minute drive between the campuses. The District will provide transportation to allow Sparkman students to fully participate in all academic and extracurricular programs at the Harmony Grove campus. Two separate bus routes will be provided for Sparkman students to provide transportation from door-to-door as much as possible.

14. The Petitioner submits that closure will not negatively impact the desegregation of any school district in the state, nor any valid court order from a court of proper jurisdiction.

15. The Petitioner submits that for the stated reasons herein the closure of the Sparkman Campus 7-12 grades will be in the best interest of the students of the Harmony Grove School District.


The District requests a hearing before the State Board of Education on this Petition and that following a hearing on this matter, the State Board of Education approve the closure of the Sparkman Campus to onsite learning for 7-12 grades, that those impacted students be transferred to the Harmony Grove for the 2022-23 school year. The Petitioner requests the State Board of

Education issue an Order to do so and that this Order be filed with the County Clerk of Ouachita County.

Dated this 10<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2022.

Sincerely,

Harmony Grove School District

By:   
Albert Snow, Superintendent

By:   
MATT NOT Board President

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*Attorneys for Harmony Grove School  
District*



**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE HARMONY GROVE  
SCHOOL DISTRICT ADOPTED AT THE BOARD'S REGULAR  
MEETING OF JUNE 9, 2022**

WHEREAS, the Board of Education ("Board") of Harmony Grove School District ("District") met in regular session on June 9, 2022 at 6 p.m. in Camden, Arkansas; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of Harmony Grove School District, having consolidated previously under the Public Education Reorganization Act, is subject to the law under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602; and,

WHEREAS, pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602, any isolated school within a receiving district must remain open unless the Board of the resulting or receiving District adopts a motion to close the isolated school or parts thereof; and

WHEREAS, Sparkman High School, is an isolated school district, or part thereof, that consolidated with this District in 2004, and therefore, Harmony Grove, as the receiving District must so move for closure of the Sparkman High School campus; and

WHEREAS, on April 26, 2022, the Board moved for closure of the Sparkman High School campus, and the Board approved the closure by majority vote, but not a unanimous vote; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602(b)(2), because the District did not approve the closure of Sparkman High School by unanimous vote, the District must petition the State Board of Education for approval of the closure; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602(b)(2)(B), the District's Board must request a hearing before the State Board of Education no less than thirty (30) days before a regularly scheduled state Board meeting and file a petition to have the motion reviewed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of Harmony Grove School District, by a vote of 5 to 2, hereby authorizes the District to file a petition with the State Board of Education, to have its motion to close the Sparkman High School campus reviewed and requests the approval of the State Board of Education, so that its students may have improved opportunities.

The Superintendent is directed to immediately provide this resolution to the Arkansas Department of Education.

Dated this 9<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2022.

  
Matthew Nutt, Board President

### CERTIFICATION

I, [NAME], Secretary of the Board of Education of Harmony Grove School District, hereby certify that the above and foregoing resolution was considered and adopted by said board at a regular session on June 9, 2022.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Wendy Nix", is written over a horizontal line.

[name], Board Secretary

Minutes  
Special Board Meeting  
April 26, 2022

The Board President Matthew Nutt called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. All board members were present.

Dr. Snow discussed the enrollment issues at the Sparkman Campus. Mr. Knight had informed Dr. Snow that there were zero kindergarten students registered for the 2022-2023 school year. As of 4/26/22, there were 108 students at the Sparkman Campus. Eleven Seniors are graduating from Sparkman this year. Also, there were three school choice applications to take students out of Sparkman for the '22-'23 school year. This would bring the total enrollment of students at Sparkman to 94. Only 40 students were registered for high school classes. Dr. Snow said that something had to be done due to the fact of having zero students enrolled for Kindergarten and the low number of high school students. His proposal was to move the high school students to the Harmony Grove Campus. Three teachers had requested to be transferred from the Sparkman Campus to the Harmony Grove Campus. Also, one other teacher and a classified employee would be transferred to the Harmony Grove Campus. Dr. Snow also informed the board that there was the threat of a law suit over this move and that no employee would lose a job.

Mr. Mock, the Harmony Grove High School principal discussed how the scores of the Sparkman High School had declined over the last five years.

Three people spoke against the moving of the Sparkman High School students to the Harmony Grove Campus. These were two parents, Mr. Harmon and Ms. Buck and a student Todd Jacobs.

Heather Johnson, a teacher from Harmony Grove, spoke about how students received a good education at the Harmony Grove Campus.

Ty Turner, a Harmony Grove parent, spoke against anyone bringing suit against the district.

Dr. Snow asked for a motion to approve the move of the Sparkman High School students to the Harmony Grove campus for the '22-'23 school year and to transfer Rayanne Thomason and Angie Jones to the Harmony Grove Campus. Ms. Thomason will teach Elementary PE and Ms. Jones will become the nurse secretary at Harmony Grove. A motion was made by Chris Garcia and seconded by Wendi Nix to transfer the Sparkman High School students to Harmony Grove High School and transfer Rayanne Thomason and Angie Jones to the Harmony Grove Campus. The motion passed 5-2. Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Lea voting against.

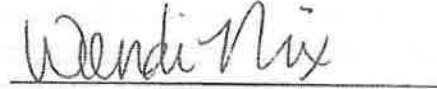
Dr. Snow made a recommendation to hire Amy Hallman at HGES, Christina Covington at HGES, and Samantha McCarroll at HGHS. A motion was made to approve these hires by Chris Garcia, and seconded by Jerry Wilson. A motion passed 5-2 with Paulette Sullivan and Brenda Lea voting against.

Dr. Snow made a recommendation to accept the resignations of Holly Ricker at Sparkman and Devonda Moore at HGES. A motion was made by Brenda Lea and seconded by Jeremy Anderson to accept these resignations. The motion carried 7-0.

A motion to adjourn was made by Chris Garcia and seconded by Jeremy Anderson at 7:19 PM. The motion carried 7-0.



President, Board of Education



Secretary, Board of Education