



## DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

# 2021 District Conversion Public Charter School Application

**Batesville Junior High Charter**

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Name of Proposed Charter

**Initial Application - Deadline July 1, 2021, at 5:00 p.m.**  
Applications will not be accepted after this time.

**Final Application - Deadline September 10, 2021, at 5:00 p.m.**  
Applications will not be accepted after this time.

Any application that is substantially incomplete will not be forwarded to the authorizer for consideration. An application will be considered substantially incomplete if it does not provide enough information to enable staff at the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide a meaningful review.

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Charter School Office  
Four Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201  
501-683-5312

|   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Name of Proposed Charter:</b>        | <b>Batesville Junior High Charter</b> |
| <b>School District:</b>                 | <b>Batesville School District</b>     |
| <b>Superintendent:</b>                  | <b>Dr. Michael Hester</b>             |
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**1. Describe the public hearing which was held for the purpose of assessing support for the establishment of this public charter school. Include the number of attendees and the feedback and/or public comments that were received.**

The public hearing for the BJHS conversion charter was held on June 1, 2021. It was advertised in the Batesville Guard on May 7, 2021, and thereafter each week in May. The public hearing was also advertised on social media and through our Remind communication tool. This meeting was in person and also offered virtually. Sixteen people attended the public hearing in person. The public hearing was recorded and also shared with stakeholders with a question submission form. Through social media outlets 2,727 people were reached. A team of teachers presented the conversion charter goals and extended opportunities for students. No questions were posed the night of the public hearing, and all feedback was positive. Many expressed, in particular, the student-advisory panel offered valuable feedback and were very excited about some of the potential opportunities that would be offered in the future. Pioneer Virtual Academy is the virtual option that has been approved for Batesville School District through ADE: DESE's digital learning plan. Since this is a complete building conversion charter, this virtual component would be a part of the conversion charter for BJHS.

**2. Describe the educational need for the charter. Include quantitative data related to academic achievement.**

The Batesville Junior High School Conversion Charter will expand learning opportunities for students by allowing them to explore their interests in junior high, investigate career learning opportunities to grow their interests, and create community connections that will expand the local workforce and increase the economic success of the community and Independence County. BJHS conversion is a district conversion charter for the junior high campus.

**Data :**

According to the most recent United States Census data, Batesville is the second oldest municipality and the oldest city in Arkansas covering almost 12 square miles. In the Batesville area, 26.3% of the eligible workforce have earned advanced degrees while 83.5% of the workforce have a high school diploma or less. Approximately 17.4% of individuals live in poverty which is 5.8% above the national average of 11.8%. When comparing the average income from 2018 Batesville was \$26,274 and the national income was \$32,621. The largest employer in Independence County is White River Medical Center which is one reason there is an increased demand for the Batesville community to grow the local workforce and to expand job opportunities. Batesville School District (BSD) is a focal point in the community and additional educational support can grow students academically while growing the community workforce, this charter will open doors to expand the local workforce leading to a decrease in the poverty rate. Collaboration between schools and business organizations will promote student success, maximize financial and human resources, and advance essential competencies to impact students in school and the future.

BSD comprises six schools and a preschool program with approximately 3,100 students in the K-12 settings. BSD has three K-5 elementary schools, a junior high school, and a high school. Batesville Junior High School (BJHS) serves students in grades 6-8 and is the feeder program to the high school. BJHS has an enrollment of 762 students and is the only school that feeds

into Batesville Charter High School in the Batesville School District located in Independence County.

BJHS, 2020-2021 data from the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) Data Center website reflects the school's poverty rate is 52%, English Learners make up 13.7%, and the number of students eligible to receive special education services is 13.6%.

In examining the data in My School Info for BJHS, the following was found:

2016-17 School Year: BJHS Public School Rating was designated a C letter grade with an Overall ESSA School Index being 71.37 with the State Average being 72.59; the BJHS ESSA School Index Weighted Achievement score was 63.02 with the State Average being 69.15; the BJHS Value Added Growth Score was 79.4 with the State Average being 80.4. These data indicate that BJHS needed improvement in achievement and growth.

The BJHS staff believes the involvement and input of parents, guardians, and members of the community are central to student success. BJHS is a Community School Model School, which takes an integrated approach to meet the needs of the whole child. Batesville and Independence County parents and community members have long-supported the schools programs. BJHS seeks to engage parents, guardians, and community members from the onset to express our desire to work together for the development of BJHS students. The school will host parent/guardian nights in the weeks leading up to the first day of classes with an open house to help inform parents and pursue involvement in the development of school programs. The school will provide the services of an interpreter for English-Spanish speaking parents/guardians and additional paraprofessionals support from the English Language Learner (ELL) program. Emphasis will be placed on the mission statement of BJHS with Students First Everyday: Academically, Socially, and Mentally. The parents/guardians will have access to the superintendent's monthly newsletter, Souped Up! where they will be informed of the many student activities offered and highlights of parents and community members involved with students in activities and projects.

BJHS will work with White River Medical Center, ARCare, and other health care entities to develop medical pathway exploration opportunities. Through Impact Independence County, the district also participates in community collaborative groups including: Healthy Living & Well-Being Hub, Economic Prosperity, Tourism, and Education. The President/CEO of the Batesville Area Chamber of Commerce, Crystal Johnson, will participate as a community member and liaison for BJHS. The goal of BJHS is to continue to have regular campus visits from parents/guardians and community members who are experts in their respective skilled trade areas, emphasizing the Pioneer pathways of medical, STEAM, and digital media. These interactions will increase the exposure students have to the vast and unique skills available allowing for a deeper exploration of career pathways.

2017-18 School Year: BJHS Public School Rating was a B with an Overall ESSA School Index being 70.7 with the State Average being 69.97; the BJHS ESSA School Index Weighted Achievement score was 60.94 with the State Average being 61.72; the BJHS Value Added Growth Score was 79.71 with the State Average being 80.54;

2018-19 School Year: BJHS Public School Rating was a C with an Overall ESSA School Index being 68.46 with the State Average being 70.16 ; the BJHS ESSA School Index

Weighted Achievement score was 61.81 with the State Average being 61.87; the BJHS Value Added Growth Score was 78.18 with the State Average being 80.79;

Each year the math, science and English departments disaggregate the American College Test (ACT) Aspire and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) data by department to determine areas that are in need of improvement. Each department identifies areas of focus and a plan is developed by the teachers to work to improve in those areas. Through this process, one targeted area for improvement are students reading assessment results. As ELA data was reviewed, it became clear that the reading component of the ELA composite was being compromised by students' reading performance.

Enrollment at BJHS has steadily increased over the past six years. In August 2015, BJHS had an enrollment of approximately 660 students and the projected enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year will be over 770 students. This is almost a 17% increase over six years.

The demographics of BJHS is changing. During the 2016-17 school year the total enrollment was approximately 679 students. BJHS was 15.2% Hispanic/Latino, 5.3% African American, and 74.3 % White. At that time, 50% of the students were low income students, 10% of the students were eligible to receive Special Education services and 12% of the students were identified as ELL. During the 2019-20 school year the total enrollment was approximately 745 students. Of those students 21.5% were Hispanic/Latino, 6.6% were African American, and 68.7% were White. Also 55% of the students were low income, 14% qualified for Special Education services and 12% were identified as ELLs. Next school year (2020-21), BJHS is projected to have an enrollment of 770 based on the current Batesville School District enrollment figures. BJHS continues to grow in population and diversity including the number of students who qualify for free and reduced meals..

### SCHOOL INFORMATION

|                             | 2022-2023   | 2023-2024   | 2024-2025   | 2025-2026   | 2026-2027   |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Grades to be Offered</b> | <b>6-8</b>  | <b>6-8</b>  | <b>6-8</b>  | <b>6-8</b>  | <b>6-8</b>  |
| <b>Enrollment Cap</b>       | <b>1000</b> | <b>1000</b> | <b>1000</b> | <b>1000</b> | <b>1000</b> |

### 3. What type of educational model will the school follow?

- Traditional
- 100% Virtual
- College Prep
- Credit Recovery/ALE

Other: The educational model will be primarily traditional with a blended approach and flexibility for a virtual/remote option for Pioneer Virtual Academy.

**4. Provide the mission statement of the proposed charter school:**

Students First Everyday: Academically, Socially, and Mentally. Developing well rounded students to succeed in the world of today and tomorrow.

**5. Provide a list and brief description of the programmatic features that the school will implement in order to accomplish the mission.**

Batesville Junior High School administrators began conversations with the students, families, staff, and community members to find ways to support students to become well rounded individuals who could face the world of today and tomorrow. Based on the collective feedback, BJHS leadership designed a building-wide conversion charter plan to address student opportunities called Pioneer Pathways that put students first everyday by focusing on academic, social, and mental excellence. These three areas: academic, social, and mental excellence, will be the campus -wide charter focus for the conversion charter. The Pioneer Pathways offer students the opportunity to explore their future through science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM), digital media, and medical pathways that will help students transition to Batesville Charter High School Pioneer Academies. Student interest surveys will be used to expand Explore course offerings.

**Academic Excellence**

Student success relies on schools moving toward a model of preparing students for additional education and training after high school. To accomplish this, expanded academic options at the junior high level is key to prepare students. The Batesville Junior High School (BJHS) charter will provide students the opportunity to explore introductory electives that connect to Batesville Charter High School Pioneer Academies. BJHS will accomplish this by embedding courses into existing classes to allow students access to other electives they could not previously experience without the model. Arkansas History would be embedded in 7th and 8th grade history. We plan to embed health into physical education at grades 6-8. BJHS is also considering embedding a performing art credit in English for grade 7 or grade 8. The district plans to submit course approvals for any embedded course through the ADE: DESE course approval system for approval prior to the charter beginning in 2022. These new electives will focus on STEAM, digital media, graphic design, and medical pathways. Students will be given the opportunity to take advanced courses in math, English, science, history, and visual arts with a future potential to earn early high school credits. Additionally, students will have flexible scheduling options to further personalize their educational experience to best meet their needs for their Pioneer Pathway experience. Along with Pioneer Pathways, BJHS proposes a virtual learning experience for students who require options in public education. Batesville Junior High Pioneer Virtual Academy will provide a public education option to students who learn best in a self-paced learning environment.

### **Social Excellence**

Batesville Junior High School (BJHS) will implement current and new programs starting in sixth grade to help students become well rounded to successfully navigate the world of today and tomorrow. These programs will help bridge the skill gap between elementary and high school social development so students can be more successful throughout their Pioneer Pathways. The conversion charter model will offer programs like, Leader in Me, that will be implemented campus wide to create a culture of trust and engagement while empowering students to lead their own lives through making a difference in others. The Leader in Me is an effective program that changes a child's future by helping him/her learn to manage priorities, focus on goals, and be a positive influence. As a district conversion charter, the entire campus population will have a focus on creating and empowering students to become leaders in their school community. Leader in Me unites students, staff, and families around a common goal to prepare students with college, career, and life readiness skills that are necessary to thrive in today's ever-changing, fast-paced environment. BJHS will provide students with the tools to achieve these goals and develop student voice and choice. Leaders in the community will also partner with certain disciplines to build the student's social experience throughout their junior high pathway

### **Mental Excellence**

The Batesville Junior High School (BJHS) staff will receive professional development to promote students' mental, physical, and emotional well being. . All staff will be Mental Health First Aid certified to support students. Furthermore, BJHS will offer a full-time behavioral interventionist and provide school-based mental health services to students. Through the district community schools model, additional services to meet the physical and emotional needs of students will be offered. Cyber safety and life skill courses will be embedded and offered to all students throughout their academic career at Batesville Junior High. This will include an experience in the Principal's Council that will give students a voice in their educational experiences.

Through this new charter model, BJHS school will become the best junior high school in the area by following the mission to provide an exceptional educational experience for our students. Students and staff will focus on continued excellence academically, socially, and mentally.

## **6. Describe a plan for school improvement that addresses how the conversion charter school will improve student learning and meet the state educational goals.**

School improvement leadership teams that encompass all stakeholder groups will meet biweekly to discuss the implementation of the charter goals and school improvement plans. Building leaders will also discuss improvements with Community School Model Site Teams, and Parent and Family Engagement Teams. Student learning goals and state educational goals will be monitored through Professional Learning Communities, Response to Intervention, and Care and Data Consults. School improvement goals focus on

literacy/reading, math, career exploration, executive function skills, digital citizenship, and communication. This includes support and acceleration options for families. The teams review data and evidence in each of these goal areas to determine what action steps need to be added to the school improvement plan.

The purpose of the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability System is to ensure all children have access to opportunities for a high quality education and to make progress in closing achievement gaps. Arkansas's accountability system, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), has four components, Weighted Achievement, School Value Added Growth, School Quality and Student Success (SQSS). The most up to date ESSA data is the 2018-2019 scores. BJHS earned an overall score of 68.46 (C). To earn a B, a score of 69.94 will need to be achieved. The goal is to not only earn a score of B, it is to surpass the score and earn a score of 75.59 or higher which is an A. The Pioneer Pathways will provide experiences that connect students to their learning thus increasing student achievement, students growth, and attendance. This will ultimately lead to an increased ESSA score.

The BJHS charter will provide classroom opportunities for students to learn how to self assess socially and academically. Hattie's (2020) research states that self efficacy has an effect size of .92. This is one of the highest factors related to student achievement. Students taking ownership in their learning will also assist in growing the baseline data for Batesville High School's ESSA score. Students at an early age will learn to self assess, establish learning and career goals and begin earning high school credits in 8th grade. The high school will be able to ensure students are on track to earn ontime credits, community service learning, and graduate with all necessary requirements.

Student success plans and collaborating with parents will be instrumental for student success. These opportunities will drive conversations to connect students to their learning and to future careers. When families are connected and when students guide the conference, students take ownership of their learning. The BJHS charter will have a positive impact on students and the community they serve.

**7. Describe how the licensed employees and parents of the students to be enrolled in the conversion public charter school will be involved in developing and implementing the school improvement plan and identifying performance criteria.**

BJHS has active Community School Site Teams, a Parent & Family Engagement Team, and a BJHS Charter Leadership Team that is composed of multiple staff members, parents, and community stakeholders. These different stakeholders can significantly improve a students educational environment if they collaborate and share their ideas, goals, and plans. Additionally, student panel discussions will be used to gather student input on the charter application. The building principal will conduct regular meetings with the Principal's Council of student leaders to provide input, ideas, student opportunities, and school improvement planning. These teams meet on a regular basis to review school goals and objectives, which include the school improvement plan and local data. The building leadership will seek input



for staff, parents, and students through needs assessments and surveys.

Building leadership consulted with students to discuss the goals and planning for a conversion charter at BJHS for the last two years. Students expressed interest in accelerated coursework, student tutoring opportunities, and were excited about the possibilities of earning early high school credit to allow more options for electives and Pioneer Academies at Batesville Charter High School.

**8. Describe how the concerns of licensed employees and parents of students enrolled in the conversion charter school will be solicited and addressed in evaluating the effectiveness of the improvement plan.**

At BJHS, the involvement and input of employees, parents, guardians, and members of the community are central to the success of our students. Batesville and Independence County parents and community members have long supported the educational system. BJHS has an active Community School Site Team, Parent and Family Engagement Team, and BJHS Charter Leadership Team. We seek to engage parents, guardians, and community members to work together for the development of the students of BJHS.

BJHS will solicit feedback from committee members each semester throughout the improvement plan process. In addition, each team member will gather feedback from the community, parents, and employees concerning the progress BJHS is making and areas for improvement. Educators will host parent/guardian nights for each grade level leading up to the first day of classes to help parents to be aware of and pursue involvement in the development of school programs. If and when needed, the school will provide the services of an interpreter for non-English speaking parents/guardians and our paraprofessionals from the district ESOL program.

Partnerships and feedback from parents/guardians and community members to develop Pioneer Pathways. Feedback will also be gathered from various community partners to develop pathways related to STEAM, computer science, and medical pathways that align with the BHS Charter. The President/CEO of the Batesville Area Chamber of Commerce, Crystal Johnson, will participate as a community member and liaison for BJHS. The goal at BJHS is to continue to have parents/guardians and community members, who are experts in their respective skilled-trade areas, emphasizing the Pioneer Pathways of medical, STEAM, and digital media, on campus to increase the exposure our students have to the vast and unique skills available. These partners will also provide suggestions and feedback to improve and further the education and opportunities of students.

In addition, BJHS will utilize their annual Community School Model Survey to gather feedback and input from all stakeholder groups. The Community School Site Leadership will evaluate survey feedback and input annually.

**9. Establish performance criteria that will be used to measure the school’s progress in improving student learning and meeting or exceeding the state educational goals. The mission of the school should be reflected in the performance criteria.**

| <b>Goal</b>  | <b>Measuring Instrument</b>  |
|--|--|
| Increase, from the previous year, the number of students who score ready or exceeding in reading by five percent annually.   | ACT Aspire & Reading Plus  |
| Increase, from the previous year, the number of students who will score ready or exceeding in math by three percent annually.  | ACT Aspire   |
| Increase, from the previous year, the number of students who will score ready or exceeding in science by five percent annually.                                      | ACT Aspire   |
| 100% of students will complete one exploratory class per year.   | COGNOS   |
| Students will enroll in embedded courses to access additional classes in high school with a starting baseline of 30 percent and increase each year by three percent. | Master Schedule<br>Counseling Partnerships<br>Student Led Conferences<br>Community Schools Family Engagement |

# CURRICULUM

**10. Will the school provide the required courses as outlined in the Standards for Accreditation and the 38 Required High School Course Offerings? If not, explain what changes will be made. What additional electives will be offered?**

Batesville Junior High School will provide the required courses as outlined in Standards for Accreditation.

**6th Grade Requirements:**

English 6 or Accelerated English 6 (both with embedded performing art credit)

Literacy 6

Math 6 or Accelerated Math 6

Science 6 or Accelerated Science 6

Social Studies 6

\*Physical Education

Health

Visual Art

Performing Art

\*Embedded health credit in Physical Education, Band, and Choir

**6th Grade Electives:**

\*Band

\*Choir

EAST

STEAM

Strings

Art Elective

Office Tech Skills

Life Skills

Computer Science

**7th Grade Requirements:**

English 7 or Accelerated English 7 (both with embedded fine art credit)

Math 7 or Accelerated Math 7

Science 7 Accelerated Science 7

Social Studies 7 (Embedded AR History Standards)

Arkansas History

Keycode

\*Physical Education

Health

Visual Art

Music

Reading

\*Embedded health credit in Physical Education, Band, and Choir

**7th Grade Electives:**

\*Band  
\*Girls + Boys Athletics  
\*Choir  
EAST + EAST Media  
Strings  
Engineering  
Computer Science  
Visual Art  
Performing Art  
Graphic Design  
STEAM  
Tools for Learning

**8th Grade Requirements:**

English 8 or Accelerated English 8 (both with embedded fine art credit)  
Math 8 or Algebra I  
Science 8 or Accelerated Science 8  
Social Studies 8 (Embedded AR History Standards)  
Careers  
Exploring Business Applications  
\*Physical Education  
Health  
Visual Art  
Music  
\*Embedded health credit in Physical Education, Band, and Choir - The physical education, band, and choir teachers will ensure the health units are taught within the scope and sequence of year-long courses.

**8th Grade Electives:**

\*Band  
Girls + Boys Athletics  
\*Choir  
Strings  
Visual Art  
Engineering  
Computer Science  
Agriculture  
Family and Consumer Science (FACS)  
Personal Finance  
EAST + EAST Media  
Cheer + Dance  
Theater  
Reading  
Tools for Learning

**11. Describe the process that will be used to ensure all curriculum materials used in the educational program are aligned with the Arkansas Academic Standards?**

The building leadership team in conjunction with content area teams will review the curriculum weekly to ensure alignment to the Arkansas Academic Standards. Furthermore, embedded courses will include the standards for both courses. Curriculum guides will be used to ensure content delivery for clear resources for teachers.

The BJHS staff is RISE trained and administrators will ensure the campus meets all requirements with regard to the science of reading.

Any purchased material will align with the Division of Elementary and Secondary (DESE) rules and expectations..

**STUDENT SERVICES**

**12. Describe how the school will provide guidance and counseling services for all students.**

Batesville Junior High's 750+ students in grades 6-8 will continue to have access to two full-time counselors and one full-time behavioral interventionist who will provide direct academic, social, and emotional support services. Along with individual and small group counseling, the counselors and interventionist will continue to provide whole-group student services in a classroom setting, guiding students in developing successful life skills, discovering career interests and pathways, and learning personal safety. Even further, BJHS's guidance program will continue to develop partnerships with community agencies to meet students' needs. For example, BJHS currently has partnerships with The Pointe Outpatient Behavioral Health Services for students' mental health services; The Children's Advocacy Center educational services for teaching Teen Safety Matters; and Lyon College's APPLE Project Upward Bound program that provides disadvantaged students, beginning in 8th grade, the academic support and guidance to become first-generation college graduates. BJHS continues to have a growing, increasingly diverse population of students, and approval of the proposed charter would greatly expand the guidance program's ability to meet the diverse needs of all students.

Additional academic guidance will occur during spring of 2021. Information about the pathways will be outlined with future job opportunities included. Parent and family engagement is critical. Early communication about the multiple pathways will offer parents important insight into their child's education.

The district will provide professional development for administrators, teachers, and staff regarding the coordination and implementation of the pathways and course offerings. This will allow for coordinated school efforts when discussing and supporting students and their families.

**13. Describe how the school will provide library media services for all students.**

The media center will continue to support flexible and customized learning for each student. The media center currently offers a wide range of options for students to access and utilize media center services. Not only will students continue to have access to hundreds of online, paperback, and hardback texts on campus, they will also have access to thousands of digital and audio texts through a continued partnership with the Independence County Library. These services provide access to texts within and beyond the traditional school day and increase access to texts for a vast variety of individualized student interests. It would also permit the media specialist to expand their traditional role and duties to better assist and support student needs. Our goal is to provide the skills and desire to empower the 21st century student. The library media specialist will still have adequate time to address all library media academic standards.

**14. Describe how the school will provide special education services for all students.**

The Batesville Junior High School (BJHS) conversion charter will ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to the charter school and are provided a high-quality education supported with services deemed appropriate and necessary by federal guidelines. If the student qualifies for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), then an IEP will be developed to ensure that the student who has a disability identified under the law will be properly accommodated by every teacher. If a student qualifies for a 504 plan, modification and accommodation will be provided in accordance to all applicable state and federal laws. BJHS will comply with all state and federal special education regulations and laws.

Students who receive support through special education services will have the same opportunity as other students to select their individual Pioneer Pathway that supports their interests and needs. Students will be provided the opportunity to explore different careers and courses to provide higher-order learning and develop students' critical thinking skills. Batesville Junior High Charter School will provide the necessary interventions and enrichment activities to all students.

**15. Describe how the school will provide dyslexia screening and services for all students.**

Batesville Junior High School (BJHS) has multiple teachers with certification in dyslexia services to help identify students in need of services. Expertly trained BJHS staff are capable of administering Level I and Level II Dyslexia Screeners. If a student screener indicates the characteristics of Dyslexia, the teacher certified in Dyslexia interventions will collaborate with the appropriate staff to develop a Response to Intervention (RTI) plan reflective of the student's needs. In the event that Dyslexia intervention services are required based on Level II screened results, parents/guardians will be provided with appropriate information and may request an independent, comprehensive Dyslexia evaluation. Dyslexia interventions meet the protocol of the district-adopted Dyslexia intervention program, Phonics First. Phonics First is provided with fidelity to all students with Characteristics of Dyslexia. Intervention is provided for a minimum of 30 minutes each day, at least three times per week for a minimum of 90 minutes weekly. Students are placed in small groups according to skill-related needs. Intervention is provided in the special education classroom, reading classroom, or online through video conferencing.

**16. Describe how the school will provide screening and instruction for English Language Learners.**

The Batesville Junior High School (BJHS) conversion charter will provide instruction for beginning English Language Learners (ELL) in speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, citizenship, and workplace language skills designed to accommodate any language ability. A student qualifies for English as a second language (ESOL) services if English is their second language, or if English is not the primary language spoken at home. An ELL takes the ELPA21 screener test before they are accurately placed in the program. The screener tests students' proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English. Once the initial screener has been taken and the results are analyzed, the student is placed in an appropriate ESOL class. A qualifying ELL student must score proficient and demonstrate proficiency through other evidence, then they may exit the program. Students who have been in the United States less than three years are considered recent immigrants. Recent immigrant students are placed in an ESOL English class so they can be provided the additional instruction they need to learn English. Each year all ELL take the summative ELPA21 test to determine the level of proficiency they have achieved. Students can score in the range of 1-5 in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. If a student has all 4s and 5s, they are considered proficient and can exit the program the following school year. After exiting the program, students will continue to be closely monitored for four years.

Each ELL has an Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) which, based on a set of criteria, recommends accommodations and modifications for the classroom and for standardized tests. These supports are then followed by the student's teachers to ensure grade level academic achievement standards are being met as students learn English.

Students continue to receive ESOL services from their classroom teachers and support from their ESOL teacher.



**17. Describe how the school will address the needs of gifted and talented students.**

Batesville Junior High School (BJHS) will continue to provide exemplary educational opportunities to challenge and encourage growth for qualified gifted and talented students, under the conversion charter waiver, all BJHS students will be provided the opportunity to pursue their talents and interests, and be encouraged to challenge themselves with high-level classes and experiences. The conversion charter waiver will ensure that resources that have been reserved for a select group of students in the past will be available to everyone. Unit plans designed by teachers will include high levels of interaction and enriching, project-based activities to challenge students to think about big ideas and the application of new knowledge. All students will receive equal opportunity to advance their learning, engagement, and academic confidence through the practices of meta-cognition and shared learning experiences. Furthermore, all students will receive additional opportunities for enrichment in the form of advanced course offerings in math, history, science, English, and visual arts. Gifted and talented students will be encouraged to take full advantage of these advanced course sequences as they provide a rigorous and rewarding learning environment and, in some cases, allow students to achieve high school credit prior to entering Batesville Charter High School.

**18. Describe how food services will be provided for students.**

The school district will continue to participate in the National School Lunch Program. The district currently contracts with OPAA food management to deliver food services for BJHS.

**SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS**

**19. Describe the student recruitment process and timeline that will provide an equal opportunity for all parents and students to learn about and apply for admission to the proposed public charter school.**

Batesville Junior High School (BJHS) will remain the only source of instruction for students in grades six, seven, and eight. Educators are required to educate every eligible student who seeks admission, including students who enroll by legal transfer or school choice. Historic data and growth projections assist in setting an enrollment cap of 1000. However, if future growth nears the enrollment cap, BSD would petition to request an increase in the enrollment cap through the charter amendment process.

**20. Describe the facility where the school will be located.**

Current Batesville Junior High School facilities will be used for school conversion charter.

## WAIVERS

Complete the following tables indicating all sections of Title 6 of the Arkansas Code Annotated, the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education rules, and the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts from which the public charter school seeks to be exempted in order to meet the goals of the school.

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Waiver #1 Topic</b>            | Flexible Schedule <b>Digital Learning Plan Waiver</b> Approved 6/28/21   |
| <b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>    | Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-102  |
| <b>Standard for Accreditation</b> |  |
| <b>ADE Rules</b>                  |  |
| <b>Rationale for Waiver</b>       | <p>This waiver will be utilized to allow students to learn asynchronously. There will be scheduled times to log in to Google Meetings and attendance will be monitored and recorded in scheduled meetings. Teachers will schedule synchronous Google Meets to provide instruction daily, however, the Google Meet will not last the entire school day. So, there will be asynchronous assignments for the student to complete independently. The PVA virtual students will not be expected to stay logged into a Chromebook for the full 6 hours. They will have assignments that can be completed independently. Remote students in grades 6-12 will be expected to log into each class daily via Google Meet, however, there may be times the teacher assigns asynchronous independent assignments.</p> <p>The school day must be in session for six hours and students receive instruction for six hours. Students enrolled in the schools Pioneer Virtual Academy, which is the schools digital learning option, taking an asynchronous class may not need the daily required time if they are able to demonstrate mastery of course content through required standards.</p> |

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Waiver #2 Topic</b>            | Teacher Licensure   |
| <b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>    | Ark. Code. Ann. §6-15-1004; §6-17-309; §6-17-401; §6-17-902; §6-17-919; §6-17-301 |
| <b>Standard for Accreditation</b> | 4-D.1; 4-F.1  |
| <b>ADE Rules</b>                  | Educator Licensure Section 7 (Non-core classes only)                              |
| <b>Rationale for Waiver</b>       | Ensuring students are college and/or career ready may                             |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>necessitate partnering with instructors who are not licensed K-12 educators. The goal of an increase in students each year who are college and career ready will require instruction in specialized areas not traditionally covered by K-12 licensure. Independence County has two institutions of higher learning and BJHS seeks the opportunity to utilize instructors from UACCB, Lyon College, or community experts to provide instruction to students.</p> <p>The request would allow BJHS to employ professionals from the community who are degreed and highly qualified in their career to provide instruction even if they do not possess an Arkansas Teaching License. BJHS would ensure any staff members hired as a result of the waiver meet the requirements of Arkansas Qualified Teacher and have successful completion of criminal background checks.</p> <p>The district has held ACT 1240 licensure waivers for the past 5 years and seeks licensure paths available through ADE: DESE whenever possible. The district has spoken with the licensure unit about the available paths for licensure.</p> <p>The waiver for librarians would allow the school to consider candidates who are otherwise qualified in those specific areas that may not hold an Arkansas teaching license.</p> |
|--|---|

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Waiver #3 Topic</b>            | Gifted and Talented  |
| <b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>    | Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-20-2208(c)(6); §6-42-109   |
| <b>Standard for Accreditation</b> | 2-G.1  |
| <b>ADE Rules</b>                  | Gifted and Talented Program Approval Standards   |
| <b>Rationale for Waiver</b>       | <p>BJHS understands a waiver of gifted and talented (GT) does not exempt the requirement of gifted and talented offerings for students. Instead, BJHS views this waiver as an opportunity to personalize each student's pathway and implement methods that allow each student to reach maximum potential through accessing gifted and talented experiences through their coursework. Traditional advanced courses and high school credit classes will continue to be offered to gifted and talented students and other BJHS students. In addition, students also have the opportunity to take classes in robotics, EAST, computer science, and participate in GT recognized activities, such as, Mock Trials, Quiz Bowl, Robotics, and Destination Imagination/Odyssey of the Mind. This charter waiver will allow</p> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | the school to redefine the gifted experience to provide enrichment and personalized courses and learning to all students instead of a small identified subpopulation. |
|--|---|

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Waiver #4 Topic</b>            | Library Media Specialist  |
| <b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>    | §6-25-103, §6-25-104  |
| <b>Standard for Accreditation</b> | 4-F.1, 4-F.2  |
| <b>ADE Rules</b>                  |   |
| <b>Rationale for Waiver</b>       | <p>The library is the hub where technology and learning occur and connect students to their learning. The librarian is a leader in our web-based culture and assists in Personal Pioneer Pathways and will serve as the Instructional Technology Contact (ITC). As such, she will oversee technology interns in the media center to implement the web-based culture at BJHS.</p> <p>As students explore Pioneer Pathways, personnel will shift to provide a learning environment that is open and flexible for all students to access. This additional flexibility will allow the media center to be a hub for technology and learning and serve as a support space for student learning and success.</p> |

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Waiver #5 Topic</b>            | Attendance - <b>Digital Learning Plan Waiver</b> Approved 6/28/21   |
| <b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>    | 6-18-213(a)(2)  |
| <b>Standard for Accreditation</b> |   |
| <b>ADE Rules</b>                  |   |
| <b>Rationale for Waiver</b>       | This waiver will be utilized to allow students to learn asynchronously. There will be scheduled times to log in to Google Meetings and attendance will be monitored and recorded in scheduled meetings. Attendance will be taken and recorded daily in eschool. |

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Waiver #6 Topic</b>            | Six Hour Instructional Day (Waiver applies to virtual/remote students only) <b>Digital Learning Plan Waiver</b> Approved 6/28/21 |
| <b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>    | 6-16-126; 6-16-102   |
| <b>Standard for Accreditation</b> | 1-A.4.2  |

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>ADE Rules</b>            |  |
| <b>Rationale for Waiver</b> | This waiver will be utilized to allow students to learn asynchronously. There may be scheduled times to log in to Google Meetings and attendance will be monitored and recorded when meetings are scheduled. Additionally, students taking an asynchronous class may not need the daily required time to demonstrate mastery of the standards. |

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Waiver #7 Topic</b>            | Clock Hours <b>Digital Learning Plan Waiver</b> Approved 6/28/21  |
| <b>Arkansas Code Annotated</b>    | 1-A.2   |
| <b>Standard for Accreditation</b> |   |
| <b>ADE Rules</b>                  |   |
| <b>Rationale for Waiver</b>       | This waiver will be utilized to allow students to learn asynchronously. There will be scheduled times to log in to Google Meetings and attendance will be monitored and recorded in scheduled meetings. Additionally, students taking an asynchronous class may not need the daily required time to demonstrate mastery of the standards. |

## REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AGENDA



|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>Scott Fredricks</b> - Pres. (AL - 2022)  | <b>Chris Milum</b> (D1 - 2021) |
| <b>Josh Swinea</b> - V.P. (D4 - 2025)       | <b>Kathy West</b> (D2 - 2023)  |
| <b>Heather Fulbright</b> - Sec. (D3 - 2021) | <b>Linda Latus</b> (D5 - 2024) |
| <b>Wesley Beal</b> - LL (AL - 2024)         |                                |

**Dr. Michael Hester, Superintendent**

**DATE:** June 14, 2021

**REGULAR MEETING:** 5:30 P.M. DAC or [Google Meet](#)

.....

In order to ensure an orderly and productive meeting, the Board of Directors of the Batesville School District will follow Board Policy 1.14.

**A. PRELIMINARY MEETING:**

Board President Scott Fredricks called the meeting to order at **5:30** p.m. and welcomed all in attendance. Director West led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Members Present

Scott Fredricks, President  
Josh Swinea, Vice President  
Heather Fulbright, Secretary  
Wesley Beal, Director- (Present virtually)  
Kathy West, Director

Administration Present

Dr. Michael Hester, Superintendent  
Jennifer Douglas, Asst. Superintendent

**2020-21 BOE Mtgs: 7-20; 8-17; 9-14; 10-19; 11-16; 12-14; 1-25; 2-22; 3-15; 4-19; 5-17; 6-14; 7-19**

## Minutes- Regular Meeting - June 14, 2021

David Campbell, Asst. Superintendent  
Byron Difani, Eagle Mountain Principal  
Tina Baker, Administrative Dean  
Dustin Rose, Sulphur Rock Principal  
Stacey Lindsey, BHS Principal  
Stephen Robertson, BHS Assistant Principal  
Matt Douglas, BJHS Principal  
Danny Daniels, BJHS Assistant Principal  
Michelle Puckett, Preschool Director  
Kristi Cox, SpEd Director  
Frank Drye, Maintenance Director  
Glenda Haley, Food Services Director  
Cheston Cooper, IT Director  
Pam Gipson, District Treasurer  
Marissa Hernandez, Board Clerk

Media Present  
Bruce Guthrie

### **B. PROCEDURAL MATTERS: Organizational Meeting**

1. Extend welcome to guests: Director Fredricks
2. Pledge of Allegiance: Kathy West
3. Approval of Regular Agenda

#### Addendums and Deletions

Director Fulbright made the motion to approve the regular agenda. Director West seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

### **C. RECOGNITIONS AND PRESENTATION**

1. To recognize The Bank of Cave City for the donated Preschool sign. - John Beller, Dustin Dayberry
2. To consider reinstating the [BSD bond election for September 14, 2021](#) - SOF Stakeholders - Karen Beller, Shane Wood & Mark Livingston



**Minutes- Regular Meeting - June 14, 2021**

Director Fulbright made the motion to approve reinstating the BSD bond election for September 14, 2021 as presented. Director Swinea seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

3. To present summer projects and plans in the maintenance department - David Campbell [Schedule](#)

Director Swinea made the motion to approve the summer projects and plans in the maintenance department as presented. Director West seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

**D. CONSENT AGENDA**

“Any item on the Consent Agenda may be removed for further discussion by the Board Of Directors at the request of a Director.”

1. To approve the [minutes](#) of the regular board meeting held on May 17, 2021.
2. To approve the [Salary & Commercial Warrants](#) for May 2021.
3. To approve the [Personnel Report](#) as presented.
4. To approve the items on the Consent Agenda as submitted.

Director Fulbright made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Director West seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

**E. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES DIVISION: \_\_\_\_\_**

1. To consider the approval of [school discipline](#) and [bullying](#) annual reports- Jennifer Douglas

Director West made a motion to approve the school discipline and bullying annual report as presented. Director Fulbright seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

**Minutes- Regular Meeting - June 14, 2021**

2. To consider approval of the [Title 1 Part C Migrant Assurances](#) for Funds. - Jennifer Douglas

Director Swinea made a motion to approve the Title 1 Part C Migrant Assurances for Funds as presented. Director Fulbright seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

3. To consider the approval of [BSD PFE Plan 2021/2022](#)- Laura Howard

Director Fulbright made a motion to approve the BSD PFE Plan for the 2021-2022 school year.port as presented. Director West seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

4. To consider the approval of the 2021 [BJHS Conversion Charter Application](#) beginning the 2022-2023 school year.

Director Swinea made a motion to approve the 2021 BJHS Conversion Charter Application as presented for the next school term. Director Fulbright seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

**F. BUSINESS SERVICES DIVISION:**

1. To consider the approval of employing [First Security Beardsley](#) as Financial Advisor for a period of three years effective as of the date of adoption.

Director Swinea made a motion to approve the extension of employment with First Security Beardsley as Financial Advisor for a period of three years. Director West seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

2. District [Expenditures and Revenue](#) Report - David Campbell

## Minutes- Regular Meeting - June 14, 2021

Director Fulbright made a motion to approve the District Expenditures and Revenue Report as presented. Director Swinea seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.\_\_\_\_\_

3. To consider approval of the district modular classroom to address overcrowding and social distancing in the 2021-22 SY - David Campbell [Cost breakdown](#)

Director Swinea made a motion to approve the addition of district modular classrooms to address overcrowding and social distancing in the 2021-22 SY. Director Fulbright seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.\_\_\_\_

4. To consider the approval of the three year [district website/app software contract](#) with Blackboard.

Director Fulbright made a motion to approve the three year district website/app software contract with Blackboard. Director West seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

5. To consider approving the purchase of a [Vac-Con](#) Sewer Cleaning Trailer. [Photo](#)

Director West made a motion to approve the purchase of a Vac-Con Sewer Cleaning Trailer. Director Fulbright seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

6. To consider the approval of replacing the floor [tile](#) in the BCHS/BJHS cafeteria.

Director Swinea made a motion to approve replacing the floor tile in the BCHS/BJHS cafeterias. Director Fulbright seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

### **G. DISTRICT OPERATIONS:**

1. To submit an "[Application for a Permit to Issue Bonds](#)", with related documents, for \$70,950,000 in Refunding and Construction Bonds to the State Department of Education and to employ First Security Beardsley as Fiscal Agent- Michael Dobbs

## Minutes- Regular Meeting - June 14, 2021

Director Swinea made a motion to approve submitting an “Application for a Permit to Issue Bonds” as presented and to employ First Security Beardsley as Fiscal Agent. Director West seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. \_\_\_

2. To adopt the Resolution with the attached Proposed Budget of Expenditures with Tax Levy for Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2022 to and including June 30, 2023 as printed and to adopt the Petition setting the date of the [Election for September 14, 2021](#).- Michael Dobbs

Director Fulbright made a motion to adopt the Resolution as presented and to adopt the Petition setting the date of the Election for September 14, 2021. Director Swinea seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. \_\_\_

3. To consider the updates and revisions of the following [board policies](#) as recommended by ASBA. - David Campbell
  - a. Synopsis

Director Fulbright made a motion to consider the updated and revisions of the listed board policies as recommended by ASBA. Director West seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. \_\_\_

4. To consider to approve the revisions to Student Handbook 2021-2022.
  - a. 2021-22 [BHS Handbook](#)
  - b. 2021-22 [BJHS Handbook](#)
  - c. 2021-22 [BES Handbook](#)

Director Swinea made a motion to approve the revisions to the listed Student Handbooks for the 2021-2022 SY. Director Fulbright seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. \_\_\_\_\_

## H. HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION:

Nothing to report at this time.

**Minutes- Regular Meeting - June 14, 2021**

**I. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:**

1. Communications FYI
  - a.
2. Superintendent Address
  - a. Carry Over & ESSER Fund discussion

**J. ADJOURNMENT:**

Director Fulbright made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Director West seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Time: **6:27 p.m.**

The next regular scheduled meeting will be at 5:30 pm on July 19th, 2021 at DAC.

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Scott Fredricks, Board President \_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Michael L. Hester, Superintendent

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Heather Fulbright, Secretary \_\_\_\_\_ Date Approved

# BATESVILLE AR

AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

409 Vine Street | Batesville, Arkansas 72501 | [www.batesvilleareachamber.com](http://www.batesvilleareachamber.com)

June 4, 2021

Arkansas Department of Education  
Division of Learning Services  
Four Capitol Mall, Mail Slot #3  
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Commissioner Key,

It is my pleasure to express support from the Batesville Area Chamber of Commerce for the Batesville Junior High School conversion charter application. Throughout extensive revisions of our county's strategic plan, the community's input has been consistent and clear with requests to offer earlier career exploration and exposure and personalize learning at all levels. The purpose of the conversion charter is to align the experiences from all campuses, and the junior high experience is a pivotal campus in the strategy. The charter will also integrate much needed student supports and opportunities for enhanced learning.

The vision for the charter school is directly in line with the county strategic plan, IMPACT. The grassroots plan, developed by our citizens, encourages progressive initiatives to address community and economic development priorities. Batesville School District has embraced the plan and incorporated the initiatives into the new proposed program to meet the needs of our students and our community.

In collaboration with business and industry leaders, healthcare providers, and institutions of higher education, the charter concept will allow Batesville School District the flexibility needed to expose students to careers earlier and in innovative ways, support students who need real-world integration for educational motivation, and enhance opportunities for advanced students.

We look forward to working with Batesville School District on this innovative learning experience that will improve the lives of our students and the economic prosperity of our region.

Sincerely,

## CHAIRMAN'S CIRCLE

BATESVILLE AR  
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



# BATESVILLE AR

AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

409 *Crystal Johnson* Arkansas 72501 | [www.batesvilleareachamber.com](http://www.batesvilleareachamber.com)

Crystal Johnson  
Chief Executive Officer

## CHAIRMAN'S CIRCLE

BATESVILLE AR

AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



IMPACT INVESTOR



Where community comes first.

IMPACT INVESTOR





June 21, 2021

Dr. Michael Hester, Superintendent  
Batesville School District  
955 Water Street  
Batesville, AR 72501

Dear Dr. Hester:

I am writing this letter to support the application for Batesville Junior High's charter status conversion for fall. By expanding the focus to STEAM, computer science, digital media, and health courses, Batesville School District will further enhance work-ready opportunities for students. These content areas align with the curriculum of UACCB as they are directly tied to our regional workforce needs.

I am excited about increased possibilities to serve students and get them interested in and connected to career-ready pathways. I see great alignment in the work done at Batesville Junior High to get more high school students to utilize concurrent and secondary career center resources at UACCB. Creating this pipeline of students will have lasting benefits on our community and state.

Once again, I support Batesville Junior High's application for conversion charter status this fall. Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized, looped initial followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr. Zach Perrine  
Interim Chancellor

---

University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville

P.O. Box 3350 / Batesville, Arkansas 72503-3350 / 870-612-2000 / Fax 870-793-4988  
UACCB is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.





STATE OF ARKANSAS

# House of Representatives

June 15, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to give my full support for the Batesville Junior High School conversion charter application. I believe the conversion charter school will better prepare students for college and career academics offered at Batesville Charter High School. Exposure to various career pathways at an early age will allow students to explore career opportunities while preparing to choose a personalized career through the Pioneer Academies that will be offered as they enter high school. An exploration in science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM) will allow students to see up-close how important some institutions are in our society and how they are connected. In addition, the opportunity for all students to have access to accelerated coursework and earn high school credits in junior high will make learning more exciting as they discover their talents.

Over the past few years, Batesville School District has worked diligently to provide innovative approaches to prepare students for high school and ultimately the workforce. Batesville School District is a collaborative partner with the Batesville Area Chamber of Commerce and actively participates in IMPACT Independence County initiatives. These initiatives are designed to improve the quality of life while presenting opportunities for all residents in the county.

I look forward to working with Batesville Junior High School on this wonderful initiative; and to seeing the positive impact it will have on students throughout the community.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stuart A. Smith".

Stu Smith  
State Representative  
District 63

SAS/prs

## REPRESENTATIVE

Stu Smith  
2605 Franklin Street  
Batesville, Arkansas 72501-7738

870-612-3974 Business  
stu22200@yahoo.com

## DISTRICT 63

Counties:  
Part Independence

## COMMITTEES:

Education  
Vice Chairperson,  
Kindergarten through Twelve,  
Vocational/Technical Institutions  
Subcommittee

Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative  
and Military Affairs  
Chairperson,  
Legislative, Military and Veterans  
Affairs Subcommittee

Joint Committee on Public Retirement  
and Social Security Programs

Legislative Joint Auditing Committee

JAMES STURCH  
SENATOR  
19<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT  
PHONE: 870-612-7589  
james.sturch@senate.ar.gov  
POST OFFICE BOX 2391  
BATESVILLE, ARKANSAS 72503



VICE-CHAIR:  
RULES, RESOLUTIONS & MEMORIALS

MEMBER:  
JOINT AUDIT  
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY &  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
EDUCATION

THE SENATE  
STATE OF ARKANSAS

June 16, 2021

Charter Authorizing Panel  
Arkansas Department of Education  
4 Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Dear Panel Members:

It is my pleasure to submit this letter supporting Batesville Junior High School as it applies for a conversion charter through the Arkansas Department of Education. I am writing to express my wholehearted support for its application.

Batesville Junior High School will be a 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade conversion charter that focuses on S.T.E.A.M education, digital media, and health pathways for its students. As the only feeder school to the Batesville High School conversion charter, students will be able to earn early high school credits.

As a conversion charter, Batesville Junior High School would continue to promote a healthy learning environment to benefit students and further their education and potential careers. I respectfully ask you to give this application every consideration. Thank you for your attention to this matter. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Sturch".

James Sturch  
State Senator  
District 19

JS:em

AFFP  
Public Hearing for Discussion

**Affidavit of Publication**

STATE OF AR }                    SS                    nullnullnullnull  
COUNTY OF  
INDEPENDENCE }

Lisa A. Lynn, being duly sworn, says:

That she is Classified Director of the Daily Guard, a daily newspaper of general circulation, printed and published in Batesville, Independence County, AR; that the publication, a copy of which is attached hereto, was published in the said newspaper on the following dates:

- May 08, 2021
- May 15, 2021
- May 22, 2021
- May 29, 2021

Publisher's Fee:    \$ 176.00

That said newspaper was regularly issued and circulated on those dates.

SIGNED:

\_\_\_\_\_



Subscribed to and sworn to me this 29th day of May 2021.

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Janet Melton, Notary Public 9/6/2022

00006771 70053257

Karen Melton  
BATESVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ADMIN  
OFFICE  
955 WATER ST  
SUITE C  
BATESVILLE, AR 72501







OBITUARIES



**Brenda Horn**  
Brenda Joyce (Smart) Horn, 76, of Sulphur Rock passed away Thursday, May 13, 2021.

She was born December 13, 1944 in Batesville, Arkansas, to Ruben Smart and Luella (Young) Smart.

Brenda was a member of Sulphur Rock Baptist Church. She loved spending time with her family and helping at the church.

Survivors include her son, Gary Horn II of Pea Ridge; two daughters, Patricia Bell (Out) of Pea Ridge and Peggy Mathes (Richard) of Saldor; eight grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Gary Horn; brother, Ronnie Smart; and sisters, Carolyn Mason and Donna Crabtree.

Pallbearers are Randall Crabtree Sr., Randall Crabtree Jr., Thomas Graham, Bryon Hoggard, Randel Davis, Richard Mathes, and Gary Horn.

Honorary pallbearers will be Logan Graham, Braxton Davis, Gearrett Bell, Greg Mathes, and Nicholas Mathes.

Funeral services will begin at 2 p.m. Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at Sulphur Rock Baptist Church with Bill Allen and James Cain officiating. Burial will follow at Sulphur Rock Cemetery under the direction of Roller-Crouch Funeral Home of Batesville.

Visitation will be held from 5-7 p.m. Monday, May 17, 2021 at Roller-Crouch Funeral Home of Batesville.

Memorials may be made in her honor in Sulphur Rock Baptist Church, P.O. Box 67, Sulphur Rock, AR 72579.



**Judy Nelson**

Judy Herndon Nelson, 63, of Cave City died Wednesday, May 12, 2021.

She was the daughter of Glenn and Jacquelyn Yvonne Herndon.

Survivors include daughter, Jodie Barber of Cave City; stepson, Ryan Nelson of Bonox; brothers, Brent Herndon (Dianne) and Tony Herndon (Sharon), both of Cave City; grandchildren, Josh

**Gerald Sanders**

Gerald R. Sanders, 77, of Evening Shade passed away Thursday, May 13, 2021.

Survivors include his wife, Annie Kimbrell Sanders of the home; one son, Richard Sanders (Tammy) of Phoenix, Arizona;

four daughters, Cherylene Shade, Kimberly McFarlin, Traci Sanders and Shawna Wells, all of Evening Shade; sixteen grandchildren; thir-

**Doyle Black Sr.**

Doyle Lee Black Sr., 81, of Mount Pleasant passed away Thursday, May 13, 2021.

He was born February 16, 1940 in St. Francis, Arkansas to Paul Basil and Opal (Tate) Black.

Graveside services will be held Monday, May 17, 2021 at 11 a.m. at Reeves Cem-

**Donna Crabtree**

Donna Lou (Smart) Crabtree, 77, of Sulphur Rock passed away Thursday, May 13, 2021.

She was born August 28, 1943 in Batesville, Arkansas, to Ruben Smart and Luella (Young) Smart.

Donna was a member of Sulphur Rock Baptist Church. She loved spending time with her grandchildren.

Survivors include her husband, Darrel Crabtree of the home; two sons, Randell Crabtree (Chelisa) of Sulphur Rock and Anthony Crabtree of Southside; two daughters, Louella Hoggard (Bryon) and Sandra Davis (Randel), both of Sulphur Rock; fifteen grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brother, Ronnie Smart; and sisters, Carolyn Mason and Brenda Horn.

Pallbearers are Randall Crabtree Sr., Randall Crabtree Jr., Thomas Graham, Bryon Hoggard, Randel Davis, Richard Mathes, and Gary Horn.

Honorary pallbearers will be Logan Graham, Braxton Davis, Gearrett Bell, Greg Mathes, and Nicholas Mathes.

Funeral services will begin at 2 p.m. Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at Sulphur Rock Baptist Church with Bill Allen and James Cain officiating. Burial will follow at Sulphur Rock Cemetery under the direction of Roller-Crouch Funeral Home of Batesville.

Visitation will be held from 5-7 p.m. Monday, May 17, 2021 at Roller-Crouch Funeral Home of Batesville.

Memorials may be made in her honor in Sulphur Rock Baptist Church, P.O. Box 67, Sulphur Rock, AR 72579.



BIRTHS

**Kaitlin Skye Boester**

Jonathan and Kimberly Boester of Highland, Dalton, Emily, Tommie, Liberty and Alivia have announced the birth of a daughter and sister at White River Medical Center on April 26, 2021. The baby weighed 6 pounds, 14.8 ounces and has been named Kaitlin Skye Boester.

Grandparents are Floyd Eugene Nitson, Shane Holfield and Tracey Holfield.

Great-grandparents are Judy Broadway and Carol Holfield.

**Faithlynn Rose Croney**

Chester Crony Jr. and Shania Sisco of Mountain View, Chester III and Jordan have announced the birth of a daughter and sister at White River Medical Center on April 27, 2021. The baby weighed 5 pounds, 8 ounces and has been named Faithlynn Rose Crony.

Grandparents are Delinda Crony and Sandy Sisco.

**Hassell Edward Rackley IV**

Hassell Rackley III and Audrey Stracener of Cave City have announced the birth of a son at White River Medical Center on April 23, 2021. The baby weighed 6 pounds, 14.1 ounces and has been named Hassell Edward Rackley IV.

**Ragnar Wayne Spurgeon**

Keith and Cami Spurgeon of Hardy, Ezili, Kenneth, Kyle and Cheyenne have announced the birth of a son and brother at White River Medical Center on April 27, 2021. The baby weighed 6 pounds, 8 ounces and has been named Ragnar Wayne Spurgeon.

**Fletcher Hayes Vaughn**

Rob and Kaitie Vaughn of Batesville have announced the birth of a son at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Medical Center in Little Rock on March 27, 2021. The baby weighed 2 pounds, 10 ounces

**Parker Quade Verser**

Justin and Robin Verser of Tumbling Shoals, Kalonia and Lakelynn have announced the birth of a son and brother at White River Medical Center on April 27, 2021. The baby weighed 7 pounds, 5 ounces and has been named Parker Quade Verser.

**Everly Faith Wilkes**

Dale and Alexandra Wilkes of Concord and Emmett have announced the birth of a daughter and sister at White River Medical Center on April 24, 2021. The baby weighed 7 pounds, 14 ounces and has been named Everly Faith Wilkes.

**Emersyn Rose McBride**

Ethan and Bailey McBride of Violet Hill, Skyler, Cash and Deacon have announced the birth of a daughter and sister at White River Medical Center on April 22, 2021. The baby weighed 6 pounds, 13 ounces and

**Fletcher Hayes Vaughn**

Rob and Kaitie Vaughn of Batesville have announced the birth of a son at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Medical Center in Little Rock on March 27, 2021. The baby weighed 2 pounds, 10 ounces

**ArDOT seeks public input about proposed improvements in Moorefield**

The Arkansas Department of Transportation will conduct an online public involvement meeting about the proposed widening of Highway 69 between Quail Valley Drive and Highway 233 and a signal installation at the intersection of Highway 69 and Highway 233 in Moorefield.

The public is invited to listen, view meeting materials, and provide written comments. The website will be available for comments until 4:30 p.m. June 2. Citizens will have an opportunity to ask questions and make comments during a "live" virtual presentation from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 18.

To access the online public meeting, visit <https://www.ardot.gov/events-feed>

forms to ARDOT staff, or print the form and mail it to Environmental Division, 10324 Interstate 30, Little Rock, AR 72209. Anyone who does not have internet access may call Karla Sims at 501-569-2000 to ask questions about the proposed project and how to access project information, or email [karla.sims@ardot.gov](mailto:karla.sims@ardot.gov).

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

**Pfeiffer Water Authority to meet**

The regularly scheduled monthly meeting for the Pfeiffer Public Water Authority has been set for 5:15 p.m. Tuesday at the Batesville City Hall.

**Artists guild to hold yard sale**

HARDY — Spring River Artists Guild will have its annual yard sale from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at 300 Main St. in Hardy.

The artists have been spring cleaning and have a large selection of items. The gallery has about 20 artists schooled in oil and acrylic paintings, many water colorists, fused glass paintings, jewelry, and stained glass pictures. The gallery is open from 1 to 4 p.m. Friday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and from 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday.

Visit <http://www.springriverartistsguild.com> for more information.

**Free offices with a view: 4 lighthouses, courtesy of feds**

By WILLIAM J. KOLE  
Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Dreading your eventual return to the office? The federal government is making available — for free — some waterfront workspaces with killer views that are sure to entice. But there's a catch. The General Services Administration says the U.S. Coast Guard has decided it no longer needs four of the nation's most picturesque lighthouses, and it's inviting certain types of organizations to take them over at no cost.

The GSA, which has been getting rid of its large inventory of obsolete lighthouses, said Thursday that Beavertail Lighthouse in Jamestown, Rhode Island — America's third-oldest lighthouse, and a beacon that defeated British forces torched out of spite in 1779 as they withdrew from the new nation — is up for

recreation, culture, or historic preservation.

Beavertail Light "has been determined to be excess to the needs of the United States Coast Guard," which is part of the Department of Homeland Security, GSA spokesperson Paul Hughes said in a statement.

Beavertail Light has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1977. The 64-foot granite lighthouse faces south where Narragansett Bay and Rhode Island Sound meet, offering drop-dead-gorgeous ocean vistas.

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**Batesville School District**  
STUDENTS FIRST

Public Notice: Batesville School District Public Hearing for the discussion of a proposed conversion charter for Batesville Junior High School will be held on June 1, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. in the junior high library. Links to join the virtual public hearing will be posted on the district website at [www.batesvilleschools.com](http://www.batesvilleschools.com).

**NORTHSHORE BALLOONFEST**  
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## Harding reopens international campuses

SEARCY — Harding University International Programs are reopening their international campuses for students seeking to study abroad and experience their education globally.

International campuses were closed in spring 2020, beginning with Harding's Florence campus in February 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, after a decrease in COVID-19 cases locally and globally, an increase in vaccinations, and extensive planning by IP staff,

the university announced it will be reopening campuses this summer. Each program has a detailed plan for handling COVID-19 cases, accessing health care, and responding to potential community outbreaks in order to follow all safety protocols while traveling.

"I am grateful for the tireless efforts of International Programs staff across the globe who have spent the last year coordinating with local partners in our program locations to develop plans to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 and reopen

our international campuses to study abroad students," said Audra Pleasant, executive director of IP. "We have spent months planning, hoping and praying together, and are overjoyed to celebrate the return of study abroad to Harding this summer. Each of our summer study abroad students has completed a detailed orientation process, and I am thankful for the responsibility and commitment to caring for each other and the local community that each student has demonstrated through their

willingness to follow local regulations and COVID protocols throughout the semester."

Study abroad programs available during the summer include Greece, Florence and England, along with a few other department programs. Additional programs in Australasia, Latin America and Zambia will be offered in the fall and spring semester. For more information about Harding's international programs, visit [harding.edu/academics/study-abroad](http://harding.edu/academics/study-abroad).

### Jane Martin



Jane Martin, 96, of Batesville passed away May 18, 2021.

She was born April 3, 1925 in Agnos, Arkansas to Albert Jacob Coggins and Alice Louella (Short) Coggins. Jane was a charter member of the Compass Church with her husband, Cliff. Her family was her hobby. She kept up with a lot of her family, even the extended members. Jane had the best stories and was a great cook. She liked her bling and her birds. As a teenager, she was a member of the Knottville Gang. They were a group that sang at churches and political parties.

Survivors include her son, Curtis Martin (Marcia) of Southside; three daughters, Jo Wright (Roger) of Batesville; Betty Gail Jones (Mickey) of Southside; Alice Jones of Richardson, Texas; eight grandchildren, Ken Jones (Liss), Steve Jones (Ashley), Luke Wright (Beth), Dan Wright (Robin), Kelly Parks (Aaron), Lacey Moore (Chase), Jackie Martin; sixteen great-grandchildren, and her 98 year old cousin, Pearl Roberts of Jonesboro.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Cliff; and six siblings, Onedia Berg, Violet Humphries, Joan Hill, Noble Coggins, Leslie Coggins, and Jean Coggins. Pallbearers are Ken Jones,

Steve Jones, Luke Wright, Dan Wright, Jacob Martin, Aaron Parks, Chase Moore, Austin Jones, Alec Jones, and Drew Wright.

The funeral service will be held Monday, May 24, 2021 at 2 p.m. at the Compass Church in Batesville with Mark McLendon officiating. Compass Church will be live streaming the funeral. Burial will follow at Oaklawn Cemetery.

A visitation will be held Sunday, May 23, 2021 from 5 p.m. until 7 p.m. at the Roller-Crouch Funeral Home.

Memorials may be made to Compass Church One Eight Fund, P.O. Box 4077, Batesville, AR 72503; or First Baptist Church Building, Fund, 610 E. Main, Batesville, AR 72501.

## Batesville authors, musicians and visual artists to be part of Delta Arts Festival

NEWPORT — The 2021 Delta Arts Festival at Newport, which will be held June 4 and 5, will include 200 visual artists, 35 authors, 31 concerts and 10 film screenings.

Batesville presents include: authors Marla Bennett and L.H. Taylor; musicians Ed Casper, Chris Davis, and John Parks; and visual artists Annette Allen, Sabina Burnett, Peggy Meitzner, Leta Parks, Julie Reardon, Dave Tinko, Mary Sutterfield and Brenda Lawrence.

Chris Davis will perform at 10 p.m. June 4 at Frankie's Place; Ed Casper will perform at noon June 5 at the Old Gas Station Bar & Grill; and John Parks will perform at 2:30 p.m. June 5 at the Old Gas Station Bar & Grill.

Marla Bennett will be a reading from "Sister to Sister" at 2 p.m. June 4; and L.H. Taylor will give a reading at 5:15 p.m. June 4.

Visit [www.deltartsfestival.com](http://www.deltartsfestival.com) for full schedule details.

Admission and parking are free.

reading from "Sister to Sister" at 2 p.m. June 4; and L.H. Taylor will give a reading at 5:15 p.m. June 4.

Visit [www.deltartsfestival.com](http://www.deltartsfestival.com) for full schedule details.

Admission and parking are free.

### BIRTHS

**Leylatha Arford**  
William and Breanne Arford of Batesville, Dezeria, Braden, Brytanie, Joby and Aleyan have announced the birth of a daughter and sister at White River Medical Center on May 4, 2021. The baby weighed 8 pounds and has been named Leylatha Arford.

Grandparents are DeAnna Kaze and Jennifer Lee.

**Spencer Colby Clark Bennett Tucker Clark**  
Preston and Brandi Clark of Mountain View, Sophie and Brayden have announced the birth of twin sons and brothers at White River Medical Center on May 3, 2021. Spencer Colby Clark weighed 5 pounds. Bennett Tucker Clark weighed 5 pounds, 4.2 ounces.

Grandparents are Melissa and Orin Buchholz, Ginger and Lonnie Clark and Lisa Clark.

**Alivia Dawn Livingston**  
Jeremy Livingston and Ashley McCarty of Mountain View, Caleb, Isaac, Tori, Kialyn and Karcyn have announced the birth of a daughter and sister at White River Medical Center on May 5, 2021. The baby weighed 7 pounds, 2.2 ounces and has been named Alivia Dawn Livingston.

Grandparents are Gary Livingston, Anna Livingston, Danny Fiekle and Patty Green.

**Lloyd Roan Burns**  
Justin Burns and Brandy Emperor of Cave City have announced the birth of a son at White River Medical Center on April 29, 2021. The baby weighed 7 pounds, 11 ounces and has been named Lloyd Roan Burns.

Grandparents are Eddie and Steven Garren and Margaret and Josh Monday.

Great-grandmother is Dian Dorsit.

**Katherine Lynn Marie Corter**  
William Corter and Tabatha Simms of Batesville, Trenton, Yessica, Lit, Willy, Ranez-May and Dillon have announced the birth of a daughter and sister at White River Medical Center on May 3, 2021. The baby weighed 5 pounds, 14 ounces and has been named Katherine Lynn Marie Corter.

Grandparents are Suzan Colon, Donnie Corter and Sabrina Corter.

**Quinnlyn Annette Payne**  
Thomas and Tiffany Payne of Sulphur Rock, Rylan and Owen have announced the birth of a daughter and sister at White River Medical Center on April 28, 2021. The baby weighed 7 pounds, 1 ounce and has been named Quinnlyn Annette Payne.

Grandparents are James and Jewel Morrow, the late Cheryl Morrow, and Laura Taylor.

Great-grandparents are Diane and Charlie Harris and LeAnn Moran.

**Carson Myles Burns**  
Marty Burns and Kasiidy Jones of Cave City have announced the birth of a son at White River Medical Center on May 6, 2021. The baby weighed 6 pounds, 15.4 ounces and has been named Carson Myles Burns.

**Lucas Hiram Cox**  
David and Kala Cox of Mountain View, Dakota and Matthew have announced the birth of a son and brother at White River Medical Center on May 4, 2021. The baby weighed 7 pounds, 2.8 ounces and has been named Lucas Hiram Cox.

Grandparents are Jack Sutterfield and Darlene Sutterfield.

Great-grandmother is Virginia Sparks.

**Sloan Talon Taylor**  
Nicholas Taylor and Allison DeCock of Hershesho Bend and Silas have announced the birth of a son and brother at White River Medical Center on May 2, 2021. The baby weighed 7 pounds, 12 ounces and has been named Sloan Talon Taylor.

**Annalese Marie Caston**  
Cody Caston and Cheyenne Cary of Mountain View, Lonnie and Karen have announced the birth of a daughter and sister at White River Medical Center on May 5, 2021. The baby weighed 7 pounds, 5 ounces and has been named Annalese Marie Caston.

Grandparents are Matt and Sheila Morgan, Lonnie and Samantha Dewep and Chuck and Debbie VanVleet.

Great-grandparents are Eileen Dodson, Truman Callahan and Mildred Cary.

**Kenny Douglas Pearson**  
David Pearson and Kaleigh Fowler of Southside and Cole-David have announced the birth of a son and brother at White River Medical Center on May 13,

**Ava Michelle Young**  
Zachariah Young and Heather Green of Batesville and Cayden have announced the birth of a daughter and sister at White River Medical Center on May 6, 2021. The baby weighed 7 pounds, 15.8 ounces and has been named Ava Michelle Young.

Grandparents are David and Christina Waldrup and Mavis and Cary Young.

Great-grandfather is Jimmy Brand.

### MINISTRY

From page A1

able to give young people an impartial ear to hear them out, as well as praying for and with them. Hopefully, his efforts will prevent suicide and help them manage their secretive, sometimes risky, teen behaviors, like street-racing, excessive drinking, fighting, shoplifting, and sneaking out.

His ministry statement reads in part "to return home to our own childhood hangouts and reach this generation of young men and women who are paddling down familiar streams of life's past, and his curd reads "We are capable of having the biggest

party, attend the loudest concert, and have the best partner, but when your spirit is still not alive, hangovers are imminent."

"I want to gain the right to listen to them by consistently being there," Jackson said.

Growing up in the Ozarks has many advantages, but it can be isolating for some, including teenagers as they

become young adults. Eventually he'd like to organize weekly or bi-weekly activities where the youth can express their gifts and talents, as well as have group discussions.

Jackson is a Army veteran, former track and field athlete, and attended Oral Roberts University. He works in Batesville at Taylor House, a men's domestic violence shelter. For more information contact 870-8055869 or email [jbecyministry@gmail.com](mailto:jbecyministry@gmail.com).

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**ROLLER-CROUCH**  
Roller-Crouch Funeral Home

### Crystal Wehmeier

Crystal Suzanne Wehmeier, 38, of Batesville passed away Monday, May 17, 2021.

She was born June 26, 1982.

Survivors include her husband, Matthew Wehmeier; her parents, Tracy and Penny Morgan of Center; one sister, Misty Morgan of Center; her grandmother, Pearl Moody-Springer of Blue

Springs, Missouri; and a host of other relatives and friends.

Funeral services will be Monday, May 24, 2021 at 10 a.m. at the Bettis Town Church of Christ at Center. Burial in the Buchanan Cemetery. Arrangements by Qualls Funeral Home of Cave City.

Visitation, Sunday, May 23, 2021 from 2 until 4 at the funeral home.

### Evelyn Wood

Evelyn Wood, 94, of Batesville passed away Wednesday, May 19, 2021.

Survivors include two brothers, Verlon Wood (Dora) of Bella Vista and Stephen Wood (Wanda) of Panama City, Panama; one sister, Wanda Armstrong of Austin, Texas; and one sister-in-law, Debbie Neeley (Curtis) of Batesville.

Funeral services will be

Saturday, May 22, 2021 at 3 p.m. at the Union Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Pleasant Plains with Verlon Wood and Stephen Wood officiating. Burial will follow in the Union Grove Cemetery with arrangements by Qualls Batesville Funeral Service.

Visitation will be from 2 p.m. until service time at the church.

### COMMUNITY BRIEFS

#### Sulphur Rock to meet Monday

SULPHUR ROCK — The city of Sulphur Rock will postpone the regular monthly meeting until Monday, May 24.

The veteran monument dedication scheduled for May 28, 2021 will be postponed until a later date.

Recovery Connection meets from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday evenings at the Pleasant Plains First Assembly of God, located at 7477 Batesville Blvd. There will be a meal followed by fellowship.

#### Recovery Connection to meet

PLEASANT PLAINS —

**VFW open for blngo**  
Veterans of Foreign Wars is open for blngo on Thursday and Sunday. Doors open at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday and at noon on Sunday.

Masks are required to enter. The post is located at 1680 Chaney Drive.

**Batesville School District**  
STUDENTS FIRST

Public Notice: Batesville School District Public Hearing for the discussion of a proposed conversion charter for Batesville Junior High School will be held on June 1, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. in the junior high library. Links to join the virtual public hearing will be posted on the district website at [www.batesvilleschools.com](http://www.batesvilleschools.com).

# DOJ to go after pandemic fraudsters

FORT SMITH — The Department of Justice announced criminal charges against 14 defendants, including 11 newly-charged defendants and three who were charged in superseding indictments, in seven federal districts across the United States for their alleged participation in various health care fraud schemes that exploited the COVID-19 pandemic and resulted in over \$143 million in false billings.

"The multiple health care fraud schemes charged today describe theft from American taxpayers through the exploitation of the national emergency," said Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco. "These medical professionals, corporate executives, and others allegedly took advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to line their own pockets instead of providing needed health care services during this unprecedented time in our country. We are committed to protecting the American people and the critical health care benefit programs created to assist them during this national emergency, and we are determined to hold those who exploit such programs accountable to the fullest extent of the law."

As part of the national takedown, Billy Joe Taylor, 42, of Lavaca, was charged by criminal complaint with health care fraud in connection with an alleged scheme to defraud the United States of over \$88 million, including over \$42 million in false and fraudulent claims during the COVID-19 health emergency that were billed in combination with claims that were submitted for testing for COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. Taylor, the owner and operator of Vital Laboratories LLC and Beach Tox LLC, two testing laboratories, allegedly used access to beneficiary and medical provider information from prior laboratory testing orders to submit fraudulent claims for urine drug tests and other laboratory tests, including respiratory pathogen panel and COVID-19 tests, that were not actually ordered or performed. The complaint also alleges that hundreds of claims were submitted for beneficiaries after they had died or otherwise ceased providing samples.

"While the COVID-19 pandemic was raging, and Americans were suffering from the economic and health crisis brought on by this pandemic, these defendants were allegedly scheming to steal millions of dollars set aside to help ailing Americans through COVID-19 testing and other federal health-care programs," said Acting U.S. Attorney David Clay Fowles. "This case demonstrates the importance of investigating and prosecuting those who would seek to line their own pockets by stealing funds set aside to help those struggling with the symptoms of COVID-19 and other health ailments."

Additionally, the Center for Program Integrity, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CPI/CMS) separately announced today that it took adverse administrative actions against over 50 medical providers for their involvement in health care fraud schemes relating to COVID-19 or abuse of CMS programs that were designed to encourage access to medical care during the pandemic.

"Medical providers have been the unsung heroes for the American public throughout the pandemic," said FBI Director Christopher Wray. "It's disheartening that some have abused their authorities and committed COVID-19 related fraud against trusting citizens. The FBI, along with our federal law enforcement and private sector partners, are committed to continuing to combat healthcare fraud and protect the American people."

The defendants in the cases announced today are alleged to have engaged in various health care fraud schemes designed to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, multiple defendants offered COVID-19 tests to Medicare beneficiaries at senior living facilities, drive-through COVID-19 testing sites, and medical offices to induce the beneficiaries to provide their personal identifying information and a saliva or blood sample. The defendants are alleged to have then misused the information and samples to submit claims to Medicare for unrelated, medically unnecessary, and far more expensive laboratory tests, including cancer genetic testing, allergy testing, and respiratory pathogen panel tests. In some cases, and as alleged, the COVID-19 test results were not provided to the beneficiaries in a timely fashion or were not reliable, risking the further spread of the disease, and the genetic, allergy, and respiratory pathogen testing was medically unnecessary, and, in many cases, the results were not provided to the patients or their actual primary care doctors. The proceeds of the fraudulent schemes were allegedly laundered through shell corporations and used to purchase exotic automobiles and luxury real estate.

"It's clear fraudsters see the COVID-19 pandemic as a money-making opportunity — creating fraudulent schemes to victimize beneficiaries and steal from federal health care programs," said Deputy Inspector General for Investigations Gary L. Cantrell of Health and Human Services — Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG). "Our agency and its law enforcement partners are aggressively and effectively investigating these egregious crimes, which is made equally clear given the result of this takedown. We will continue to support the unprecedented COVID-19 public health effort by holding accountable those who use deceptive tactics to profit from the pandemic."

In another type of COVID-19 health care fraud scheme announced today, defendants are alleged to have exploited policies that were put in place by CMS to enable increased access to care during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, pursuant to the COVID-19 emergency declaration, telehealth regulations and rules were broadened so that Medicare beneficiaries could receive a wider range of services from their doctors without having to travel to a medical facility. The cases announced today include first in the nation charges for allegedly exploiting these expanded policies by submitting false and fraudulent claims to Medicare for sham telemedicine encounters that did not occur. As part of these cases, medical professionals are alleged to have offered and paid bribes in exchange for the medical professionals' referral of medically unnecessary testing.

The law enforcement action today also includes a third set of criminal charges related to the misuse of Provider Relief Fund monies. The Provider Relief Fund is part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, a federal law enacted March 2020

designed to provide needed medical care to Americans suffering from COVID-19.

The Fraud Section is prosecuting the cases in the following districts: Western District of Arkansas, Northern District of California, Middle District of Louisiana, Southern District of Florida, District of New Jersey, and the Eastern District of New York.

Today's enforcement actions were led and coordinated by Assistant Chief Jacob Foster and Trial Attorneys Rebecca Yuan and Gary A. Winters of the National Rapid Response Strike Force of the Health Care Fraud Unit of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section, in conjunction with the Health Care Fraud Unit's Medicare Fraud Strike Forces (MFSF) in Miami, Los Angeles, the Gulf Coast, and Brooklyn, as well as the U.S. Attorneys' Offices for the Northern District of California, Western District of Arkansas, and Middle District of Louisiana.

The cases in the Western District of Arkansas is being prosecuted by Senior Litigation Counsel James Hayes and Trial Attorney D. Keith Clouser of the National Rapid Response Strike Force, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Kenneth Elser of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Arkansas.

The MFSF is a partnership among the Criminal Division, U.S. Attorneys' Offices, the FBI and HHS-OIG. In addition, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General, Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Louisiana Medicaid Fraud Control

Unit, and other federal and state law enforcement agencies participated in the law enforcement action.

The law enforcement action was brought in coordination with the Health Care Fraud Unit's COVID-19 Interagency Working Group, which is chaired by the National Rapid Response Strike Force and organizes efforts to address illegal activity involving health care programs during the pandemic.

The Fraud Section leads the Medicare Fraud Strike Force. Since its inception in March 2007, the Medicare Fraud Strike Force, which maintains 15 strike forces operating in 24 federal districts, has charged more than 4,200 defendants who have collectively billed the Medicare program for nearly \$19 billion. In addition, the HHS Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, working in conjunction with the HHS-OIG, are taking steps to increase accountability and decrease the presence of fraudulent providers.

The Department of Justice needs the public's assistance in remaining vigilant and reporting suspected fraudulent activity. To report suspected fraud, contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDP) at (866) 720-5721 or file an online complaint at <https://www.justice.gov/disaster fraud/webform/nctd-disaster-complaint-form>.

Complaints filed will be reviewed at the NCDP and referred to federal, state, local, or international law enforcement or regulatory agencies for investigation.

An indictment, complaint, or information is merely an allegation, and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

## Travel numbers climb as Americans hit the road for holiday

By JAKE KOYLE  
*Associated Press*

Americans hit the road in near-record numbers at the start of the Memorial Day weekend, as their eagerness to break free from coronavirus confinement overcame higher prices for flights, gasoline and hotels.

More than 1.8 million people went through U.S. airports Thursday, and the daily number was widely expected to cross 2 million at least once over the long holiday weekend, which would be the highest mark since early March 2020.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas warned people to expect long lines at airports and appealed for travelers to be patient.

The rise in travel appears to be fueled by an increase in COVID-19 vaccinations as well as an improving economy. The U.S. Commerce Department said consumer spending increased in April, although not as much as in March, showing how consumers are driving a recovery from last year's pandemic recession.

At Miami International Airport, officials expelled crowds equal to pre-pandemic levels. It was a similar story in Orlando, where airport traffic has reached 90 percent of 2019 levels as tourists flocked to theme parks that have recently loosened restrictions.

Along the Florida coasts and around Orlando, many hotels were booked solid through the weekend.

"We are going into off-season, and it has not slowed down," said Cathy Balestriere, general manager of Crum's Beach House, a boutique hotel in Delray Beach, Florida.

Vacation destinations like Las Vegas, Hawaii and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, were among the top destinations for holiday revelers, according to AAA. Paula Twidale, a spokeswoman

for the auto club and insurer, said the pickup in travel began in April as more Americans get vaccinated and the weather improved.

"People are just excited to get out," she said.

Memorial Day coincides with some states eliminating their remaining pandemic restrictions as the number of new COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths decline.

Virginia, where President Joe Biden traveled to tout his administration's efforts to contain the virus, is easing all distancing and capacity restrictions Friday. A mask mandate in Massachusetts ends Saturday.

AAA expects a 60 percent jump in travel over the 2020 Memorial Day weekend, with 37 million Americans traveling at least 50 miles from home, most of them in cars. That's despite gasoline prices being at their highest levels in seven years: The national average is above \$3 a gallon for regular.

Prices for rental cars are up sharply, too — if you can find one — after companies culled their fleets to survive last year's deep slump in travel.

"My mother-in-law called me on a vacation and said, 'Hey, can you get me a rental car?'" I said, "No," said Jordan Starb, president of SmarterTravel Media. "Demand is up 500 percent since January, and it's tough to get a rental car right now."

Hotels and other lodging in beach and mountain areas are expecting bigger crowds than those in cities.

Lois Carrier, the president of Distinctive Hospitality Group, said the company's two hotels in tourist towns in Connecticut have seen a jump in bookings since the state loosened its mask requirements two weeks ago, but occupancy is still only around 20 percent at its three hotels in Boston.

## In visions of post-pandemic life, Roaring '20s beckon again

By JAKE KOYLE  
*AP Film Writer*

NEW YORK — History repeats itself. But do decades duplicate?

As hopes rise that the pandemic is ebbing in the United States and Europe, visions of a second "Roaring Twenties" match last century's post-pandemic decade have proliferated. Months of lockdown and restrictions on social life have given way to dreams of a new era of frivolity and decadence. For some, it feels like party time.

In many parts of the world, such thoughts are unthinkable. India is engulfed in crisis. The virus is raging in South America. Japan is grappling with a punishing new wave of cases. And even in places where cases are falling and vaccinations are expanding, deep wounds remain from more than a year of death, illness and isolation. COVID-19 won't disappear. More infectious variants are circulating. Herd immunity may be elusive. Long-term health effects will linger. There will be no Hollywood ending.

But a coming summer and a soaring stock market have lifted optimism and fueled predictions of a new Roaring Twenties. This time, Bill Maher has suggested, we do it without "the Depression at the end of it." The New Yorker joked that prohibition in "the New Roaring Twenties" should be on "company-mandated virtual happy hours." Madison Avenue has turned up the heat. Suitably, a man's fashion brand is running a suggestive ad campaign with writhing models and the tagline: "The New Normal Is Coming." Summer travel is booming. A sinner of loss "acceptation" is predicted. Even the bob is back in style.

Is it fair to connect these twin '20s, both decades that follow closely on the heels of worldwide pandemic? Could two '20s really roar? Do we all need to start buying flapper dresses and bushing

up our F. Scott Fitzgerald?

Some of the parallels are legitimate, says Nicholas Christakis, professor of sociology and director of Yale University and author of "Apollo's Arrow: The Profound and Enduring Impact of Coronavirus on the Way We Live." After an interim period of "weeping with the clinical, psychological and economic shock of the virus," he says, we'll see an uplift this summer, with a post-pandemic period taking root by 2023. It will, he says, be "a bit of a party."

"Understandably, people will be very relieved when this is all finally over. People have been cooped one way or another for a very long time," Christakis says. "We're going to see people relentlessly seeking out social opportunities in nightclubs and restaurants and bars and sporting events and musical concerts and political rallies. We might see some sexual licentiousness, some loosening of sexual mores."

Such prognostications have tantalized many eager for the fabled liberation of a century ago — what Fitzgerald described as "the most expensive orgy in history." Outside of the 1960s, perhaps, no decade looms larger in the collective imagination than the 1920s, thanks in part to the emerging mass culture that captured the time — the swinging speakasies, the Harlem Renaissance, the first "talkie" in 1927, "The Jazz Singer." Over time, the mythology has only grown glitzier (see Baz Luhrmann, "Gatsby," 2013).

There's truth in that portrait of the '20s, but mainly to wealthier white Americans. The decade was punishing to farmers; for the first time, more people lived in cities. Membership surged for the Ku Klux Klan, which targeted African Americans, immigrants, Jews and Catholics — anyone who didn't meet its definition of a "real American." In 1921, one of the worst incidents of racial violence occurred — the Tulsa Race Massacre. Three years later, the Immigration Act of 1924 restricted immi-

grants from Asia and Eastern Europe.

"The 1920s, in short, were not all they were cracked up to be. We have today in the United States, cheek by jowl, Prosperity and Depression," the author and civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois wrote in 1926.

It's not hard to see many of the same threads today: racial injustice, economic inequity, convulsive technological change. The 1921 campaign slogan of Warren G. Harding — "a return to normalcy" — sounds very familiar and even appealing to those who have had it with the "new normal."

Forecasts on Wall Street, of course, vary. The United Nations last month raised its global economic forecast to 5.4 percent growth in 2021. While many analysts are predicting the pace to quicken in the months and years ahead, Tina Fordham, partner and head of global political strategy for Avonhurst, foresees a post-lockdown period that will feel like "The Great Gatsby" only to a few.

"For many, it could be more like 'The Grapes of Wrath,' unless steps are taken to address inequities — which accelerated during the pandemic — and the gaps in the social safety net," Fordham concludes.

Are we even right to connect the 1920s with the 1918 influenza? To John M. Barry, author of the defining history "The Great Influenza," it's a false association. The so-called Spanish Flu was far more virulent and deadly. It killed more than 50 million worldwide and some 675,000 Americans — more than ten times the toll of WWI to the U.S.

"People seem to think we just leapt into the Roaring Twenties," says Barry. "But first we went through 1919, which is one of the most chaotic and violent years in American history. Then you had a serious recession in 1920, 1921. The aftermath this month and years ahead, which is quite different."

People also experienced the 1918 influenza differently. Lockdowns then never lasted more than a few weeks. The societal surge that followed in the '20s? Most historians ascribe that to the postwar pe-

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**Batesville School District**

STUDENTS FIRST

Public Notice: Batesville School District Public Hearing for the discussion of a proposed conversion charter for Batesville Junior High School will be held on June 1, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. in the junior high library. Links to join the virtual public hearing will be posted on the district website at [www.batesvilleschools.com](http://www.batesvilleschools.com).



## Batesville Junior High School

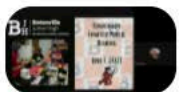


BJHS held the public hearing for a conversion charter last night in the BJHS library. The recorded meeting is linked below.

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nXmKkwf431Dixb\\_pJtkNf1xU7fbCTSCr/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nXmKkwf431Dixb_pJtkNf1xU7fbCTSCr/view?usp=sharing)

If you have questions, please submit them on the form linked:

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### Public Hearing - BJHS Chartr (2021-06-01 at 16\_...

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### Batesville Charter High School Question

Please enter your name, email, and any questions you ha...

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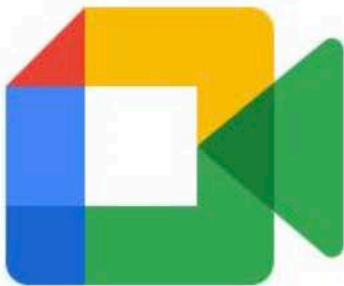
## Batesville School District

Published by Jennifer Douglas · June 1 at 11:51 AM ·



Just a reminder - Batesville School District Public Hearing for the discussion of a proposed conversion charter for Batesville Junior High School will be held June 1, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. in the junior high library. You are invited to attend in person or you may join the meeting virtually with the link below.

Click the link to join the Google Meet: [meet.google.com/pkt-ikaf-yoy](https://meet.google.com/pkt-ikaf-yoy)



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## Batesville School District

Published by Jennifer Douglas · May 28 at 10:02 AM ·



Public Notice: Batesville School District Public Hearing for the discussion of a proposed conversion charter for Batesville Junior High School will be held June 1, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. in the junior high library. You are invited to attend in person or you may join the meeting virtually with the link below.

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