

OFFICIAL MINUTES FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING OF THE
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

The Board of Trustees for the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Arkansas School for the Deaf met for their monthly meeting on September 17, 2024, at the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Present: Robert Fagan, Chair; Dr. John McAllister, Vice Chair; Cary Smith, Board Member; K. Nicole Walsh, ASD Superintendent; Dr. Chris Barnes, ASBVI Interim Superintendent; Will Gorum and Jonathan Smith, Interpreters; Members of the community.

Absent: Philip Powell, Board Member; Jerry Belew, Board Member, and Holley Mott, ASD Parent Representative.

The meeting was called to order at 5:04 pm.

For the September student highlight, a video was shown where ASD students were recognized by the National FFA. The video was created to celebrate the incredible things done here. It is published and can be view at the following link: <https://www.ffa.org/the-feed/whats-ffa-like-in-my-region/>

Mr. Fagan called roll and determined that we do have a quorum. After discussion regarding the day of the next board meeting, it was determined that moving to the fourth Tuesday of October would be better for all members than the regularly scheduled meeting on the third Tuesday of the month. Therefore, the next board meeting will be held on October 22, at the Arkansas School for the Deaf in the Tornado Shelter.

Joint Agenda

24-J-63 Motion to Approve Joint Meeting August 20, 2024, Minutes

Dr. McAllister made a motion to approve. Mrs. Smith seconded. Motion Carried.

Comment by Brianne Franks, parliamentarian. Addressed a question from last month's meeting regarding abstaining from votes. Under the board's rules for governance and operations, any member who abstains from voting will be counted as having voted against the motion or resolution.

Action Items –

Ready for Learning Plan

This document was created to apply for both schools in the spirit of working and bringing the Arkansas School for the Deaf and the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired together. The 2024-2025 Ready for Learning Plan discusses what would happen in the case of a school closing due to an outbreak, how we would carry out virtual learning and how we would return as soon as deemed safe. This document is a requirement of ARP Funds to receive ESSER monies. These funds will expire in December making it highly unlikely that a Ready for Learning Plan will be needed next year.

Mrs. Smith made a motion to approve. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion Carried.

Annual Equity Compliance Report

A form assuring we are following Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, The Age Discrimination Act, The Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act of 2001 and Section 9524 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. We agree that we are doing the things stated and are in compliance. ASD and ASBVI have Equity Coordinators representing both campuses. Any and all complaints are investigated by our coordinators in compliance with the law.

Mrs. Smith made a motion to approve. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion Carried.

Community Service Policy and Form

Under the LEARNS Act, State Law requires that students earn 75 hours of Community Service beginning with the class of 2027. A process and standard procedure need to be approved outlining how the 75 hours can be collected for students to get the required 75 hours. The policy outlines the specific sites and activities accepted as community service. Hours earned must be logged on the proposed form and signed by the sponsoring adult. Many of the approved sites are on the ASD/ASBVI campus so that residential students have equal opportunity to earn hours. In addition to the specifics mentioned in the policy, there is a caveat giving permission to the superintendent to add additional options as opportunities arise, making it a living document that can be changed as needed.

Dr. McAllister made a motion to approve. Mrs. Smith seconded. Motion Carried.

5 Minute Break – Interpreter arrangements

Discussion Items –

Flu Clinic

Our nurses run one of the largest school Flu Clinics in the State. Our students and staff will attend the clinic in the morning on October 2nd and then, in the afternoon, the clinic will open to community members, specifically the Department of Education. The clinic will be held in Woolly Auditorium.

Public Comments

Betty Dukes shared a concern regarding policies that are approved by the board and asked if parents have access to them and if so, where they can be found. Mr. Fagan asked Dr. Barnes to email her the requested information.

ASD Agenda

24-D-64 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

Dr. McAllister made a motion to approve. Mrs. Smith seconded. Motion Carried.

Discussion Items –

Para Academy

Donna VanDevender, ASD's Curriculum and Instructional Specialist has begun collaborating with Lori Cole and Brandy Faught at ASBVI to establish dual-campus initiatives.

Donna is here today to discuss Para Academy that she established at ASD in 2023. This group was created to support our Paraprofessionals who were feeling disenfranchised in the educational process. The goal of Para Academy is to support Paras with their skills, with behavior management, the IEP process and other special needs that are being encountered, with the aim of fostering a feeling of true involvement in the educational process. Meetings occur weekly after school covering many topics and hosting training activities. Participants receive notebooks with materials covered for their reference. Time is also spent in preparation for the Para Certification Test. Schools receiving Title 1 funding, require Paras to meet one of the following criteria: a two or four-year degree, 60 semester hours or can pass the Parapro Praxis Exam. The Parapro Praxis skills are estimated around a 7th or 8th grade level and very heavy on reading, even in the areas of mathematics. This poses a hurdle for those who struggle with reading. To help ensure our Paras are ready to succeed, we employed IXL, an online remediation program which measures skills and provides scaffolded lessons which bring learners to a higher level. A sense of community has developed through our time together which includes hard work as well as snacks, drinks, and door prizes! Participants of Para Academy are feeling respected as they grow in their skills. Our plan is for a two-part program: Para Onboarding which would teach behavior management, understanding special needs and special orientation issues in preparation for the classroom, as well as Para Academy which would focus on exam preparations. Our estimate is that each part of the program would take a year to complete, totaling a two-year program.

Mr. Fagan asked if a similar program could be put in place for our residential staff. Nicole agreed that would be a good thing to discuss further and grow as our residential staff are in need of a robust onboarding program.

Action Items –

ASD Suspension Procedure

Previously approved in our Mental Health Handbook, the Suspension Procedure will be pulled from the Mental Health Handbook and added to our Student Handbook as an addendum, in an effort to make it more easily accessible.

Dr. McAllister made a motion to approve. Mrs. Smith seconded. Motion Carried.

ASD Superintendent Report

- Currently, 107 enrolled, plus 3 added since report was written
- Several students in the process of enrollment that are moving from out of state
- Still advertising for a Science Teacher – currently have a long-term sub in place
- Restructure – Roy DePriest is now Director of Facilities
- Attendance performance – 92% for MS and HS
- Attendance performance – 94% for LS
- Using Parent Square to help encourage attendance and decrease tardies
- NWEA scores ready in Oct. Test was given in September
- ADE & ASD met to discuss CAP. Needing solid enrollment and admissions policies established and published, as well as training on those policies. Brandy Faught and Stacy Kratky are working together to create common policies approved by ADE. Once approved, then we will ask Co-ops to send their LEA support person to be trained by us on these policies and processes so that they can then in turn can go out into the districts and offer support.
- First ASD football game 59-0
- Girl's volleyball is having a rebuilding year as we lost most of the team to our graduating seniors last year, but they are working hard and getting stronger
- Coaches are working hard transporting our day students to allow them the opportunity to continue taking part in sports
- 9 paras attend Para Academy last month
- New Hires: Ag Science, Paras, Media Specialist – shared
- Prof Development is going well with PLCs under way, and MS & HS meeting to discuss goals, and dig through data
- Instructional Leadership Meeting took place across both campuses. Exciting to learn what everyone does and eager to meet their “buddy” on the other campus. We toured both campuses to familiarize ourselves with both schools
- Want to recognize KaAnn who is doing a great job supporting her teachers in this huge move and dealing with students with behavior struggles
- Operations and facilities. Some preventative maintenance is underway. Repairs to bleachers, decking and electrical repairs to lighting on football field
- Transportation – routes established and successfully implemented. Discussing potential changes that may be needed once construction is underway

- Tech – new chrome books ordered, set up and deployed to our students in one weekend
- Recognizing William Harrison who canceled unused cable services for both ASD and ASB resulting in \$18,000 in savings annually
- Grant for high impact tutoring \$1350
- Budgets actively being reviewed for inefficiencies and changes with more to come later

Mrs. Smith asked if we had sufficient dorm space to care for the students who came from out of state for our volleyball tournament. Nicole Walsh said we were tight but able to house everyone that came.

Mrs. Smith inquired about the new Media Specialist and her familiarity with both Braille and ASL. Walsh commented that the Media Specialist is a teacher of the deaf by trade but has a visual impairment herself. Ms. Moody is excited and willing to learn what she needs to be ready to support our students. Ms. Cole will be assisting Moody in this effort.

Mr. Fagan requested an update on a projected date for demolition and construction. Walsh said that RFQ submittals will be reviewed very soon, and someone will be selected at that time and are to begin work right away. Currently still on target. A first draft of potential options from the architects should be ready in the next couple of months, having options to present to stakeholders. The same group will do demolition and construction. During Homecoming week, we will have a Lights Out Ceremony giving everyone the opportunity to come and take pictures and say goodbye.

Mrs. Smith questions the sustainability of our coaches driving students home after practice. Walsh replied that we are truly depending on our coach's dedication. We have also sought the help of teachers and any other staff willing to drive from time to time, rotating people out in hopes of not wearing them out. We are also looking at scheduling alterations that can be made to lessen the need. It is not sustainable beyond a year's time, and certainly not ideal, but we are hoping to finish this year.

ASB Agenda

24-B-65 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

Dr. McAllister made a motion to approve. Mrs. Smith seconded. Motion Carried.

Action Items - None

Discussion Items – None

ASB Superintendent Report

- Dr. Chris Barnes - 4th week in the role of Interim Superintendent
- 63 Students enrolled – a dip from last year of 67

- NWEA assessment was given the second week of school. Results will be presented in October
- Arkansas Tech University partnership to start offering concurrent credit and advanced placement courses on a 5-point scale. Looking to expand this to all base courses – currently just two
- 2 staff dedicated in literacy and math as instructional coaches – Joe Reynolds and Jennifer Baxter
- Classroom Walk Through – focusing each week on one area of need instructionally as well as safety checks
- Student Support – K-6 weekly sessions with counselor to support social emotional growth
- Teacher in social worker role is Ms. Runder is providing resources to help our families in need
- Looking at additional support for intensive tier two intervention
- Several vacancies: GT position that will be a shared service, Science teacher with coaching responsibilities added, Family Consumer Science teacher need – preparing children for careers, all part of the Governor’s initiative with the LEARNS Act, Instructional Paraprofessional positions open with strict requirements they must meet - working towards a Teacher Academy and doing a graduated pay structure. We are also looking for Statewide birth to 3 support
- ESSER 3 Funds – Money provided to schools to prepare them in case of an outbreak. 30,000 dollars left over that must be expended by end of year. ASBVI chose to purchase a Braille machine
- Facilities and Transportation – campus security has been first on our minds. We are walking the campus to note anything needing to be seen to
 - Shout out to Roy DePriest for all his work
- Campus Security Officer should begin work next week if all paperwork gets finalized. We will then have 24-hour support for our campus. Trained as CSSOs to coordinate with our police in town.
- HVAC issues and water leaks are being seen to
- Recent brown out
- Working with architects on completing stakeholder meetings
- Collaborating with World Services for the Blind to begin a transition program for techniques of daily living skills. Aiming for it to count as a career service elective credit. Doris Pettus will be working with ASB
- A donation of \$30,000 received from Arkansas Ophthalmology Association resulting from the sale of eclipse glasses. Will go into the student services fund for special needs
- Friends of ASB – meets on Thursday night and is available on Zoom at 6:00
- Started a social media campaign postings highlighting from a specific area each day of the week. Making an Impact Mondays, Trivia Tuesdays, Who’s Who Wednesdays, Throwback Thursdays and Friday Faculty. Sharing the good things taking place on campus to pull in our communities
- ASBVI will be adopting Parent Square
- Braille Boot Camp was a success

- Transition activities taking place between ASBVI and ASD such as our Instructional Leadership Teams, and through professional development. Everyone has worked together beautifully showing it truly is all about the kids
- Upcoming: Literacy Night October 10 and Take your Legislature to School Day October 17

Mrs. Smith inquired as to our Legislators. Dr. Barnes shared they are Clark Tucker and Tippi McCullough.

24-J-66 Motion to Adjourn

Dr. McAllister made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Smith seconded. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:24pm.

Robert Fagan, Chair

Dr. John McAllister, Vice Chair