

**Minutes
State Board Meeting
May 5, 2023**

Present: Ouida Newton, Chair; Dr. Fitz Hill; Lisa Hunter; Jessica Saum, 2022 Arkansas Teacher of the Year; Jacob Olivia, ADE Secretary

Present via ZOOM: Kathy Rollins; Steve Sutton; Jeff Wood; Adrienne Woods

Absent: Dr. Sarah Moore, Vice-Chair; Randy Henderson

The Arkansas State Board of Education (State Board) met Friday, May 5, 2023. Chair Ouida Newton called the meeting to order at 2:05 PM.

Action Agenda

II. Consideration of the Consolidation of the Request of the Commissioner, acting as the Marvell-Elaine School District Board, to enter a Transformation Contract with Friendship Education Foundation, pursuant to Act 237 of 2023, the Arkansas L.E.A.R.N.S. Act.

Item II.1. was presented by Ms. Stacy Smith, ADE Deputy Commissioner.

Ms. Stacy Smith presented a timeline of the Marvell-Elaine School District from the 2018-2019 School Year through the 2022-2023 School Year. She reminded the State Board that they rescinded their previous vote of December 8, 2022, in which the State Board denied the petition of the Marvell-Elaine School District for a Minimum School District Size Waiver (Waiver), then on April 13, 2023, voted to grant the Waiver. Additionally, on April 13, the State Board assumed authority over the Marvell-Elaine School District and voted to direct the Commissioner of Education, under Act 237 of 2023, Section 14 to explore entering a contract for school transformation for the Marvell-Elaine School District.

Three entities submitted application to enter a transformation contract with the Marvell-Elaine School District. All three submissions were accepted, which included:

Charter One
Friendship Education Foundation
Grassroots Arkansas

While an education service cooperative initially expressed interest, they ultimately withdrew their application.

The Transformation Contract Interview Committee included:

Mr. Clyde Williams, President, Marvell-Elaine Board

Mr. Larry Powell, Marvell-Elaine School Board Member

Ms. Netasha Brown, Boys, Girls, Adults Community Development Center

Ms. Fileshia Powell, Parent

Mr. Lee Guest, Marvell Mayor

Dr. Brenda Poole, Regional Superintendent - Brinkley

Ms. Deborah Coffman, ADE Assistant Commissioner, Division of Elementary & Secondary Education

(DESE)

Mr. Eric Saunders, ADE Assistant State Superintendent, DESE Office of Coordinated Support and Service

Ms. Stacy Smith, ADE Deputy Commissioner

Ms. Smith expressed that the law requires that the entity must:

- be determined to be in good standing;
- the charter has not been previously revoked;
- have an overall rating of C or higher the three (3) years preceding the school year;
- and no significant findings on the prior-year annual financial audits.

Additionally, she stated that the law requires that the contract be with the governing body of an open-enrollment charter school, or another entity approved by the State Board. Also, contract negotiation occurs with the local district school board and the organization; currently, the Commissioner of Education serves as the local school board of the Marvell-Elaine School District.

By a unanimous vote, for numerous reasons, the Transformation Contract Interview Committee recommends to the State Board to approve the Marvell-Elaine School District School Board to enter into a transformation contract with Friendship Education Foundation for three (3) years.

Friendship Education Foundation meets all requirements by law.

Ms. Smith emphasized that the State Board is not approving an actual transformation contract; rather, the State Board is determining that the Marvell Elaine School District can enter into a contract with a third party. Marvell-Elaine School District will remain an Arkansas public school district called Marvell-Elaine School District that will go into a contract with a third party. Moreover, the school facilities, property, and land will continue to belong to the community of the Marvell-Elaine School District, and the sports teams will remain.

The contract requires a \$50,000 transition payment and an annual payment of \$200,000.

Public Comments

A motion to hear public comment was made by Mr. Steve Sutton, seconded by Dr. Fitz Hill. The motion unanimously passed.

The State Board heard public comments from the following:

Ms. Ali Noland
Dr. Anika Whitfield
Senator Joyce Elliott
Kwami Abdul-Bey

A motion to direct the Commissioner of Education to enter into a transformation contract with Friendship Education Foundation was made by Mr. Steve Sutton, seconded by Mr. Jeff Wood. The motion unanimously passed.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the State Board meeting was made by Dr. Fitz Hill, seconded by Mr. Steve Sutton. The motion unanimously passed. Chair Ouida Newton adjourned the State Board meeting at 3:48 PM.

Minutes recorded by Angela Scaife.

Jacob Oliva, Secretary
Arkansas Department of Education

Ouida Newton, Chair
State Board of Education