

**March 12, 2026 at 10:30 AM - State Board of Education
Regular Meeting**

Present: Adrienne Woods, Chair; Lisa Hunter, Vice-Chair; Dr. Aaron Abbott; Gary Arnold; Ken Bragg; Randy Henderson; Leigh Keener; Jeff Wood; Jeanie Wilcoxon, 2025 Teacher of the Year; Jacob Oliva, ADE Secretary.

Absent: David Peacock

The Arkansas State Board of Education (State Board) met Friday, March 12, 2026. Adrienne Woods called the meeting to order at 10:31 AM, followed by a moment of silence.

The National Anthem was sung by the Sloan-Hendrix School District choir, led by Jerry Felps, Choir Director.

Recognition

V.1. Ronald Reagan Oratory National Finals High School Competition Winner – Zander Schoultz

Item V.1. was presented by Jacob Oliva, Secretary. Present was Zander Schoultz, Lakeside High School.

Zander Schoultz, a junior from Lakeside High School in Hot Springs, was named the winner of the high school portion of the 2nd Annual Ronald Reagan Oratory National Finals Competition. The competition was held at the Reagan Library on January 10, 2026. Zander showcased his talents by delivering a compelling presentation of one of President Reagan's radio addresses.

V.2. Harvard University National Speech and Debate Tournament Winners – Jack Liu and Shangyu Wu

Item V.2. was presented by Jacob Oliva, Secretary. Present from Little Rock Central High School were Dr. Rosie Valdez Block, Director of Speech and Debate; Colten Gilbert, Assistant Director; and Juniors Jack Liu and Shangyu Wu.

Jack Liu and Shangyu Wu, juniors from Little Rock Central High School, made Arkansas history by becoming the first and only team from the state to win the Harvard University National Speech and Debate Tournament.

The students traveled to Harvard University in February to compete as part of Central's policy debate team. Entering the tournament ranked second in the nation, they earned a national championship and brought this prestigious title home to Arkansas.

V.3. Beloved Community Civic Leadership Award — Dr. DuShun Scarbrough

Item V.2. was presented by Jacob Oliva, Secretary. Present was Dr. DuShun Scarbrough, Executive Director, Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission.

Dr. DuShun Scarbrough Sr., Executive Director of the Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission, received a national award, the Beloved Community Civic Leadership Award in February at a ceremony in Atlanta, GA, presented by The King Center. Additionally, Dr. Scarbrough was the second Arkansas recipient of the 2026 National Freedom Flame Award, presented by the organizers of the Selma Bridge Crossing Jubilee. The first Arkansas recipient of the National Freedom Flame Award was Dr. Mayo Angelo.

Changes to Agenda

Continuance

Action Agenda

VII.3. Request for Waiver – LA-25-004 – Jacqueline Mills

A motion to grant a continuance of Action Agenda Item VII.3. Request for Waiver – LA-25-004 – Jacqueline Mills was made by Jeff Wood, seconded by Dr. Aaron Abbott. The motion unanimously passed.

Action Agenda

VII.1. Application for District Conversion Charter by the Little Rock School District at Hall High School

Item VII.1. was presented by Carlton McGee, Principal, Hall High School. Also present was Stacy Smith, Deputy Commissioner; Dr. Darrell Smith, Assistant Commissioner, Office of School Choice and Parent Empowerment; and Dr. Jermall Wright, Superintendent, Little Rock School District.

On January 29, 2026, representatives of the Little Rock School District provided a presentation to the Charter Authorizing Panel about the proposed district conversion charter for grades 9-12 as a blended learning environment operating at Hall High School.

During the State Board meeting held on February 12, 2026, a motion to pull the item from the Consent Agenda for discussion during the State Board meeting scheduled on March 12, 2026, was made by David Peacock, seconded by Randy Henderson. The motion unanimously passed.

A motion to modify the decision of Charter Authorizing Panel to add a one year waiver of A.C.A. § 6.16.102 was made by Jeff Wood, seconded by Dr. Aaron Abbott. The motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes, 1 No (Lisa Hunter).

VII.2. Consideration of the Arkansas Better Chance Program Renewal Grants for FY27

Item VII.2. was presented by Ashelyn Abney, Director, Office of Early Childhood.

The Office of Early Childhood Education (OEC) requested approval for the Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Program Renewal Grants for the 2026-2027 school year, pending approval of legislative appropriation, and authorization for OEC to administer slot funding, as needed in alignment with enrollment levels and program capacity.

OEC also requested to support foster children, as well as, homeless/displaced children as the need arises. ABC provides waivers for the identified children to receive immediate services. The placement of a foster child and/or displaced child in an ABC program would add a per child award above the total awarded number of slots for that program during the 2026-2027 year.

A motion to allow the Office of Early Childhood to reallocate slots as necessary throughout the fiscal year was made by Leigh Keener, seconded by Lisa Hunter. The motion unanimously passed.

A motion to provide the Office of Early Childhood the flexibility to meet the needs of vulnerable populations as they arise was made Leigh Keener, seconded by Dr. Aaron Abbott. The motion unanimously passed.

VII.3. Request for Waiver – LA-25-004 – Jacqueline Mills

Item VII.3. – Continuance granted

VII.4. Request for Waiver – LA-25-005 – Pamela Wyatt

Item VII.4. was presented by Daniel Shults, Chief Legal Counsel. Also present was Pamela Wyatt, educator.

The Arkansas Department of Education received information that Pamela Wyatt, educator was convicted of disqualifying criminal offenses. Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-410, the State Board shall not renew an existing license and shall revoke an existing license not up for renewal of a person who has pled guilty or nolo contendere to or has been found guilty of an enumerated offense by a court in the State of Arkansas or of any similar offense by a court in another state or by a federal court. The educator requested a waiver under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-410(f).

A motion to grant the waiver request for Pamela Wyatt, educator was made by Dr. Aaron Abbott, seconded by Randy Henderson. The motion unanimously passed.

New Business

None

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes
2. Renewal of School Charters
 - a. Cave City High School Career and Collegiate Preparatory School
 - b. Cave City Middle School Career and Collegiate Preparatory School
 - c. Cross County Elementary Tech Academy
 - d. Cross County High School – A New Tech School
 - e. Fayetteville Virtual Academy – A District Conversion School
 - f. Mountain Home High School Career Academies
 - g. Southside Charter High School
 - h. Southside Junior High School
 - i. Westwind School for the Performing Arts
3. IX.3. Review of Loan and Bond Applications

A motion to approve the Consent Agenda was made by Lisa Hunter, seconded by Leigh Keener. The motion unanimously passed.

Public Comments

The State Board heard public comments from the following:

- Charline Wright

Adjournment

Adrienne Woods, Chair adjourned the State Board meeting at 1:59 PM.

Minutes recorded by Angela Scaife.

Jacob Oliva, Secretary
Arkansas Department of Education

Adrienne Woods, Chair
State Board of Education