

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 August 20, 2024, at the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

**Present:** Robert Fagan, Chair; Dr. John McAllister, Vice Chair; Cary Smith, Board Member; Philip Powell, Board Member; Jerry Belew, Board Member; K. Nicole Walsh, ASD Superintendent; Tyrone Williams, ASBVI Interim Superintendent; Holley Mott, ASD Parent Representative; Will Gorum and Sydney Morriss, Interpreters; Members of the community and press

**Absent:** None

Mr. Fagan called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm. Mr. Fagan called the roll and announced that the next board meeting will be held on September 17, at the Arkansas School for the Blind in the Multi-Purpose room.

Trey Lewis, ASD High School Senior, shared his summer experience at the Deaf Youth Leadership Camp in Illinois. He learned leadership, socialization and networking skills. Trey expressed his gratitude to the ASD Foundation and to VR for their support.

SCM and Macky Mitchell Architects shared briefly about their plan to produce a unified, state of the art campus. The architects wrapped up their 3-day long visit filled with engagement meetings with 14 groups. Two hundred and fifty people participated, sharing their thoughts to help guide the architect's design. Graffiti walls were put up on both campuses to gather answers to prompts, determining what is important all. Clear themes and beautiful patterns have emerged in the areas of Career and Technical Education, safety, Statewide Services, language development and early acquisition, co-location, consolidation, supports, classrooms and education, extracurricular activities, and room for growth and flexibility. These patterns will guide the architect's design and design process. After taking in all stakeholder input over the three days, the Joint Leadership Committee came up with the following goal for the new build: This place will be a beacon for best practice for educating children who are deaf and blind, a national model to serve students and their families. The next steps will be to refine the concept to a program level with collaboration being priority number one.

A ten-minute recess was taken to allow the press time to ask questions concerning the new build. Meeting resumed at 5:36 pm.

## Joint Agenda

### **24-J-58 Motion to Approve Joint Meeting July 23, 2024, Minutes**

Mr. Powell made a motion to approve. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion Carried.

### **24-J-59 Motion to Retire into Executive Session**

Dr. McAllister stated that the board would like to retire into Executive Session at the end of the meeting and made a motion to do so. Mr. Belew seconded the motion.

### **Action Items –**

#### **ASBVI District Support Plan**

Mr. Williams stated that they plan to improve their elementary and secondary education by supporting the things outlined in the LEARNS law with a focus on literacy, empowerment, accountability, readiness, networking, and school safety. We will work towards improving our attendance and strengthening our curriculum and making sure our teachers are properly supported. Most academic classes have been moved into the Helen Keller building.

#### **ASD District Support Plan**

Mrs. Walsh relayed that the ASD plan is focused heavily on reading and supports for literacy. Stating we have adopted Read 180 as our current curriculum, however are investigating additional core curriculums to ensure a robust ELA curriculum for our students. Adequate training for teachers will be provided.

No board members expressed concern or question.

#### **Assurance for Constitutionally Protected Prayer**

Williams and Walsh shared that both schools are abiding by the law to ensure students have the right afforded to them to take a moment of silence for prayer if they so choose.

No board members expressed concern or question.

### **Discussion Items –**

#### **ASBVI Bullying Report**

There was one incident of bullying in which a student was accused of sending harassing text messages. Parents were notified and the student had privileges removed. Handbook was followed in disciplinary measures taken.

#### **ASD Bullying Report**

Two incidences reported last year. The first was a secondary student using racial slurs towards another student. The child's parent reported this to our Dean of Students which turned into an investigation. Student admitted to allegations and the incident was witnessed by others. Parents were notified and student received a three day out of school suspension, a drop in dorm level and a 2-hour character education upon return to school. The second incident involved an elementary school student who was

reported intentionally excluding others and actively recruiting other students to exclude the individual as well. After interviewing students and reviewing staff documentation, the incident was determined credible. Parents were notified and the student received three days in dorm suspension, as well as restitution and character education.

Mr. Powell asked for clarification on a drop in dorm level. Walsh explained that the levels allow students to earn privileges based on positive behavior and maintained grade levels. This student, therefore, lost two levels worth of privileges.

No board members expressed concern.

### **Community Support Announcement**

Announcement to the public explaining the norms of a board meeting due to concerns expressed regarding input from the crowd during meetings. Board meetings are held in public but not for the public. Therefore, if someone stands up and signs from the community, the interpreter may not immediately respond to or voice for you. Mr. Fagan may ask the person interrupting the meeting to step out or sit down, at which point the interpreter would relay what is being stated.

No board members expressed concern or question.

## **ASB Agenda**

### **24-B-60 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**

- Summer conference
- Moved all classrooms to the Helen Keller building
- Food pantry. 25 students received food bags for 34 weeks of school. All donated by Midtown Church in Benton. They have committed to continue donating this year. Meals at holidays and wish lists. Four students received meals during the summer. Approximately 1000 bags of food shared altogether!
- Hired high quality teachers for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7-8<sup>th</sup> grade. They are very eager and have been working with our Math and ELA coaches.
- All gates locked during the day
- Most all of ASBVII classes moved into the Helen Keller building.

- SpEd dept moved to Hill Cottage as well as birth to 3 program.
- NWEA testing will take place next week.

### **ASD Agenda**

#### **24-D-61 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)**

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

**Action Items** – None

**Discussion Items** –

#### **Statewide Services Telecommuting Procedure**

Some of our students have been relocated into office spaces due to the upcoming demolition of buildings. Therefore, we are somewhat limited on office space. Since our Statewide Service providers are potentially only on campus two times a month, we have developed a telecommuting procedure to allow them to have a home office, freeing up a minimally used office space. These are trustworthy employees who are doing a great work out in the community. Although state vehicles are an option for our Statewide Services employee use, they can be paid mileage if they live too far to take advantage of a state vehicle. This practice can also be discussed for our ASB staff in outreach services.

#### **ASD Superintendent Report**

- 110 students preregistered as Aug 14
  - 15 in process for enrollment
  - 2 accepted in ECC
- Staffing numbers are at 110 full time
- New teachers – Agricultural Science Teacher and a Librarian that will be a shared service
- Couple of instructional positions still vacant
- Four non instructional positions are still open – one being our public safety officer – CSSO which will be a full-time position. There are two interested applicants we will be interviewing soon.
- Restructuring - Director of Special Services which will be supervising Special Education Compliance, Nursing, Food Services, Family and Student Engagement, Related Services and Statewide Services. All restructuring was completed with staff on hand.
- Academic performance – laying a good foundation for a successful year
  - Principal’s meetings
  - Data review
  - Emergency preparedness planning in light of our recent move
  - Instruction improvement plans
  - Discussed academic challenges

- Special Education Support Services – Two Corrective Action Plans (CAP). One has been completely cleared. The other, our long-term CAP is still in process with the next steps being due December 15. We are ahead of schedule.
- Our move is complete thanks to our wonderful team who worked together to make it happen.
- Fencing for our lower school playground is up
- Addressing maintenance concerns
- Fundraising opportunities – hopefully will have more information next month
- Now accepting volunteers. Please ask for an application.
- NFFA did a video on our program. Check it out on Facebook. We are one of the few Deaf FFA chapters in the nation. CTE is a great place to start with merging, but we need training first so that our teachers are ready.

#### **Executive Session –**

Dr. McAllister stated the board would like to move into Executive Session to discuss Secretary Oliva's recommendation to demote or terminate Mr. Williams from his position as the Interim Superintendent, top administrative position at the Arkansas School for the Blind.

Mr. Powell made a motion to move into Executive Session. Mr. Belew seconded. Motion Carried.

The public meeting was called back to order at 6:57 pm. Mr. Fagan asked Dr. McAllister to explain the motion. McAllister stated that the motion on the floor is to demote Mr. Williams and appoint Dr. Chris Barnes to the immediate position of Superintendent.

Dr. McAllister motioned to demote Mr. Williams to Principal. Mr. Powell seconded. Mr. Belew abstained. Let it be noted that any member who abstains from voting will be counted as having voted against the motion or resolution. Motion carried.

#### **24-J-62 Motion to Adjourn**

Mrs. Smith made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Powell seconded. Motion carried.

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Robert Fagan, Chair

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Dr. John McAllister, Vice Chair