

## Petition for Closure of Isolated School

The Harmony Grove School District (Ouachita County) seeks to close its Sparkman K-12 campus, which is an “isolated school” as defined by Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-601, at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Arkansas Code Ann. § 6-20-602 affords two ways that an isolated school may be closed. The first is if the local Board of Directors unanimously votes for the closure. If the vote is not unanimous, the school may be closed if the majority of the local Board of Directors voted for the closure and closure is approved by the majority of the State Board of Education. *See* Ark. Code Ann. 6-20-602(b)(1)-(2). In the present case, a majority of the Harmony Grove Board of Directors voted to close the Sparkman K-12 campus (5-2), but the vote was not unanimous.

A local Board of Directors seeking the State Board’s approval to close an isolated school must no less than 30 days prior to a regularly scheduled State Board meeting request a hearing and file a Petition that contains:

- An identification of the specific isolated school that the local Board of Directors has moved to close;
- A statement of all reasons that the isolated school should be closed;
- A statement of how the closure will serve the best interests of the students in the district as a whole;
- A statement as to whether the closure will have any negative impact on desegregation efforts or violate any valid court order from a court of proper jurisdiction; and
- A copy of the final motion approving the closure by the local Board of Directors.

Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602(b)(2)(B)(i) and (ii)(a)-(e). The State Board has the authority to approve or disapprove the Petition, but only shall approve the Petition if it finds the closure to be in the best interests of the students in the school district as a whole, and that the closure will not have any negative impact on desegregation efforts or will violate any valid court order. Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602(b)(2)(C)(i)-(iii).

The Harmony Grove School District has filed a timely Petition and request for hearing.