

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 May 20, 2025, at the Arkansas School for the Deaf Leopard Spot (formerly the Tornado Shelter).

Present: Robert Fagan, Chair; Dr. John McAllister, Vice Chair; Cary Smith, Board Member; Philip Powell, Board Member; Jerry Belew, Board Member, and Holley Mott, ASD Parent Representative, K. Nicole Walsh, ASD Superintendent; Dr. Chris Barnes, ASBVI Interim Superintendent; Interpreters; Members of the community.

Mr. Fagan called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. He said there was a lot of recognition for the meeting tonight. He asked Dr. Barnes to introduce the senior class. Dr. Barnes said this is the 2025 Senior Class for ASBVI. The students introduced themselves and told them their plans for after graduation. Dr. Barnes said graduation will be Thursday at 10:00 am in Woolly Auditorium. The ASBVI seniors led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Fagan thanked the seniors for coming. He said next Ms. Walsh had special recognition for teachers. Ms. Walsh said May is Teacher Appreciation Month. She said so often we forget that teachers do the work, day in and day out. She said they wanted to take the time to honor teachers who have worked at ASB/ASD 10 years or more. She recognized ASD's teachers- Katie Brown, 10+ years; Amy Yetley, 10+ years; Tommy Varner, 11+ years; Mandy Akins, 13+ years; Shannon Huels, 13+ years; Kara Siemens, 17+ years; Gina Wooten, 22+ years; Janie Kimble, 26+ years; Judy Brint-Murphy, Jennifer Harrington, 27+ years; Lynn Brooks, 43+ years; ASB teachers-Brian Tanner, 10+ years; Alisha Allred, 11+ years; Brandey Burnett, 11+ years; Alicia Reddick, 17+ years; Shelli Hardman, 23+ years; Phyllis Gunderman, 29+ years; Pam Rogers, 33+ years. Mr. Fagan thanked all of them for their hard work and dedication to the schools. He said the Board appreciates all they do. He said it is like a family.

Mr. Fagan called roll - all board members were present.

The next meeting will be June 17, 2025, in Woolly Auditorium on the ASBVI campus. Everyone was good with that date.

Joint Agenda

25-J-22 Motion to Approve Joint Meeting Minutes for April 15, 2025.

Mrs. Smith made a motion to approve. Mr. Belew seconded. Motion carried.

Action Items: None

Discussion Items: None

Mr. Fagan asked if anyone signed up for public comments. No one signed up. The meeting moved to the ASD agenda.

ASD Agenda

25-D-23 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

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

Action Items – None

Discussion Items – None

Ms. Walsh asked the board if a discussion item could be added after her superintendent report. She said there was new information since the agenda had been approved. It is their curriculum for next year.

Ms. Walsh thanked Nabholz for the fabulous meal they provided the board with today. She asked Paul and Chris to give an update on the construction. Chris said all the buildings have been demolished. They are cleaning up footings and the demos should be wrapped up this week. He said they would start site utilities in about a week or so. Paul said they are pricing design development drawings. He said if you imagine zero to 100% drawings, they are probably at the 60-65% mark. They have a very good understanding of what is in the building. They are taking that and getting pricing from subcontractors to make sure they are tracking it along. The project is going great. The design team has been incredible and the team at the school. Taking the design development drawings, they will move into what they call construction drawings (which they will actually build off of). They have gotten structural drawings for the north half of the building. They are looking to procure some of those items to keep moving forward.

Mr. Powell asked if they were still on track. He said absolutely. Ms. Walsh said she understood they are nearly a month ahead.

ASD Superintendent Report

- Enrollment is steady at 109 students
- Graduation for ASD at 6:00 pm on May 22nd
- ASB graduation at 10:00 am on May 22nd
- Parent/Student/Community Building Reveal May 22nd. 2-3:30
- Teacher appreciation week was a huge success
- ASB student announced at Trojan baseball game

- Celebrated Deaf Leadership Council 5/8. The council will send out a survey over the summer to gain insight into why there is not as much participation as in the past
- GPSD ASL Bowl - Multiple students won awards in poetry, storytelling and team competition
- Prom was a huge hit
- Held Townhalls to talk about the new building and ASB/ASD merger
- Crystal Bridges April 29th - It was a joint trip with ASB/ASD 10th – 12th grade (55 students)
- First Student Advisory committee meeting with a boy and a girl from grades 9 – 11 to talk about the plan for next year.
- Buildings/Facilities – April rough for cleanup after storms. Thanked Roy and his team
- Classroom Highlights – Finished ATLAS testing in April
- Celebrated Deaf History Month in April
- Hired 7 – 3 pm RN and 3 – 11 pm LPN
- Tours held for potential students
- Statewide Services – Currently have 27 children/8 new referrals to be evaluated
- Celebration Day on Friday for ASB/ASD
- Video from Crystal Bridges shown

Dona VanDevender talked about the curriculum selection that has been made for literacy for next year.. She they are excited about the new curriculum – American Reading Company (ARC). It is divided into two parts. One part is called IRLA, the other is Core Curriculum. IRLA is widely used, more than 25 deaf schools are using it. She said some blind schools use it, but she did not know of any blind schools using the Core Curriculum. She said IRLA improved student stamina and interest in reading. It is based on phonetic units. She said they are looking forward to purchasing and implementing for the 25/26 school year.

Ms. Walsh said this is what ASD is using, and she is encouraging ASB to look into it also. She said there are a lot of benefits to sharing a curriculum, it allows teachers to have a partner who is working on the same thing. It allows students to have similar experiences. She said they want to be very sure it meets the students' needs.

The agenda moved to the ASB agenda.

ASB Agenda

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

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

Discussion Items – None

Action Items –None

ASB Superintendent Report

- Enrollment holding steady at 63 student
- Recruiting new students
- Attendance is holding steady, better than in the winter
- Graduation week
- Celebrating students that met their AR 5/21
- ATLAS Assessment – many accommodations needed; a test monitor came on the last day of testing. They said everything going well
- Prom on 4/23 at Burns Park Hospitality House-best Roaring 20's party
- Crystal Bridges trip – a wonderful experience for the students
- EAST Night Out/Spring Concert/Parent Dinner on 5/8
- Student of the Month announced
- Teacher Appreciation Week/Principal's Day/Nurse's Week
- Senior Breakfast/Graduation/Building Reveal for students/community on 5/22
- Senior Trip to Silver Dollar City on 5/27
- West Wing Awards/Kindergarten Graduation 5/28 at 9:30
- Sixth Grade Graduation 5/29 at 10:30
- Last day of school June 6th
- Summer Camp 6/16 - 20 (Grades 1-6)
- Summer Camp 6/23-27 (Through age 15)
- Jump Start for students 16–19 – Virtual 6/10-12; Onside Assignments 6/16-27
- ASB student announced baseball game for UALR Trojans – made possible by Jena McDonnell
- Human Capital – Still have positions to be filled; have placed RN; 2 Residential Advisors
- Building Updates – everything moving fast

Mr. Fagan reminded the board members of the graduations. Ms. Walsh asked who was planning to attend the graduations.

Mr. Fagan asked for a motion to adjourn.

25-B-25 Motion to Adjourn

Mr. Powell made a motion. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 6:20pm.

Robert Fagan, Chair

Cary Smith, Secretary