

OFFICIAL MINUTES FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING OF THE
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

The Board of Trustees for the Arkansas School for the Deaf and the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired met for their monthly meeting on April 22, 2020.

Present: Roy DePriest, Chairperson; Dr. John McAllister, Vice-Chairperson; Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Secretary; Faith McLaughlin, Board Member; Susan Pack, Board Member (via phone); James Caton, ASBVI Superintendent; Dr. Janet Dickinson, ASD Superintendent; Dr. Priya Gupta, ASB Parent Representative; Holley Mott, ASD Parent Representative; Jaime Harrell and Amanda Firth, Interpreters

Mr. DePriest called the meeting to order at 1:08 pm. The next meeting was scheduled for May 19, 2020. Mr. DePriest said the meeting would be at 5:00 p.m. at ASB.

20-J-007 Motion to Approve Minutes

Mr. DePriest asked for a motion to approve the minutes from February meeting. The board did not meet in March so there are no March minutes. Ms. McLaughlin made a motion to approve February minutes and Dr. Atcherson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Items

Mr. DePriest said the main business for this meeting is the superintendents' evaluations. He said that would be done in Executive session. He said they would meet across the hall to perform the evaluations. Ms. McLaughlin said she would make the recommendation that the board go through the agenda first and perform the evaluations at the end of the meeting. Mr. DePriest said that would be easier and they would do the evaluations at the end of the meeting.

Discussion Items
COVID-19

Mr. Caton said it has been interesting times for all schools. He said there have been a lot of learning curves for remote learning. He said they have implemented a lot of methods for ASB students because not any one thing fits our students' needs. A lot of printed materials are still being used and AMI packets prepared by the teachers, as well as computer based learning. A lot of ASB families do have internet and able to do zoom sessions and Google Classroom. Some teachers are using Facebook. It is a wide variety of different means of delivering the content to the students. Mr. Caton said they have really focused on the Core content and the basics, not introducing any new instruction.

Mr. Caton said ASB has been following the ADE guidelines for AMI while keeping in mind what is the balance that families can tolerate under these circumstances. The students were divided up between all of the teachers so that each teacher has 3 to 4 students and have one teacher be a point of contact for each family. The family is contacted each week to see where the student is and if any assistance is needed. He said this way the family is getting one call instead of several calls. It is figuring out what is best for each family and what their needs are and at the same time trying to maintain some basic instruction and keep the kids from losing as little as possible (since the traditional classroom cannot be duplicated). He said he has been very pleased at the adjustments the teachers have made for the students. The teachers have stepped up to the plate and are committed and involved in keeping the kids engaged in the learning activities during these circumstances. He said he was pleased with how it is going at this point.

Mr. Caton said the majority of staff is working remotely. Access to the buildings is restricted and a log is kept of who comes and what times. He said he set from 10 – 2 as the designated times to be on campus. He said restriction for how many people can be on campus at the same time. Mr. DePriest asked what the daily average was for people on campus. Mr. Caton said four. He said the teacher have a Google sign-up for coming to the school. He said that way he has been able to control access to the buildings. Masks and gloves are available for anyone that enters the building. He said there are very few deliveries. The last few weeks have gone smoothly. It seems everyone has gotten into a routine and it is like the new normal for now. He said schools are not about social distancing as everyone knows. He said he was sure everyone in the room was feeling the abnormality and not being able to have the interaction that our brains are used to. The kids are most certainly missed. He said most calendar events have been canceled. He said they are trying to figure out what can be done for graduation – some kind of momentum that they can walk away with – virtual or some other means since a traditional graduation cannot happen this year. He asked if there were any questions. Dr. McAllister asked about summer programs. Mr. Caton said they were still working on that but as far as bringing kids to stay on campus they were not going to do that. He said he did not know how that would impact the UALR summer intern program. He said he was very reluctant to open the campus to any type of residential stays over the summer. He said there is a lot the kids lose out on and that is true of all schools in the district state-wide. He said there are so many things they do with the kids in terms of Expanded Core Curriculum. Even with the remote learning, there are other staff (para's/RA's) contacting the kids and doing other types of activities with them and trying to keep them engaged in the Expanded Core for the blind and visually impaired. Mr. Caton said they were trying to meet every need they could with all the resources they have.

Dr. Dickinson said when the school year started they never envisioned how it would end. The COVID-19 pandemic has upended our world. We have changed the way we do almost everything – teaching students, teaming together and supporting each other. Before we met in classrooms, cafeteria, and gymnasium for games, now we meet through the internet – zoom, Google, etc.

ASD actually began the transition to Google Classroom and 1:1 laptops for students 3 years ago. The first year our high school students received 1:1 MacBooks. Then 2 years ago, our middle school students received Chromebooks. This year, they were starting the 1:1 laptop program for 3rd – 5th grade with Chromebooks. So the students are already familiar with learning online and submitting assignments online. In many ways, they had a smooth transition to online learning.

ASD is now currently working with school districts to help get devices to any student who did not already have one assigned to them. She greatly appreciates the support of Cathi Swann from the ARESC COOP, and also the school districts for partnering with ASD to get laptops to students.

While most staff is working from home, she is in her office each day, along with other essential staff.

While many things have changed, one thing that hasn't changed is the spirit of ASD. These moments in history often bring out the best in creativity and motivation. Next year, we will look back and remember...wow ASD raised the bar to meet students' needs through innovation and persistence. She believes they will look back and be impressed. She is so proud of her team.

Teachers and students have engaged in amazing innovative work through internet platforms. Learning is happening, and students are motivated and engaged. Parents are stepping up and ensuring their students have authentic learning experiences.

ASD's recent Drive Thru was very successful. Families drove through campus and stopped at Pit Stops to pick up their children's dorm items, snacks, etc. They were so excited to see the students, especially the little "I love you" hands out the windows. They miss their students.

So far, it seems no one from the ASD family has tested positive for COVID-19. Thankful!

What happens NEXT? They are working on planning several possible scenarios. They do not know what will happen for sure, but our goal is to come back as smooth and safe as possible.

Dr. Dickinson said ASD has endured a pretty hefty budget cut for the current fiscal year. They have cut everything, except essentials to educate students. They received a preliminary view of their budget for the next fiscal year. It shows a 15% cut in Category A, but with an additional 5% funding in each of the following categories – Category B, C, & D. They are hopeful that they will be able to at least recapture 10% through Categories B & C.


Mr. DePriest asked her what their average daily people on campus would be. Nurse Vicki said about 23 every day at the beginning getting the dorm students belongings to them, now about 5 or 6 and they are in different buildings.

Mr. DePriest asked Mr. Caton if ASB had to do a similar process with the dorm students getting their belongings. Mr. Caton said there were 5 – 6 families left to pick up things. He said they scheduled the RA's to come in and pack the things in the dorms then called the students to come pick up their belongings.

Mr. Caton said he would add that ASB is under the same circumstances regarding the budget. He said as of now ASB would be starting the new fiscal year with about a million dollars less than what it would normally be, but hopefully they will end up getting some of the other funding types. He said historically they have never gotten those funds. He said this year's cut was a little over \$300,000.

Mr. DePriest said by the next meeting they will know even more and have more information regarding COVID-19 as it affects everyone. Mr. Caton said they were all very fortunate that everyone is still on the payroll and haven't had to make any cuts.

There being no further Joint business, the meeting moved to the agenda for the School for the Blind.



Roy DePriest, Chair



Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Secretary

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ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

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20-B-004 Motion to Approve Consent Items

Mr. DePriest asked for a motion to approve the consent items to include the minutes, financial statement and personnel items. Dr. McAllister made a motion to approve the consent items and Ms. McLaughlin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. DePriest asked if the new hire was before the COVID-19 started. Mr. Caton said yes. He said they are under a hiring freeze. He said the teacher that resigned was a Sped teacher and he is trying to get approval to fill that position since it is such a critical position. Mr. DePriest asked what he called the position. Mr. Caton said they are not just certified as a teacher of the visually impaired but are fully certified in Special Education. She worked with kids with some disabilities in addition to their visual impairment. He said there was also another person in that same area that has been on FMLA. That left us two people short in that area and this is also IEP season. Mr. Caton said ASB also lost Patrick Nixon, Residential Manager. He said it was and still is a very sad time for the ASB family.

Action Items

None

Discussion Items

None

There being no further business for the School for the Blind, the agenda moved to the School for the Deaf.



Roy DePriest, Chair



Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Secretary

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Present: Roy DePriest, Chairperson; Dr. John McAllister, Vice-Chair; Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Secretary; Faith McLaughlin, Board Member; Susan Pack, Board Member; Dr. Priya Gupta, ASB Parent Representative; Holley Mott, ASD Parent Representative; James Caton, ASBVI Superintendent; Dr. Janet Dickinson, ASD Superintendent; Jaime Harrell and Amanda Firth, Interpreters

20-D-003 Motion to Approve Consent Items

Mr. DePriest asked for a motion to approve the consent items to include the minutes, financial statement and personnel items. Dr. Atcherson made a motion to approve the consent items and Ms. McLaughlin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. DePriest asked if their new hire was the same situation and Dr. Dickinson said yes.

Action Items

None

Discussion Items

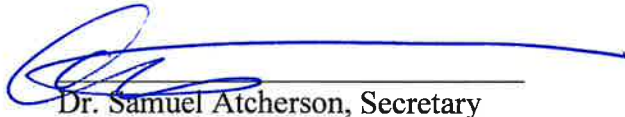
None

Mr. DePriest said at this time they would return to Joint meeting portion and complete the superintendent evaluations. He said that the evaluations had to be done in Executive Session and that was the only business to be discussed. Executive Session started at 1:42 and ended at 3:55.

The meeting adjourned at 3:57.



Roy DePriest, Chair



Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Secretary