

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 July 11, 2017.

**Present:** Dr. Doug Watson, Chairperson; Faith McLaughlin, Vice Chairperson; Susan Pack, Secretary; Everett Elam, Board Member; Dr. John McAllister, Board Member; James Caton, ASBVI Superintendent; Dr. Janet Dickinson, ASD Superintendent; Jeanne Tribett, ASB Parent Representative; Harry Pompeo, ASD Parent Representative; Beth Smith and Will Gorum, Interpreters; Members of the Deaf Community; Members of the Blind Community, Hillcrest residents

Dr. Watson called the meeting to order at 4:08 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for August 15<sup>th</sup> at ASD. Ms. McLaughlin stated she would be out of state but could join by conference call.

**17-J-009 Motion to Approve Minutes**

Dr. Watson asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the June meeting. Ms. McLaughlin made a motion to approve the June minutes and Ms. Pack seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Action Items**

**None**

**Discussion Items**

**ASD Parent Representative – Harry Pompeo**

Mr. Pompeo said there is not much news. ASD will be having football and volleyball camp the first week of August. Summer School is complete. The theme was Super Heroes and focused on deaf history. Deaf and hard of hearing students plus SODAS and CODAS attended summer camp. The students went to the Clinton Library, Museum of Discovery, Zoo, waterpark activities, Travelers game, and a trip to Silver Dollar City. Class involvement included ASL, cooking, art, science, engineering, technology, math and team building activities. Dr. Watson asked how this one compared to years previous. Mr. Pompeo said all four of his kids were there for the first time and they really enjoyed it a lot. Ms. Pack asked how many attended from public schools. He said Ray would respond to that question.

Ray said there were 89, 7 hard of hearing from the public school, 12 from mainstream and some are interested in coming to school at ASD. Dr. Watson asked what the Arkansas policy is for someone to come to school here – what do the parents have to do. Dr. Dickinson said they let people know summer camp is fun and exciting then when they attend they see what is going on here and fall in love with the campus. They are able to get in touch with Rick Porter and start the process with the local school district. Ray said if someone is interested in more information about ASD they can check a box on the application form. ASD uses that to reach out to the parents and share more information about the school. Dr. Watson asked if there was any way the school can inform parents around the state what the school provides. Dr. Dickinson said she knows they can communicate if there is a good relationship with the school district and Rick has many good relationships. She said many of them contact ASD. Said it is interesting for the parents as they have those two weeks free while their child is in summer camp. Mr. Pompeo said his 2<sup>nd</sup> son has never studied ASL and in the two week he was here I noticed he had new signs that he had picked up at summer camp. Ms. McLaughlin asked if it was difficult for the public school students to get into summer camp and is there a limit to how many you can take. Ray said historically have small numbers. Last year there were 62 students and this year 89. He said they wanted to revisit how they can do summer camp better. He said they hope to grow that number each year. Dr. Dickinson said they want to have a balance. She said they have big visions and would like to have all the deaf/hard of hearing students in the state come to ASD for summer camp but there are budget limitations.

#### **ASB Parent Representative – Jeannie Tribett**

Ms. Tribett said she had nothing to report.

Mr. Elam said blind culture doesn't seem to be as ingrained in Little Rock as deaf culture does. He asked what they thought it was that separates what deaf people do from what the blind do. He said you would think that being deaf would isolate you more but it seems to him from going to UALR and other disability hot spots around Little Rock that is just the opposite. Ms. Pack said she has discussed with James and she thinks one thing is that there is not a college for blind students like Gallaudet. Ms. Tribett asked Mr. Elam if he would have opted for a blind college if it had been available to him. Mr. Elam said he would have opted for it if it was like Dr. Dickinson talks about Gallaudet. Ms. McLaughlin said there are no blind colleges. Someone said no. Ray said he wanted to let them know Gallaudet was not the only university that the deaf can attend and he named off several other colleges for the deaf. Dr. Dickinson said she thought it was all about the language because they have a shared language that unites them. Ms. Pack said her husband was working the Rural Ed Conference in Hot Springs. Virtual school was the topic/speaker yesterday and they said their number one hottest course is ASL.

There being no further business of Joint nature, the agenda moved to the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Watson", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Douglas Watson, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Pack", written over a horizontal line.

Susan Pack, Secretary

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**17-D-013 Motion to Approve Consent Items**

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

**Action Items**

Dr. Dickinson said she had ASD's new student handbook. She said in both the Student Handbook and the Employee Handbook there was a lot of cleaning up of the language. She said there were no big policy changes. She said some of the things discussed with staff was for example last year we asked the staff (based on parent request) to not post any pictures on their personal Facebook pages. She said they officially added that to the handbook. She said in the Employee Handbook as a recommendation from the staff was to become more warm and friendly. She said they added pictures of the BOT and some other things to make it warmer – the policies are pretty much the same. Dr. Watson asked how they present the handbook to the students and parents. Dr. Dickinson said you can't give it to a student then expect them to read it so they go through it. The homeroom teacher will go through the handbook with the high school students.

**17-D-014 Motion to Approve ASD Student Handbook**

Ms. Pack made a motion to accept and approve the ASD Student Handbook for 2017 – 2018 and Ms. McLaughlin seconded the motion. The motion passed 5 – 0.

**17-D-015 Motion to Approve the ASD Employee Handbook**

Ms. Pack made a motion to accept/approve the 2017-2018 ASD Employee Handbook and Ms. McLaughlin seconded the motion. The motion passed 5 – 0.

## **Discussion Items**

### **None**

Ms. Pack said last month the 1240 Waiver was discussed and the board received the information from you but she wasn't sure if everyone in the room had the information.

Dr. Dickinson said she sent a letter to the community saying that ADE made a recommendation that we consider the 1240 Waiver. She said they have been waiting to see if ASD was eligible for the waiver. ADE attorneys decided that ASD is not eligible for the waiver. She said ADE is still trying to figure out how to support teachers better because many teachers have good backgrounds, deaf education degrees, but in Arkansas it means nothing. She said the goal is to have a good shining teacher in the classroom. She said they do not want a teacher who is great with kids but can't be in the classroom because of paperwork issues. She said the waiver is off the table so ASD has to be very conservative. She said she has met with ADE six times, met with OPM and met with Standards and the recommendation to her is to make sure every teacher is fully licensed and credentialed before they start the school year. Mr. Elam asked if they were looking to replace them if they can't. He said there was a short window if he was reading it correctly. Dr. Dickinson said she has good people and she is trying to do everything possible to keep teachers in the classroom but at the same time the school has to be protected. She said sometimes hard decisions have to be made. ADE recommends July 15<sup>th</sup> because you have time to look and find someone to put in the classroom.

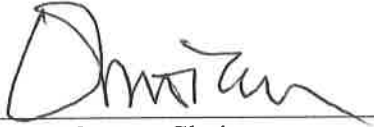
## **Superintendent Report**

Dr. Dickinson said they are ready to open the Culinary Arts program. Renovations are being made and it should be ready when school opens. The new Horticulture program is coming together. A new greenhouse is being brought in from the Lowe's grant. It will be adjacent to the Vocational Building. Dr. Dickinson and one of the Kindergarten students attended Deaf/Blind Awareness Day at the Capitol. The Governor was impressed with the student and made pictures with her. He also mentioned that he was very impressed with his recent visit to ASD.

Dr. Dickinson said she had the first draft for the Deaf Education Conference they will be holding on September 22. It should be on the website soon. Dr. Watson asked if it was going to be at the Embassy. Dr. Dickinson said yes it is a good location and would love everyone to come. Dr. Watson asked if it was Arkansas, Regional or National. Dr. Dickinson said they decided to call it the Arkansas Conference on Deaf Education and Career Readiness.

Dr. Dickinson recognized the staff that worked at Summer Camp.

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



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Dr. Doug Watson, Chair



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Susan Pack, Secretary

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**Present:** Dr. Doug Watson, Chairperson; Faith McLaughlin, Vice Chairperson; Susan Pack, Secretary; Everett Elam, Board Member; Dr. John McAllister, Board Member; Jeannie Tribett, ASBVI Parent Representative; Harry Pompeo, ASD Parent Representative; James Caton, ASBVI Superintendent; Dr. Janet Dickinson, ASD Superintendent; Beth Smith and Will Gorum, Interpreters; Members of the Deaf Community; Members of the Blind Community

**17-B-014 Motion to Approve Consent Items**

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

Dr. Watson asked Mr. Caton if he wanted to comment on people that left. Mr. Caton said they were waiting for the RN position to be unfrozen by the Governor. Ms. McLaughlin asked if the position would be a licensed RN. Mr. Caton answered yes that the ASB Infirmary is a licensed infirmary by the Arkansas Department of Health and are required to have a licensed RN. Ms. McLaughlin asked if it was the same for the Deaf School. Ms. Pack said they changed that when she was superintendent because they decided not to keep the kids at school but to send them home. She asked if they were licensed at the present time. Dr. Dickinson said they were not. Mr. Caton said in most public schools they have Nurse Stations. Dr. Watson asked if they were using different locations at the two schools. Mr. Caton said yes they were separate because they were two separate schools. Dr. Watson asked about the two retirees and if they were being replaced. Mr. Caton said he did replace the Teacher Supervisor (that Mr. Hill was in). He said Tyrone Williams was promoted to the Teacher Supervisor position. He said Mr. Williams would be helping the school focus more in a curriculum direction as he has that in his licensure. He said Mr. Williams was also licensed as a Building Administrator which will be helpful as well. Mr. Williams will also learn to be the LEA and Special Ed Supervisor. Mr. Caton said the school was in the process of advertising for Pam Raspberry's (Birth to Three) position. He said earlier this summer they had hired a GT Coordinator, Michelle Tull. He said she comes with excellent credentials and qualification, fully certified in Building Administrator. Mr. Elam asked where she was from and Mr. Caton said Springdale.

Ms. Tribett said she had talked about the EAST Lab being set up and asked how that was coming along. Mr. Caton said he was anxious to show the Board once everything was set up. He said the school was beginning to get the equipment in for the lab. He said it is located upstairs in the library area. He said there were new classroom tables and chairs, upgraded the network capabilities and upgraded the electrical capacity because of all the equipment that would be going in the lab. He said they would begin replacing the lighting with new LED lights. The EAST people that came and looked at it were excited about it and very complimentary of the area.

Ms. McLaughlin asked how the renovations were coming on the bathrooms. Mr. Caton said they have had their preconstruction meeting on the Prewitt Hall bathrooms and the work will begin on July 24<sup>th</sup>. It is expected that the work will take about 3 months. Prewitt Hall is the high school boys' dormitory and they will be relocated to another dormitory temporarily. Dr. Watson asked if there were accommodations that would be needed. Mr. Caton said there were no particular accommodations unless there is a wheelchair involved (and there will be a handicapped bathroom).

### **Action Items**

#### **Approval of 2017-2018 Student Handbook**

Mr. Caton said he had emailed a quick reference sheet showing the policies where there were changes made. He said a lot of it was cleaning up the language and wording and removing some repetitiveness. He said one policy that was changed was the graduation honors. The Valedictorian was removed and replaced with a Distinguished Award and an Advance Award. For a GPA of 3.5 and above the student will receive a Distinguished Award. For a 3.25 to 3.49 the student will receive an Advanced Award. A lot of high schools are increasingly not having a Valedictorian and going to other types of honors. Ms. McLaughlin asked if he thought there might be parents objecting to not having the Valedictorian. Mr. Caton said that remains to be seen and if so we will talk to them and try to explain the direction the school wants to go. He said he wants to honor as many students as possible.

#### **17-B-015 Motion to Approve ASB Student Handbook for 2017-2018**

Ms. Pack made a motion to approve the 2017-2018 Handbook for the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Dr. McAllister seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).



Dr. McAllister asked how ASB decides who will speak at graduation. Mr. Caton said he was going to go year by year and there may not be a student speaker or there may be several. He said if there was only one student with a Distinguished Award, we would have the flexibility to do a speech. Ms. McLaughlin asked Mr. Elam what he thought. Mr. Elam said he thought competition is good and he knows there is a lot of worry to singling that one person out making them look like the best but that is the real world. He said he didn't know if he liked it but he would support it. Mr. Caton said he didn't think it was watering it down as you still have a very high achievement in terms of the GPA. He said out of the graduating seniors which is typically a small class historically you are not going to have more than one or two that are going to be at that level. He said if too many people have issues with it he would certainly look at it again and revise it.

### **Discussion Items**

**None**

### **Superintendent Report**

Mr. Caton said they are still in the process of working on the Agency Strategic Plan for 2018-2019 fiscal years and the draft is due August 1<sup>st</sup> to the Governor's office. The Administrator team and I will be attending the AAEA Summer Conference the first week in August. Mr. Caton said they are still investigating applying for a RISE school designation. It is just now being rolled out in the state. He said everyone is busy getting ready for the new school year. He said they are making good progress on the Woolly Fine Arts roof replacement, unfortunately with one of the rain storms we did end up with a little damage because the roofers had taken too much off before they could finish covering it. Damages were basically in the front lobby area – all the ceiling tiles will have to be replaced and possibly the carpet. He said he has made it very clear that this could not happen again. Their instructions are not to take off more than you can replace for that day. He said since renovations will be starting in the Infirmary building the Infirmary will be relocated to the east end of this building for the beginning of the year. He said that dorm will be relocated to another building. He said he had gotten a quote for the Easter Seal property in terms of putting up a post and cable barrier fence, 350 feet 3 foot tall with 3/8 inch galvanized wire rope with posts set in concrete footing. The galvanized post (unpainted) was \$4,748 and if painted powder coated safety yellow it is \$5,566 and just painted safety yellow it is \$5,604. He said he would look at the financials to see what is left in the demolition fund and what could be covered by it. He said it was important to restrict vehicular access to the lot. He said his preference and that of the neighbors was to see it go back to a natural area and it would be a nice buffer for the school. Dr. Watson said Joann Coleman was very interested in helping us get the funding.

Dr. Watson asked about the Aspire testing and how the students are doing. Is there a way to measure that? Mr. Caton said yes ASB gets the test results for the school. He said they have received them but are still in the process of analyzing them. He said for tonight he was going to give a brief overview of what they are initially seeing. It does appear in the Elementary school that the kids are doing better with this particular test. He said they made several improvements. If you look at in terms of being ready they had 32% that ready in English, 41% in Math, 27% in Reading, 18% in Science and 14% in writing in the Elementary school. He said all except for Science were improvements from last year's percentages. He said this was looking at all the grades together. He said they would look at the grades individually later. In terms of needing support in the Elementary school they are showing 14% in English, 9% in Math (that is an improvement from last year's 16%), 41% in Reading, 36% in Science and 55% in Writing. He said in the Secondary school they are seeing as much improvement and will have to investigate to see what is going on. For English 25% were ready, 4% for Math, 13% for Reading, 4% in Science and 13% in Writing. In terms of needing support that is 25% in English, 79% in Math, 50% in Reading, 88% in Science and 50% in Writing, which is not a pretty picture. He said you have to look at different factors and look at the test itself as how it relates to blind and visually impaired student. Ms. McLaughlin said as the kids in the readiness level in Elementary improve and move upward, you will see a definite by the time they get to the next level. She said the instructional level must be getting better. For high school to try to make that change when foundation is needed will take some time. She said when he is finished analyzing with the staff she would be interested in seeing how it all falls out. Mr. Caton said this was only the second year they had had this test and there is not enough trend yet to point to whether a student is going to do better with it or not, especially our kids with their specialized needs but they are going to continue to move forward and do what is needed to get the percentages up.

Dr. Watson asked Dr. Dickinson what ASD was finding. Dr. Dickinson said this is the second year of the Aspire test. Last year I was not happy with the results, but at the same time could not compare it. This is the first year they have a comparison and feel it is not really for deaf students. She said Math skills were higher but you have to read to get the results so maybe the score might be skewed. She said she would get back with a report next month. Ray said they had not received the High School scores yet, but have received Middle School and Elementary. He said they are expecting those late July or first of August. Dr. Watson said should have them by the beginning of the school year. Mr. Caton said they were all in the portal. Dr. Dickinson said she would have to look at that. Dr. Watson said these are challenging times. Mr. Elam said is it the kids getting dumber or the test getting written by people who are not aware. Ms. Pack asked if all kids have to take it – multi-disabilities. Mr. Caton said kids that are on a portfolio would take a different assessment not the Aspire.

Dr. Watson said both schools have other ways to measure before and after tests. Dr. Dickinson said they have spent a lot of time discussing which assessments are best for the students.

Dr. Watson asked if there was any other business. Ms. McLaughlin said Dr. Dickinson became a grandmother this morning. Dr. Dickinson said her daughter was adopted from Rumania and gave the baby a Rumania name and she was not sure how to pronounce it – she knows how to spell it. She said the middle name is Xavier and weighed 6 pounds.

### **17-B-016 Motion to Adjourn**

Ms. McLaughlin made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Dr. McAllister seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 5:16 pm.



Dr. Doug Watson, Chair



Susan Pack, Secretary