

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 November 19, 2019.

Present: Susan Pack, Chairperson; Roy DePriest, Vice-Chairperson; Dr. John McAllister, Secretary; Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Board Member; Faith McLaughlin, Board Member; James Caton, ASBVI Superintendent; Dr. Janet Dickinson, ASD Superintendent; Dr. Priya Gupta, ASB Parent Representative; Holley Mott, ASD Parent Representative; Beth Smith and Will Gorum, Interpreters; Members of the Deaf Community; Members of the Blind Community, Hillcrest Residents

Ms. Pack called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm. The next meeting was scheduled for December 17, 2019 at the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

19-J-016 Motion to Approve Minutes

Ms. Pack asked for a motion to approve the minutes from October 15th meeting. Ms. McLaughlin made a motion to approve the October minutes and Dr. McAllister seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Items

None

Discussion Items

Mr. Caton said he had an item he wanted to bring to the group's attention. He said he received a letter today from the Arkansas School Board Association stating one or more of the board members will be a recipient of an ASBA Boardmanship Award. He said the winners will receive the awards during the Awards Luncheon at the ASBA Annual Conference on Thursday, December 12, 2019. He said the recipient is Susan Pack. He said he thought it was related to the level of training hours. He congratulated Ms. Pack. Ms. Pack said it was a nice surprise.

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


Susan Pack, Chair


Dr. John McAllister, Secretary 

OFFICIAL MINUTES FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING OF THE
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

The Board of Trustees for the Arkansas School for the Deaf met for their monthly meeting on November 19, 2019.

Present: Susan Pack, Chairperson; Roy DePriest, Vice Chairperson; Dr. John McAllister, Secretary; Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Board Member; Faith McLaughlin, Board Member; Dr. Priya Gupta, ASB Parent Representative; Holley Mott, 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, Hillcrest Residents

19-D-022 Motion to Approve Consent Items

Ms. Pack 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 minutes, financial statement, and personnel items. Mr. DePriest seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion Items

Ms. Pack said there were several people that wanted to address the meeting. She said she needed to make clear to all board members and audience the procedure to be followed by state law regarding public comments. Each person is allowed three (3) minutes to talk. During this time there is no discussion or asking questions.

Seth Buckman, Food Service Director at ASD

Seth said he was there on behalf of his staff concerning the SCPI policy. He understood about 3 years ago the policy was put into place to commit ASD to a barrier-free environment to ensure a better academic, social and vocational development of ASD students. He was not there to discredit the policy or say it should be done away with. He supports the Deaf culture and what the policy does for students and staff. Mr. Buckman said he was there to voice help and shed light on his staff that is affected by the policy and the minimum requirements for them. Several of his staff are at risk of losing their jobs at the end of December.

In total, his staff has a combined 72 years of experience and spent thousands of hours creating meals for not only ASD students and staff but other deaf schools and people that visit the campus. They spend countless hours in volunteer efforts and have fundraised and given money back to the school for the students. His staff does care about the campus and the students. He said their ASL skills are not on par with what is expected by the policy of the board but the staff does try.

While the staff may not have the Survival Plus, he has witnessed the staff using what they do know and what they have learned to communicate in the best ways they can.

Mr. Buckman has seen them step out from behind the line to communicate with the staff and students and try to put smiles on their faces. He realizes they have had a little over three years since the implementation of the SCPI policy to acquire Survival Plus level, and at times their attitudes and behaviors may not reflect their care for the school but they do care about the campus and students. He is aware that the board has been generous in giving extensions to all ASD staff members to attain their SCPI rating, and asks the board to reflect on the work merits of the staff. He said while they may not have the SCPI level, they do work toward the purpose of the SCPI policy which is to create a barrier-free environment.

Kenya Rogers, Food Service AM Cook

Kenya said per the ASD Handbook pages 66-67, Sign Communication Proficiency Requirements, it states any staff hired before June 15, 2016 must meet the minimum level of proficiency requirement by June 15, 2019. She said they were tested in September, 2019, and have not received results. If it is found that they did not meet the minimum proficiency per handbook policy they should receive a notice of a 6-month probation and that would mean their probation period would be up March, 2020, not December, 2019. Per policy, they have not been notified of their proficiency either way. She said they have been there for 15 years or more and have had no problem understanding or communicating with the children nor have the students had any problem understanding or communicating with them. She said that should hold some weight and asked that all this be considered when deciding their continued employment and dedication to the children they serve.

Sylvia Smith, Janitorial Staff

From her understanding all tests should have been graded at UALR. When you take the test you get a piece of paper asking if you want your test to be graded on campus or at UALR. If it is graded on campus, why should they have to wait 3 or 4 months before they get the results. Sylvia stated there are no results and you do not get anything showing you took the test. She said all they want is to be treated fair. They don't have any letters behind their names but they want to be treated fair.

Carol Jones, Food Service AM Cook

In the handbook it says that they are not discriminated against regardless of the job they hold, but she sees they are being treated unfairly. They are supposed to be treated equal. In the handbook you say you don't treat people that work beneath any different than anybody else but she begs to differ. She said she thinks they are being treated very unfairly.

Julia McKinney, Food Service Supervisor

Julia said it has been difficult knowing that staff might lose your job. She did pass the test so at this point she will still be there December 31st. However, she had four people under her that may not so that will leave only her. She looks at this in a different perspective because she knows the school must go on and the children have to be fed. The kids will be coming back on January 6th expecting three hot meals a day. That will be impossible without the staff. People can be brought in to help but no one can replace the experience of the staff she has now. She stated on page 67 in the 2019-2020 ASD Handbook it says “Staff hired before June 2016 A 4th year extension may be granted if the employee has reached the step below their required level (for example: scoring Intermediate instead of Intermediate Plus). She said she was asking them to consider what the outcome is going to be after December 31st if ASD loses four staff members on the AM shift.

Clay Herren, Janitorial Staff

Clay said the only thing they are asking for is to be treated fairly. If they didn't care they wouldn't be there. They are there for the sake of the students. The students need them and they need the students. It is not whether you know sign language or you don't. He said most importantly it should be about job performance.

Ray Boland, School Principal

Ray said it is very important for ASD to follow the SCPI because they are working for the students to make sure they have full communication and an open environment. He said he has been principal for 5 years and he has seen and heard students complaining about teachers, paras, RAs, cafeteria staff, and janitorial staff having limited or no communication and the misunderstandings it can cause. They want to make sure the students have a 360 degree access to communication and a language rich environment.

Nathan Burleson, IT Department & Former Student

Nathan said he has worked at ASD for 3 years and is also a former graduate of the school. As a former student and now an employee, he can see many things that were traumatic for him as far as misunderstandings because people weren't communicating well. Some of the instructors may not have signed well and caused misunderstandings and miscommunications which would lead to incorrect information being shared. The SCPI levels are very important. He understands that the staff is working to acquire their skills the handbook says staff are required to attend classes so they can sign well. Basically, the idea is that if part of the policy is removed, are we opening up the school to others who don't understand Deaf Ed. He thinks it very important to keep the policy in place.

Ms. Pack said that she has additional letters from parents, former students, and staff speaking in favor of the policy. They will be distributed to the board members. There would be no decision made at this time. Ms. Pack told the audience they will need to contact Department of Education and share the information from both sides. With their input the decision will be made regarding what to do next. Ms. Pack thanked them for coming and speaking up and that they have their heart in the right place.

Superintendent Report

Dr. Dickinson said last month has been quite busy. They had Homecoming, Halloween, Silent Sunday and GPSD. Each one of those events required many hours of work from many people.

Silent Sunday was a lot of fun and very successful. They do not have the final number yet of how much total money was raised but will share that information next month. She thanked Michelle Alvarez and Kevin Lentz for leading the event and to everyone that attended.

For Dr. Dickinson, her personal favorite thing that happened in the last month was to see Ray and others in the dunking booth. The students used their ROAR tickets at the dunking booth to celebrate their AR reading successes by purchasing their chances to throw a ball for the dunking booth. She said while she was sitting in the booth, she thought surely they were going to run out of tickets soon but they never did.

Dr. Dickinson then asked JR Courtright to talk about Jr. NAD. JR said 2 weeks ago he and three students went to Rochester, NY for the Jr. NAD. There were a total of 80 students and 27 deaf schools represented. There were discussions on leadership, future needs, language, what schools around the country need along with a variety of other topics and presentations. JR Courtright also received a Service Award for his work with Jr. NAD and the community. Ms. Pack asked JR to tell the other board members what the Daily Moth is. He explained how the Deaf have always watched the local news with captions. The Daily Moth is the news in American Sign Language. This Deaf ASL news used to be on a monthly basis but now is called the Daily Moth and the news broadcasts are posted daily in a video blog on Social Media. Students are learning about world events. Ms. Pack said ASD made the Daily Moth not too long ago with the story about the grave yard.

Dr. Dickinson said she did not know if the board was aware that Whitney Rainey from ADE was present. Whitney works with them as ASD's business manager. She is also working with ASB.

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


Susan Pack, Chair


Dr. John McAllister, Secretary

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

The Board of Trustees for the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired met for their monthly meeting on November 19, 2019.

Present: Susan Pack, Chairperson; Roy DePriest, Vice Chairperson; Dr. John McAllister, Secretary; Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Board Member; Faith McLaughlin, Board Member; Dr. Priya Gupta, ASB Parent Representative; Holley Mott, ASD Parent Representative; James Caton, ASB Superintendent; Dr. Janet Dickinson, ASD Superintendent; Beth Smith and Will Gorum, Interpreters; Members of the Deaf Community; Members of the Blind Community; Hillcrest Residents

19-B-022 Motion to Approve Consent Items

Ms. Pack 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. Caton said ASB had a couple of resignations, Candi and Lonnie that had other opportunities or circumstances that came up for them. He said Tymberly Garrett joined ASB as the night shift LPN.

Action Items

None

Discussion Items

District Support Plan

Mr. Caton said the board members should have a copy of the District Support Plan for school improvement for the school year and also a copy of the letter dated October 9th from the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education stating ASB will be placed in coordinated support in accordance with Arkansas Code 6152913. He said the reason for this on the ACT Aspire results from last year, our students overall (elementary & secondary) scored between 40 to 49.99% in need of support on the reading section. This is in specific reference to the reading portion of the ACT Aspire of annual assessment. ASB's percentage was 44.68 so ASB was close to not hitting coordinating support but you have to be below 40% for that. As a requirement for the coordinated support, you have to come up with a District Support Plan. One of the components required in the District Support Plan is the District Literacy Plan. You will see that when you look at the plan.

Mr. Caton said the first part of it is basically following the targeted areas in the School Improvement Plan for elementary and secondary. He said they addressed those and show how they will support the different target areas with the resources as a district that the elementary and secondary schools have set for themselves. The second part under the District Literacy Plan is the part that specifically addresses the coordinated support for reading based on the ACT Aspire Assessment for last year. Under that they listed the goals that have been set for that and they are pretty significant goals but after much discussion with his administrators they felt they were doable. When they are faced with this year's ACT Aspire Assessment, they are hoping to improve those percentages compared to last year. He said they have put a plan in place to begin to use their resources as a district and try to support the students in improving their reading scores. The biggest initiative is along the lines of the Science of Reading and the RISE Initiative that the state has implemented. Ms. McLaughlin asked how that was going. Mr. Caton said it is going pretty well. He said it was very ambitious what the teachers have to achieve in terms of proficiency in the Science of Reading and it is not easily accomplished. He said they have the teachers on the pathway where they are completing the 18 hours through AR IDEAS as the videos are released. Once that is completed, they have to do three additional days of training and the plan is for the teachers to go this summer to Arch Ford to complete the additional training days. In addition to that they also have to be assessed by a certified assessor in the Science of Reading to show they are proficient. He said because all of ASB's teachers come under the Special Ed part for vision, all of the teachers have to show proficiency versus in a lot of public schools some teachers have to show proficiency while others will only have to show awareness (which the requirements are a lot less). Ms. McLaughlin asked if there was a timeframe. Mr. Caton said yes there is a timeframe for them to show proficiency and he thinks it is 2022. He said Teresa has attended several Science of Reading trainings at Arch Ford and is working toward becoming a certified assessor therefore ASB would have someone on staff that not is certified to be an assessor but also has a vision background.

Ms. Pack said Janet has been taking the training. Dr. Dickinson said she had just completed day 3. Ms. Pack asked if she read correctly that a lot of it is phonetically – Dr. Dickinson said yes and is a challenge. She said it was easy for her to sit in the meetings and say this doesn't apply to their students, however, Ray was sitting in front of her saying he loved it.

Mr. Caton said Teresa was not there tonight or she would comment on it but based on what she has told him, she has really gotten a lot out of the trainings she has attended. They have been very interesting in spite of the challenges with it for the kids. It has been beneficial and in the long run will help them get closer to improving the students' reading outcomes and at the end of the day that is what it is all about getting better scores and performance in reading.

Child Nutrition Review

Mr. Caton said they had a copy of a letter dated October 23rd regarding the Child Nutrition Review. Overall, it was a good review and the reviewer was very complimentary of the program and all that she saw going on with it. She did have a couple of things that she wanted corrected. 1) Wellness Committee: She said that the School Improvement Plan did not reflect the wellness priority along with the goals, etc. ASB's Wellness Policy does and is posted on the school's website. It does have the goals in it but did not know it was to be in the School Improvement Plan. He said he has not seen anything in the regulations that says it has to be in it, but it will be put in the School Improvement Plan and send the documentation to clear up that area. 2) For the Pre-K kids some of the food was left out too long – they are not supposed to be set out until the kids are down there and typically that is what happens. He said the Child Nutrition staff would have to do some training to make sure that meals cannot be put out until the kids are actually in the cafeteria. He said that is a safety regulation.

The Wellness Committee needs documentation of their meetings and at least 2/3 of the members present to count as a meeting. Mr. Caton said he appointed a new Wellness Committee Chair, Jennifer Linder.

Superintendent Report

Mr. Caton said they enjoyed going over to the Meet & Greet lunch picnic at the Department of Education. They enjoyed meeting people from the other divisions of ADE.

Mr. Caton said he wanted to congratulate Doah Strojek, Social Studies/History teacher for getting an Amazing Educator Award from Little Rock Family Magazine. She received the award in the Special Needs category.

Mr. Caton said that ASB had a very successful 3rd Annual Arkansas Regional Cane Quest which is part of the Braille Institute of America's program. ASB has been hosting the Braille Challenge for a number of years and have added the Cane Quest. He thanked Dr. McAllister for helping with the Orientation & Mobility travel and other activities on a very rainy day. He said it was good practice for those on the Explorer's route roaming the Hillcrest neighborhood. Skills have to be practiced in all sorts of conditions.

He said the Annual Fall Parade was also a success. He said he appreciated Secretary Johnny Key being the Grand Marshall this year. The Parkview Band also participated this year. They really added to the parade with almost 100 members in the band.

The Child Nutrition staff attended the state conference in Hot Springs and brought back a lot of good information. He said the conference is a good professional development for their department.

Infirmery renovations are going well. They have been putting up sheetrock and will start painting soon. Shults House dorm is getting new front doors and has proven to be quite a challenge since you can't find doors like those any longer so they have to be rebuilt to fit in with the building. The new doors will be more secure and sturdier.

Upcoming Dates:

Thanksgiving Lunch this Thursday followed by the Annual Turkey Walk
Thanksgiving Break is November 25th – 29th – classes resume on December 2nd
Parent Dinner & Christmas Concert will be December 19th – Dinner at 5:00
Christmas Break December 23rd – January 3rd with classes resuming January 6th, 2020
Arkansas School Board Annual Conference December 11th – 13th

There being no further business for the Arkansas School for the Blind, the meeting adjourned at 5:45.



Susan Pack, Chair



Dr. John McAllister, Secretary