

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 October 17, 2023, at the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

Present: Susan Pack, Chair; Robert Fagan, Vice Chair; Dr. John McAllister, Secretary (Zoom); Philip Garner, Board Member; James Caton, ASBVI Superintendent; Dr. Gretchen Cobb, ASD Interim Superintendent; Holley Mott, ASD Parent Representative; Will Gorum and Sydney Morris, Interpreters; Members of the Deaf Community; Members of the Blind Community

Absent: Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Board Member; Dr. Priya Gupta, ASBVI Parent Representative

Mrs. Pack called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm. The November board meeting will take place on November 28, 2023, at the Arkansas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired.

The board meeting was changed from November 21st to November 28th due to Thanksgiving Holiday break. The meeting time was moved to 4:00pm to allow board members the ability to attend the ASD basketball game.

Joint Agenda

23-J-039 Motion to Approve Joint Meeting September 2023 Minutes

Dr. McAllister made a motion to approve. Mr. Garner seconded. Motion Carried.

Action Items – None

Discussion Items – None

ASBVI Agenda

23-B-040 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

Mr. Fagan made a motion to approve. Mr. Garner seconded. Motion Carried.

Action Items – None

Discussion Items –

Annual Report to the Public

School continues to place strong emphasis on Literacy.

Through the Department of Education, the school will continue consultation work with region 14. Implemented NWEA Maps Assessments. First round this school year, completed. 2023 ACT ASPIRE State Assessment reflected ongoing challenges. Seen areas of growth especially in relation to reading scores. Data reflected 55.8% of students in grades 3-10 in need of support. Improvement from 2022 assessment that reflected 62%. Percentage keeps school in the level of directive support with ADE and DESE. Should also provide opportunities to access literacy coaches provided under the LEARNs Act. 2023-24 State moving to new ATLAS assessment. Recognized by University of Ark. Office of Education Policy for areas of academic growth. Targeting Math for areas of improvement. Implemented a new program on Fridays called Focus Fridays. Provides students with data driven remediation and instruction in ELA, Math, and expanded core curriculum. New middle school structure for grades 6th through 8th. Teacher credentials are very critical to success and ongoing improvement. Teacher candidates come with core content certifications and enroll in SFA-Texas to receive Teacher of Visually Impaired certification. Currently there are five teachers in the TVI certification program. Revised Professional Development plan. Requires 10-hrs related to blindness and/or Visual Impairment. Our paraprofessionals and high school students can work toward a teaching credential. Three paraprofessionals in a teaching program. One student pursuing a pathway. Three teachers in ADE Teacher Academy for Master of Teacher credential. Under the LEARNs Act, teacher starting salary increase approved for both schools. EAST program in seventh year. The core of the program is student growth. Continue low vision clinic and birth to three statewide programs. Summer programs are outreach programs, public school students also participate. Jumpstart program in collaboration with Division of Services for the Blind. Provide job skills and paid job experience in the community. Student competitions include Annual Regional Braille challenge and Annual Cane Quest. Legislative appropriation for state braille and large print textbook program. Residential program continues to serve students. Currently operating with three dormitories. Athletic programs include track and field, wrestling, cheerleading, Esports, and goalball. Currently in the second and final phase of cottage building. Along with ASD in consultation with ADE on planning for the long-term facilities needs of the campuses.

Mr. Garner asked about salary increases for teachers completing TVI or Master Teacher program. Mr. Caton stated the TVI certification is a 6% increase. Also increases for first master's degree and when 30-hours past a masters.

Mr. Garner asked if there is a plan for general clean-up or fix-up from one building to the next. Mrs. Pack said there is a computerized schedule. Mr. Caton stated many different assessments done based on needs, it's just a matter of tackling one at a time depending on funding available.

Mr. Fagan asked about the status of the Infirmary. Mr. Caton stated he would provide update in Supt. Report.

Superintendent Report

Attended APH Annual conference in Louisville, KY.

Selected for the pilot program to field test the Monarch.

Legislative tour, very good turnout. Approximately thirty visitors.

Open science teacher, FACs teacher, Resident advisor, and RN position listed.

Last month, foreign exchange student was approved and added to enrollment.

The track team traveled to TN for track and field championships. The girls won 3rd place.

Students enjoyed a fun day at the State Fair.

Celebrated National School lunch week with Parents.

Really good turn out for Literacy night.

Math night coming up, date TBD.

Flu clinics on October 5th and 26th. Upcoming covid booster clinic on October 19th.

Infirmary providing covid tests were necessary. Increase in Strep.

The Infirmary remains in the Learning Center. Awaiting final reports from Ark. Mold and Water testing.

The approximate return to the Infirmary building is estimated to be one month.

Picture day – October 20th

Mr. Garner asked about additional supplies or appliances needed for the Infirmary once building is completed. Mr. Caton said there are no additional supplies or appliances needed at this time.

ASD Agenda

23-D-041 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

Mr. Fagan made a motion to approve. Mr. Garner seconded. Motion Carried.

Action Items – None

Discussion Items –

Report to the Public

Excited to be going forward with region 14. Realigning towards data this year. Collecting data and helping teachers make decisions about the data.

Region 14th tentatively coming November 7th-9th.

Doing the Grow your Own and have Para Academy on Wednesday afternoons.

Training former students to be assistants to the Para's.

Leadership Academy to have mentor teachers to work with Para's.

Changes to admissions procedures this year. Roughly 90% of students enrolled by the first week of Aug.

Parent square app put into play last year. Great information can be found on parent square.

More than 200% growth on Facebook since 2022.

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All social media posts must be approved by ADE. Parent square is excluded.
57k awarded in grants this year.

CSSO Program Update

Dr. Cobb stated following a meeting with Secretary Oliva, that every option needs to be looked at for campus security. The day following the meeting with Secretary Oliva, Dr. Cobb attended a board meeting in Pine Bluff and Sheridan has had a CSSO and SRO for a couple of years. They have never had to utilize a CSSO. It's a layer of protection not a replacement for SRO or Police Officer. With that said, Dr. Cobb would like to have security on campus before worrying about the CSSO. There is a security issue that is very concerning.

Mr. Garner asked about the status of campus fences, locks and if these concerns arose during the legislature tour. Dr. Cobb stated that the information will be covered in the Supt. report.

A copy of the Legislative tour folder was provided to board members and parent representatives.

Superintendent Report

Legislatures were shown the good, the bad, and the ugly on both campuses. Great Tour.
Received call from Katie at Bureau of Legislative Research regarding security. Told her a fence is needed.
An existing push for both schools to combine and share more services.
No feedback from Legislatures following tour currently.

Mr. Garner asked what the bad items were. Dr. Cobb said they were shown the pool and CTE building.

Mr. Mims asked if there were only two negatives shown and if there was an agenda for the tour. Dr. Cobb stated additional buildings were included. An agenda was created but due to time restraints not all visitors received a full tour. Asked that a list of those in the Legislative tour be made available.

Dr. McAllister asked about shared services previously mentioned. Dr. Cobb stated it would be more shared buildings such as cafeteria or shared media center or therapy space. Dr. McAllister expressed concern about a shared campus space for both schools.

Mr. Fagan asked about shared dormitories and administrative staff. Dr. Cobb stated she has heard no talk of combining dormitories. Mrs. Pack stated that as individuals and a board, encourage people to look at other Deaf-Blind schools.

Dr. Cobb said nothing specific was discussed with the Legislatures, at the time of the visit it was mainly about putting some funds on the school for building repair.

Mr. Fagan asked ASBVI Principal, Ms. Doan, if other Deaf-Blind schools are primarily going multi-handicap. Ms. Doan said is her experience. Mrs. Pack stated that's the experience even if separated. Dr. Cobb asked the ASD Principal, Mr. Boland, to speak about the Alabama School for the Deaf-Blind. Mr.

Boland provided insight into the Alabama campus including school services and Administration structure. Mr. Fagan prefers the schools to remain separate.

Dr. Cobb stated there are pros and cons to both. The funding could be structured differently with more shared services. Mr. Caton thinks it would be beneficial to research and study other models of Schools for the Deaf and Schools for the Blind. Moving forward it is important to consider the future of the schools and their sustainability, it is critical for our populations and their unique needs.

ASD Enrollment shows 110 with fourteen perspective students.

Nine students, ages 2-4, are waiting to join the early childhood program.

School not licensed to have the early childhood program, partly due to restructuring of LEARNs.

Working with DHS for early childhood program licensing.

Upcoming training next week.

Lady Leopards on fire. Came in third at GPSD. Two remaining games.

Lady Leopards won Southern, Leopard, and Classic in Oklahoma spike outs.

Upcoming Anti-bullying and red ribbon week, next week.

New ATLAS testing that is criteria based by grade with computer adaptive testing (CAT).

ATLAS will help students with barriers be more successful with the tests.

The new service coordinator is amazing.

Added two new students to zero to three programs with two prospective students.

40 outreach students.

Mr. Fagan asked ASBVI Principal, Ms. Doan, about ATLAS testing for blind students. Ms. Doan thinks it would be better. Not as worried about ASBVI due to the level of technology and the teachers knowing Braille. Whereas public school students are treated differently due to the expense of educating a blind child. There are only eight ESVI consultants, with limited consultation for braille and mobility. Mr. Fagan and Ms. Doan agree that blind students should be referred to ASBVI for blind services.

Dr. Cobb will host an open house for the Board members on November 28th.

23-J-042 Motion to Adjourn

Mrs. Pack offered her condolences to the ASBVI School and Community on the recent passing of two former employees.

Mrs. Pack made a motion to adjourn. Motion carried.

Susan Pack, Chair

Dr. John McAllister, Secretary