

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 June 17, 2025, at the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Woolly Auditorium.

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.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm.

Mr. Fagan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Fagan called roll - all board members were present. Mr. Fagan stated this would be Mrs. Mott's last meeting and the new ASD parent rep would begin in July. Everyone expressed their appreciation to Mrs. Mott for her dedication and support to the board/school/students.

The next meeting will be July 15, 2025, in Woolly Auditorium on the ASBVI campus. All members agreed on the date.

Joint Agenda

25-J-26 Motion to Approve Joint Meeting Minutes for May 20, 2025.

Mr. Powell made a motion to approve. Mr. Belew seconded. Motion carried.

Action Items:

5 Personal Days Policy – Superintendent Walsh explained the policy. Mrs. Smith asked if it applied to teachers or all 10-month staff. Mrs. Walsh said it applies to all 10-month staff. Mrs. Smith said that there are no substitutes for RA staff and asked how that would be dealt with. Mrs. Walsh said there are a lot of ways that it can be handled, there are staff who are on call to be extra support, some paras are willing to work overnight and teachers that are willing to be stipend for that time. She said her goal is to have fully staffed residential programs by the fall. They are working hard to interview. People came to interviews, accepted the job but then changed their mind. Mrs. Smith asked who created the policy. Mrs. Walsh said it was created by them and reviewed by the legal team. Mr. Fagan said if they do not use their 5 days, it does not carry over to next year. Mrs. Walsh said that was correct. Mr. Belew asked about RA's and if they would accrue comp time. Mrs. Walsh comp time is to be earned in situations like riding the bus, etc. to be utilized during break times. It is not to be utilized for personal days.

Mr. Fagan asked for a motion.

25-J-27 Motion to Approve 5 Personal Days Policy

Mrs. Smith made a motion to approve. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion carried.

Flex Days Policy – Mrs. Walsh said it is to outline the flex day policy. She said they wanted to outline what constitutes flex day PD, what you must do to earn that time and what you must do to be able to take those days. The flex days are built into the school year to allow for PD. It is required by the state, and it is important for the teachers to be knowledgeable and skilled for our specialized population. 10-month staff are required to earn 30 hours of professional development annually. Flex time can only be earned through the following activities: school provided PD in the summer; superintendent/supervisor approved outside PD when not receiving pay as part of their job responsibilities. The PD must be relevant to their job. All 30 hours must be earned before you can take a day off so if you have only earned 25 hours before the first flex day, you still have to come on that day to earn the last 5 hours before taking off. Flex time can only be used on predetermined days as indicated on the academic calendar. It will be tracked by administrative assistants.

25-J-28 Motion to Approve Flex Days Policy

Mr. Powell made a motion to approve. Mr. Belew seconded. Motion carried.

Non-Student Contact Days Policy – Mrs. Walsh said this policy outlines when there are early release days, when to come to work, hours to come in. On non-student days you are supposed to be at work from 8:00 – 3:30. All 10-month staff are to report from 8:00 – 3:30 on flex days unless flex time has been earned. Dorm staff should report from noon to 7:30 on early release days.

25-J-29 Motion to Approve Non-Student Contact Days Policy

Mrs. Smith made a motion to approve. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion carried.

Discussion Items:

Building Update: Mrs. Walsh introduced Brad Place from SCM Architects. Mr. Place reported on the progress of the building and passed around models.

Resolution for ARKDB: After much discussion, it was decided that the acronym for Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind would be ARDB.

Mrs. Smith said the ASB parent rep position has been open for a very long time, longer than the ASD parent rep. She said it was frustrating not to have a rep when there were parents that applied. She said one of them is now pulling their child from the school. Mrs. Walsh said she has asked about it, but it is ultimately up to the governor.

The meeting moved to the ASB agenda.

ASB Agenda

25-B-30 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

Dr. McAllister made a motion to approve. Mrs. Smith seconded. Motion carried.

Action Items – None

Discussion Items – None

ASB Superintendent Report

- Graduation for West Wing, 6th Grade and Seniors
- Senior Breakfast
- Summer Camp Program started this week with 18 students
- Jump Start started this week

Dr. Barnes said this was his last meeting as Interim Superintendent for ASBVI. He said he appreciated the opportunity to serve/work with some of the best people that go beyond for the students. He said it is one thing to see it from the outside, but it is very different when you are on the inside and can see the trials, tribulations and successes. He said he was grateful for the time he was given to be at ASBVI. He is excited about what the future holds for the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind.

Mr. Fagan thanked Dr. Barnes and said the board appreciated all the work he had put into the campus. The board members also thanked Dr. Barnes for his work, support and leadership. Mrs. Walsh thanked Dr. Barnes. She said it had been a tough year and was grateful for his partnership, support and friendship. Mr. Fagan said we don't want to miss you; we want you to be around.

The agenda moved to the ASD agenda.

ASD Agenda

25-D-31 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

Mrs. Smith made a motion to approve. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion carried.

Action Items – None

Discussion Items –None

ASD Superintendent Report

- Nancy Hicks listed incorrectly – it was a promotion (Not a New Hire)
- ASB lost students that graduated – 4 on books to enroll
- ASD lost students that graduated – 4-5 on books to enroll
- Enrollment numbers should hold steady for the new year
- Celebrations – Full day of graduation – ASB at 10:00/ASD at 6:00
- Parent/Student/Community building reveal

- Working with DF&A on the merger
- Opted to go with Arkansas River Coop
- Staff Celebration honoring retirees and a family addition
- ANCRC granted funding for Parnell Hall restoration
- Back to School Registration on the last day of school – 8 ASD Students/4 ASB Student
- 2025 Arkansas Skills USA Championship took place in Hot Springs in April. Won gold in photography and Opening/Closing Ceremony (Parliamentary Procedures). Gold medalists will represent ASD at the Nationals in June
- ASB Human Capital Updates – Offers made to teachers, RA's, RA Activities Supervisor, Nurses
- ASD Human Capital Updates – Offers made to LPN, Food Prep Coordinator
- Shout Outs for ASB – Christina Robertson, Josie Hall & Jazmyn Adams
- Shout Outs for ASD – Gina Wooten, Brandy Mimms, Sharon Smith, James Hayes, Eduardo Tuzon
- Small Electrical Fire at Riggs Museum-it was averted
- Installation of tankless water heaters this summer
- End of the School Year – Joint field day & graduations
- Construction project moving smoothly
- Gearing up for the new school year
- Administrative Retreat at the end of the month

Mr. Fagan asked who would be involved in the retreat. Mrs. Walsh said principals, facilities director, security, basically all admin. Mr. Fagan asked about the next report – will financials be combined in one report. Mrs. Walsh said next month it would be the report for June (always a month behind). In August, it will be combined.

Mr. Fagan asked about the organizational chart. Mrs. Walsh said she would have one next month. She said they are working on alignment. She said she thought they were going to be able to move/shift people to cover all the position needed.

Mrs. Smith asked what was being done to fill all the vacant positions before school. Mrs. Walsh said she has been reaching out to colleges, postings. She said they have not had a shortage of applicants, but when interviewed they are not the best fit or not qualified or not certified. She said they will have a full staff for teachers next year. The positions that are hard to fill are the lower grade positions. Mrs. Smith asked if they could get a list of teachers and positions. Mrs. Walsh said yes.

Mr. Fagan asked about the Infirmary. Mrs. Walsh said surface mold growth was discovered so the staff was moved back to the LC temporarily. She said it had been tested and dried out. It was a fresh air intake concern related to equipment failure. She said they would move back by the end of the month.

Mr. Fagan asked if there were any other questions.

Mr. Fagan asked for a motion to adjourn.


25-D-32 Motion to Adjourn

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

The meeting was adjourned.



Robert Fagan, Chair



Cary Smith, Secretary