

BEFORE THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

1. On March 11, 2013, during a regular meeting of the Arkansas State Board of Education (State Board), the State Board considered a petition made by the Harrisburg School District (Petitioner) to close the following isolated school:

Weiner High School (Grades 7-12)

2. The petitioner was represented at the hearing by Superintendent Danny Sample. The following individuals who opposed the petition appeared at the hearing: Mr. Gary Sitzer, Mr. Ray Keller and Ms. Michelle Cadle. Arkansas State Representative John Hutchinson spoke on behalf of the Harrisburg School District and the Weiner Community.

3. The State Board conducted the hearing pursuant to the legal authority and jurisdiction vested in it by Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602, the Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Closure of Isolated Schools and the Arkansas Administrative Procedure Act (Ark. Code Ann. § 25-15-201 et seq.).

FINDINGS OF FACT

4. On December 17, 2012, by a vote of four (4) in favor and one (1) opposed, the Harrisburg School District Board of Directors voted to close the Weiner High School Campus.

5. On February 8, 2013, pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602, the Harrisburg School District petitioned the State Board to close the Weiner High School Campus.

6. For the 2012-2013 school year, the Harrisburg School District has a total of 1,377 students.

7. There are currently two high schools in the Harrisburg School District: The Harrisburg High School and the Weiner High School.

8. For the 2012-2013 school year, the Harrisburg High School teaches 343 students in grades nine (9) through twelve (12).

9. For the 2012-2013 school year, the Weiner High School teaches 135 students in grades seven (7) through twelve (12).

10. The representatives of the Harrisburg School District contend that the Weiner High School should be closed for the following reasons:

- a. For the most recent school year for which a full year of expenditures is available, the 2011-2012 school year, it cost the Harrisburg School District \$2,593,051.88 to operate the Weiner K-12 Campus, in comparison to \$2,347,706.26 in revenues attributable to the Weiner Campus, resulting in a loss of \$245,345.62 to the

Harrisburg School District. No further financial cuts can be made at the Weiner Campus without jeopardizing the programs that are already in place.

- b. In the 2011-2012 school year, the per student expense to the Harrisburg School District for a student at the Weiner Campus was \$9,260.90 versus \$8,127.78 for a student at the Harrisburg Campus, a difference of \$1,133.12 per student.
- c. The closure of the Weiner High School Campus, along with the greater efficient use of existing transportation, school and classroom resources, is part of a district-wide systemic plan to operate the Harrisburg School District in the most efficient manner possible and provide a more rigorous academic program.
- d. The enrollment at the Weiner High School Campus continues to decline. Enrollment at the Weiner High School Campus declined from 171 students in the 2009-2010 school year, to 143.37 students in the 2010-2011 school year (the first school year after the annexation of the former Weiner School District into the Harrisburg School District), then to 134.23 students in the 2012-2013 school year.
- e. The closure of the Weiner High School Campus and the transfer of the Weiner High School students to the Harrisburg Middle School and Harrisburg High School campuses will result in increased educational opportunities for the Weiner High School students, including:
 - (1) Pre-Advanced Placement (AP) course offerings for grades seven (7) and eight (8) in English, Math, and Science;
 - (2) Weiner students will have more choices in class options during the instructional day in both core areas and electives; and
 - (3) Additional support services will be available for students in grades seven (7) and eight (8) who are in need of remediation and enrichment, provided by the after school program at the Harrisburg Middle School.
- f. Transporting the Weiner High School students to the Harrisburg secondary campuses will be done in such a way as to minimize the inconvenience to current Weiner students to the fullest extent possible. The Harrisburg School District will also provide transportation to allow the Weiner High School students to fully participate in any and all academic and extracurricular programs at the Harrisburg secondary campuses, as well as vocational offerings at the Jonesboro School District.
- g. The facilities at the Harrisburg secondary campuses will adequately accommodate the Weiner High School students. The closure will provide equal opportunity for all secondary students in the Harrisburg School District to have access to all programs and provide for both academic and extracurricular activities.

- h. With the proposed merger, Weiner High School students will be able to participate in Journalism, French, Physics and Spanish through live, face-to-face instruction instead of compressed interactive video (CIV).
- i. By merging the two high schools into one high school at the Harrisburg Campus, the more rigorous operation of curriculum and extracurricular activities will better serve the students throughout the Harrisburg School District.

11. The parties opposing the closure of the Weiner High School contend the following:

- a. The quality of academics, the fiscal situation and the facilities at the Weiner High School Campus is equal to or greater than that of the Harrisburg High School Campus.
- b. The Weiner Community (39.90%) pays a higher millage rate than the Harrisburg Community (35.50%).
- c. The Weiner High School Campus offers a variety of sports programs, including: archery, baseball, basketball, bowling, golf, softball, tennis and track. The various sports teams in Weiner received several conference, district, regional and state accolades.
- d. The Weiner High School Campus offers the following courses that are not offered at the Harrisburg High School Campus: World Geography, AP Biology, College Concurrent Credit through Arkansas State University-Newport, College Algebra, Accounting, Digital Communications, Micro-Information Systems, Survey of Fine Arts-Visual, and Survey of Fine Arts-Musical.
- e. The Weiner High School Campus consistently has a high percentage of students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses.
- f. The Weiner High School Gifted and Talented Program has been designated as an exemplary program for three years and was featured in the January 2013 issue of "Teaching for High Potential," a publication that highlighted the program's service to secondary students. The program facilitator for the Gifted and Talented Program received the Arkansans for Gifted and Talented Education Challenger Award and the 2013 Martha Ann Jones-Norton Service Award, which honors and recognizes outstanding service to the organization.
- g. Seventy-three percent (73%) of Weiner High School's 2013 senior class (16 out of 22 students) had a grade-point average of 2.4 or better at the end of their junior year. Forty-eight percent (48%) of Harrisburg High School's 2013 senior class (39 out of 80) had a grade-point average of 2.4 or better at the end of their junior year.

- h. Forty-three percent (43%) of Weiner High School's 2013 senior class (9 out of 21 students) scored 19 or above on their ACT exam. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of Harrisburg High School's 2013 senior class (32 out of 85 students) scored 19 or above on their ACT exam.
- i. In 2004, the Weiner School District received the Golden Apple Award as one of the top ten schools in Arkansas.
- j. Weiner has a graduation rate of one hundred percent (100%). The community's schools are consistently higher than the state average. In 2010, the 11th Grade at Weiner High School tied for the highest public school literacy score in the state. In 2012, the 7th through 12th grade classes at Weiner tied for 13th place in literacy scores in Arkansas.
- k. The former Weiner School District was never in academic or fiscal distress.
- l. The Weiner Campus enjoys outstanding community support.

12. The State Board of Education and Arkansas Department of Education can find no desegregation order or other applicable court order that affect the Harrisburg School District or the former Weiner School District.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND ORDER

13. Pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602(b)(2)(C)(ii), "[t]he state board shall only approve a motion to close isolated schools or parts thereof under [Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602(b)(2)(A)] if the closure is in the best interest of the students in the school district as a whole."

14. From the evidence and testimony received by the State Board pertaining to this matter, the State Board finds that the motion of the Harrisburg School District to close the Weiner High School is in the best interest of the students in the Harrisburg School District as a whole.

15. The closure of the Weiner High School Campus will not have any negative impact on desegregation efforts, nor will it violate any valid court order from a court of proper jurisdiction.

16. Accordingly, by a vote of five (5) in favor and two (2) opposed, the petition of the Harrisburg School District to close the Weiner High School Campus is **GRANTED**.

Signed this 28th day of May, 2013



Mr. Jim Cooper, Chairman