

Minutes
State Board of Education
Thursday, July 23, 2020

The Arkansas State Board of Education (State Board) met Thursday, July 23, 2020, via Zoom video conferencing. Chair Ms. Charisse Dean called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Ms. Dean led a moment of silence.

Present: Ms. Charisse Dean, Chair; Mr. Brett Williamson, Vice-Chair; Dr. Sarah Moore; Dr. Fitz Hill; Ms. Kathy McFetridge; Ms. Ouida Newton; Mr. Steve Sutton; Ms. Susan Chambers; Ms. Adrienne Woods; Mr. Joel Lookadoo, 2020 Arkansas Teacher of the Year; and Mr. Johnny Key, Secretary

Absent: None

Action Agenda

Staff Attorney Ms. Mary Claire Hyatt provided State Board members with the background history of the 3% cap and reviewed school choice appeal procedures. State Board members asked clarifying questions.

A-1 School Choice Appeal: Jennifer Warren

Staff Attorney Ms. Mary Claire Hyatt said the non-resident district, Pangburn School District, denied the school choice application because the resident district, Midland School District, reached its numerical 3% maximum.

Pangburn School District Superintendent Mr. David Rolland said the student and her sibling were denied due to the 3% maximum; however, the district does have the capacity to accept the students. He noted the various options which would be available to the students. He said the district would support this family if they were able to attend and would appreciate the opportunity to work with the family.

Midland School District Superintendent Dr. Bruce Bryant said the district rejected the transfer based on rules. He said the district is at a net transfer total of 16, which is one student over what is required for releasing students. He discussed the financial implications for his district if these students were allowed to transfer.

Ms. Amy Warren, parent, provided background information about her students and noted the bullying situation her students are currently dealing with in the Concord School District. She noted that the school her students would attend, if they were to be unable to transfer from Midland School District, has a D-rating, and that is not acceptable to their family. Ms. Jennifer and Mr. William Warren, students, made statements about why they wanted to transfer to the Pangburn School District.

State Board members asked clarifying questions.

Ms. Chambers moved, seconded by Ms. McFetridge, to grant the appeal for Jennifer Warren. The motion passed unanimously.

A-2 School Choice Appeal: William Warren

Ms. Chambers moved, seconded by Ms. McFetridge, to grant the appeal. The motion passed unanimously.

A-3 School Choice Appeal: Graycen Bridges

Staff Attorney Ms. Mary Claire Hyatt said the non-resident district, White Co. School District, denied the school choice application because the resident district, Midland School District, has reached its numerical 3% maximum.

White County School District Superintendent Mr. Dean Stanley provided some background information and said his district agrees that it is the best place for the Bridges family. He noted that the family had attended the White County School District before.

Midland School District Superintendent Dr. Bruce Bryant restated his previous argument about the 3% maximum and potential financial issues for his district should the student be allowed to transfer out of his district. He also encouraged the State Board members to consider all items individually.

Ms. Amy Bridges, parent, said her child familiar with the White County School District administration and staff, and she trusts them. The student also has family living in the area, and both parents are working closer to the White County School District. She also discussed the difference in the test scores between the White County and Midland School Districts.

State Board members asked clarifying questions.

Ms. Chambers moved, seconded by Dr. Moore, to grant the appeal. Ms. Woods voted no. The final vote was 7-1. The motion passed.

A-4 School Choice Appeal: Madeline McMinn

Staff Attorney Ms. Mary Claire Hyatt said the non-resident district, Southside School District, denied the school choice application because the resident district, Midland School District, has reached its numerical 3% maximum.

Southside School District Superintendent Mr. Roger Rich said that they would welcome any student into their district. He noted that several students attend the Southside School District thanks to the school choice option.

Midland School District Superintendent Dr. Bruce Bryant restated his previous argument about the 3% maximum and potential financial issues for his district should the student be allowed to transfer out of his district. Dr. Bryant noted that Midland School District has released 17 students to Southside School District already.

Mr. Sam McMinn, parent, said that his student never attended the resident district. He said his student was initially homeschool and then attended the Virtual Academy. However, their situations have changed, and they have decided to enroll their student at Southside School District. In addition to the academic options available to the student, the Southside School District is closer for the student to drive to as a newer driver.

State Board members asked clarifying questions.

Dr. Bryant discussed procedural concerns he had due to two students who were scheduled to be released to Southside School District, but are potentially going to return to the Midland School District. There was further discussion on this by the State Board members. Ms. Hyatt discussed the procedures, rules, and laws surrounding school choice. Options were discussed regarding potential actions for this and the next action item.

Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Ms. McFetridge, to table this item until the August State Board meeting, unless this item is settled outside of a State Board meeting between the school districts and the families involved. There was a roll call vote. Dr. Moore voted no. Mr. Williamson was not present for the vote. The final vote was 6-1. The motion passed.

A-5 School Choice Appeal: Carlee Duncan

Staff Attorney Ms. Mary Claire Hyatt said the non-resident district, Southside School District denied the school choice application because the resident district, Midland School District, has reached its numerical 3% maximum.

Southside School District Superintendent Mr. Roger Rich and Midland School District Superintendent Dr. Bruce Bryant asked clarifying questions.

Mr. Brandon Duncan, parent, said it is in the best interest of his student to attend the Southside School District academically. In addition, he noted a situation at his daughter's current school, which has negatively impacted the student's ability to focus on education. He worries that returning to the student's current school would be detrimental to the student's emotional/mental health, as well as academics.

Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Dr. Hill, to table this item until the August State Board meeting, unless this item is settled outside of a State Board meeting between the school districts and the families involved. There was a roll call vote. Dr. Moore voted no. Mr. Williamson was not present for the vote. The final vote was 6-1. The motion passed.

A-6 Reconsideration: School Choice Appeal for Cooper Estep

Staff Attorney Ms. Mary Claire Hyatt said the Estep family requested an appeal of the denial of their school choice application. Greenbrier School District denied the application because the resident district, Guy-Perkins School District, reached its 3% numerical maximum. On July 9, 2020, the State Board heard the appeal, and the appeal was denied because there was a lack of a motion. Subsequently, the Board voted to reconsider the appeal at this special board meeting.

Mr. Andrew Estep, parent, thanked the State Board for its reconsideration and reviewed the family's reason for requesting the transfer.

Guy-Perkins School District Superintendent Dr. Joe Fisher and Greenbrier School District Superintendent Mr. Scott Spainhour provided an overview of their comments from the previous State Board meeting.

Ms. Woods moved, seconded by Dr. Moore, to grant the appeal. There was a roll call vote. Mr. Williamson was not present for the vote. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

There was no new business.

Public Comment

There were no public comments made during the meeting.

Adjournment

Mr. Sutton moved, seconded by Dr. Hill, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 12:12 p.m.

Meeting minutes recorded by Tiffany Donovan

X 

Charrise Dean
Chair

X 

Johnny Key
Secretary