ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MINUTES
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

June 18, 2026
Arkansas Department of Education
DESE Auditorium
4 Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201
9:00 AM

I. Call to Order

Chair Dr. Sonja Wright-McMurray called the June 18, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel (CAP) to order at 9:15 a.m.

Present were:

- Chair Dr. Sonja Wright-McMurray,
- Dr. John Bacon,
- Mr. Phillip Baldwin (via Zoom),
- Dr. Tina Moore,
- Ms. Edie Stewart,
- Ms. Toyce Newton

Absent: Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan

II. Changes to Agenda

None

III. Action Agenda

1. Charter Amendment Request

a. Schools for Advanced Studies--Northwest Arkansas

Superintendent DeAnna Rowe and CEO/School Management Representative Dr. David Hubalik presented, via Zoom, a request to amend the charter by transitioning from an Arizona-based corporate board to a local Arkansas governing board.

Following discussion and questions from CAP members, a motion was made to approve the amendment request.

Motion: Ms. Edie Stewart
Second: Ms. Toyce Newton
Vote: Passed unanimously

2. **Charter School Applications**
   a. **Sheridan Jacket Academy**

Mr. Andy Mayberry (Director of Communications) and Superintendent Chad Pitts along with several other Sheridan School District staff representatives presented an application for a district conversion charter to establish Jacket Academy within the Sheridan School District.

Following discussion and questions from CAP members, a motion was made to approve the application and issue a five-year charter contract.

Motion: Dr. John Bacon
Second: Ms. Edie Stewart
Vote: Passed unanimously

3. **Renewal of Existing Charters**
   a. **Arkansas Virtual Academy**
      1) Arkansas Virtual Academy--Elementary
      2) Arkansas Virtual Academy--Middle
      3) Arkansas Virtual Academy--High School

      Executive Director Amy Johnson presented a request for the renewal of the contract for Arkansas Virtual Academy schools.

      Following discussion and questions from CAP members, a motion was made to approve a five-year renewal for Arkansas Virtual Academy with the following conditions:

- Participation in quarterly Charter School Unit check-ins to monitor implementation and progress; and
- Administration of the ATLAS Interim Assessment to support consistent data analysis and timely accountability reporting.

Motion: Ms. Toyce Newton
Second: Dr. John Bacon
Vote: Passed unanimously

b. Graduate Arkansas

Superintendent Katie Hatley presented a request for the renewal of the contract for Graduate Arkansas.

Following discussion and questions from CAP members, a motion was made to approve a five-year renewal with the following conditions:

- Participation in quarterly Charter School Unit check-ins to monitor implementation and progress; and
- Administration of the ATLAS Interim Assessment to support consistent data analysis and timely accountability reporting.

Motion: Ms. Toyce Newton
Second: Dr. John Bacon
Vote: Passed unanimously

c. Imboden Area Charter Schools

Superintendent Scott James presented the renewal request for Imboden Area Charter Schools.

Following discussion and questions from CAP members, a motion was made to approve renewal with the following conditions:

- Issuance of a Notice of Performance Deficiency;
- Extension of the charter on a probationary or conditional basis with monthly monitoring and targeted support by the Charter School Unit and ASPRC; and
- A formal renewal hearing before the Charter Authorizing Panel in January 2027 to make a final determination regarding renewal.

Motion: Mr. Phillip Baldwin
Second: Ms. Toyce Newton
Vote: Passed unanimously

4. **Review and Consideration of School Improvement Plans**
   a. **Institute for the Creative Arts**

Representatives from the Institute for the Creative Arts did not attend the meeting.

Following discussion, CAP members moved to:

- Reject the submitted School Improvement Plan;
- Approve issuance of a Notice of Performance Deficiency;
- Place the school on the August 2026 CAP agenda with the expectation that school leadership attend; and
- Direct the Charter School Unit to document the school's lack of engagement, refusal to engage, or failure to meaningfully participate in the improvement process as part of the record supporting the notice and August review.

Motion: Dr. Tina Moore
Second: Ms. Edie Stewart
Vote: Passed unanimously

IV. **Consent Agenda**
   1. **Minutes**

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the May 21, 2026, Charter Authorizing Panel meeting.

Motion: Ms. Toyce Newton
Second: Dr. Tina Moore
Vote: Passed unanimously

V. **Reports**
   1. Update on Schools Opening in 2026-27 School Year

Mr. Freddie Scott of the ADE Charter School Unit provided an update on the onboarding process for schools opening in fall 2026.

VI. **Public Comments**
There were no public comments.

VII. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

The next meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is scheduled for July 16, 2026.

Minutes Prepared By:

Regina Rihani

Ms. Regina Rihani
Charter School Office Staff
Arkansas Department of Education

Minutes Approved By:

Dr. Sonja Wright-McMurray, Chair
Charter Authorizing Panel
AR Department of Education