



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MINUTES

Charter Authorizing Panel

May 15, 2025

Arkansas Department of Education

DESE Auditorium

4 Capitol Mall

Little Rock, AR 72201

9:00 AM

I. **Call to Order**

The May 15, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel (CAP) was called to order by Chair Dr. Sonja Wright-McMurray at 9:08 AM. Members present in person were Dr. Sonja Wright-McMurray (Chair), Ms. Edie Stewart. Members present via Zoom were Dr. John Bacon and Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan. CAP members Mrs. Toyce Newton, Dr. Tina Moore, Mr. Phil Baldwin were absent. LaBria Brown, Litigation Attorney for the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), Office of Legal Services, provided an overview of legal procedures for the meeting.

II. **Consent Agenda**

The Consent Agenda was introduced by Dustin Wood, J.D., State Director of School Choice, Arkansas Department of Education, and included the following items:

- Minutes of the April 17 Charter Authorizing Panel Meeting
- Voluntary Recission of Charter for Adventure Online Academy by Waldron School District
- Voluntary Recission of Charter for Centerpoint School District

Dr. Crystal Beshears-Duncan moved to accept the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. Edie Stewart. The Charter Authorizing Panel voted unanimously 4-0 to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion passed.

III. **Action Agenda**

The Action Agenda was introduced by Dustin Wood, J.D., State Director of School Choice, and consisted of the following item:

A. Charter Amendment Request from Arkansas Virtual Academy

- a. Arkansas Virtual Academy (ARVA) is requesting a school enrollment cap increase from 5,500 to 7,000.

Amy Johnson, ARVA Superintendent, provided an overview of the amendment request and provided a brief history of the school. She highlighted key aspects of the school specifically focusing on the overall grade improvements for all three ARVA schools (elementary, middle, and high school) and entertained questions from the CAP. Additionally, she provided the rationale for the increase, emphasizing they want the additional capacity so they could accept additional families that come from unique situations (i.e., medical, family trama, special needs etc.).

Dr. McMurray requested LaBria Brown to come forward with any legal concerns—Ms. Brown esponded that there were none.

Dr. Beshears-Duncan made comments regarding ARVA journey and praised their success. She inquired about how they were successful and what they have done to set those conditions. Ms. Amy Johnson explained that they used a wide variety of intervention tools via Regional Community Coordinators (RCC), such as coordinating Adventure Days and other connecting social events to help establish a community of learners..

Dr. Bacon opened with compliments on their success and then inquired how the school will maintain the progress given the request to increase the student CAP. Ms. Amy Johnson expanded on their ability of supporting their teaching staff and incorporating new ideas. She added that they removed the stigma of negative events for teachers not achieving. In doing so, they strive to maintain transparency and involment from the top down. The big turning point was establishing this new culture of learning.

Ms. Edie Stewart began with some comments regarding their success and being excited to come visit. Her questions focused on the strategy to onboard the new staff in supporting the increase of numbers and then the additional student support requirements (i.e., IEP, access to sites, physical therapy etc.). Amy Johnson spoke generally about the strategy they will utilize for onboarding new faculty, as well as the additonal requirements for students based on the increase.

Dr. Wright-McMurray inquired about how ARVA will offer and support CTE opportunities for ARVA students. Amy Johnson expanded about their how the school has positioned themselves to support CTE training and learning opportunities. She provided information on their FFA program and also virtual welding course they have established. She continued to explain how they are connecting real world experiences via the virtual learning environment.

Dr. McMurray asked for a motion on the amendment. Ms. Edie Stewart moved to accept the amendment and it was seconded by Dr. Beshears-Duncan. The motion passed unanimously 4-0 (Dr. Bacon - Yea, Ms. Edie Stewart - Yea, Dr. McMurray - Yea, Dr. Beshears-Duncan - Yea).

IV. **Adjournment**

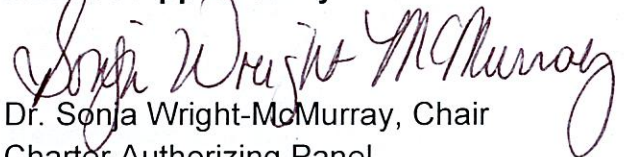
Ms. Edie Stewart moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Dr. Beshears-Duncan. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 9:51 AM.

Minutes Prepared By:



Mr. Seth R. Seaton
Charter Office Team Analyst
Arkansas Department of Education

Minutes Approved By:



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