

BEFORE THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

On February 9, 2023, during a regular meeting of the Arkansas State Board of Education, the State Board considered the Ozark Mountain School District’s petition to close Grades 7-12 at its St. Joe and Bruno-Pyatt campuses, which are “isolated schools” as defined by Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-601, beginning the 2023-2024 school year, and to move those grades to its Western Grove campus. The State Board conducted a hearing pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602 and the Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Closure of Isolated Schools.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. On December 15, 2022, by majority vote (4-3), the Ozark Mountain School District voted to close Grades 7-12 at its St. Joe and Bruno-Pyatt campuses and serve the impacted students at its Western Grove campus starting with the 2023-2024 school year.

2. On January 6, 2023, the District filed with the Arkansas State Board of Education a petition for closure of Grades 7-12 at its St. Joe and Bruno-Pyatt campuses.

3. Among other things, the District reasoned that these closures would provide both a financial and academic benefit to the students of the school district.

4. At the hearing, a group of District patrons opposed the proposed partial closure.

5. The District and Opposition presented evidence and argument during the hearing.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND ORDER

6. The St. Joe and Bruno-Pyatt campuses are “isolated schools” as defined by Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-601.

7. Because the Board of Directors of the Ozark Mountain School District did not vote unanimously to partially close Grades 7-12 at the St. Joe and Bruno-Pyatt campuses (although a

majority of members voted for closure), Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602(b) requires State Board approval for closure of those campuses.

8. According to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-602(b)(2)(C), the State Board shall only approve the closure of an isolated school or schools, or any part thereof, if it determines that the closure is in the best interest of the students in the school district as a whole, and that the closure would have no negative impact on desegregation efforts or violate a valid court order.

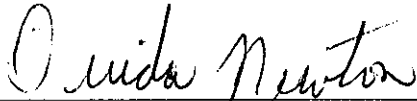
9. The District acknowledged that the closure of Grades 7-12 at its St. Joe and Bruno-Pyatt campuses would not have a negative impact on desegregation efforts or violate a valid court order, and no evidence to the contrary was introduced.

10. Based on the District's petition, documents submitted by the opposition, and evidence and argument presented during the hearing, the State Board finds that the closure of Grades 7-12 at the St. Joe and Bruno-Pyatt campuses and serving the impacted students at the District's Western Grove campus is in the best interest of the students in the school district as a whole.

11. Consequently, the State Board grants the District's petition to close Grades 7-12 at its St. Joe and Bruno-Pyatt campuses and move the impacted students to its Western Grove campus starting with the 2023-2024 school year.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

On this 9th day of February, 2023.



Ouida Newton, Chair
Arkansas State Board of Education