

BEFORE THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

On July 14, 2022, during a regular meeting of the Arkansas State Board of Education, pursuant to the legal authority and jurisdiction vested in the Board by the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act, Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2901 *et seq.*, and the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Rules Governing the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act, the Board considered whether to classify the Helena-West Helena School District as in need of Level 5 – Intensive support.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. On June 22, 2022, the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education provided written notification to the Helena-West Helena School District that the Division would recommend to the State Board during the Board's July 14, 2022, meeting that the District be classified as being in need of Level 5 – Intensive support.
2. The District did not appeal the Division's recommendation.
3. During the hearing, evidence and argument were offered by Division staff, as well as by Earnest Simpson Jr., Vice President of the Helena-West Helena Board of Directors.
4. The evidence reflected that, among other things, the District continues to experience instability with staffing, as well as irregularities in its master scheduling process, which adversely impact student learning.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND ORDER

5. Upon consideration of the evidence and argument presented, the State Board determined that the Helena-West Helena School District should be classified as in need

of Level 5 – Intensive support.

6. Pursuant to its authority under the AESAA and rules governing the Act, the State Board Orders that effective July 14, 2022:

a) The Helena-West Helena School District be classified as in need of Level 5 – Intensive support;

b) The Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education provide support to the District to assist it in improving its educational systems, including but not limited to the support detailed in the Hearing Notice dated June 22, 2022, which is attached as Appendix “A.”

c) The powers and duties of the Helena-West Helena Board of Directors to make all personnel decisions be removed and that the Commissioner shall make all personnel decisions in lieu of the Helena-West Helena Board of Directors; and

d) The Commissioner conduct an analysis of all school district systems and make recommendations for additional action by the State Board.

Signed this 15th day of July, 2022.



Ouida Newton, Chair
Arkansas State Board of Education



Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education

June 22, 2022

Johnny Key
Secretary

Assistant Superintendent Joyce Anderson

Dr. Ivy Pfeffer
Deputy
Commissioner

Ms. Sanetta Davis, President

Helena-West Helena School District

305 Valley Drive

Helena-West Helena, AR 72342

Stacy Smith
Deputy
Commissioner

Re: HEARING NOTICE: Recommendation to Classify the Helena-West Helena School District as in Need of Level 5 – Intensive Support

**State Board of
Education**

Dear Assistant Superintendent Anderson and President Davis:

Ouida Newton
Poyen
Chair

The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (the Division) has reviewed the Helena-West Helena School District's (the District) Act 1240 waiver request concerning teacher licensure. After a thorough analysis, the Division has determined that the District's human capital system is still experiencing instability with staffing and irregularities in the master scheduling process.

Dr. Sarah Moore
Stuttgart
Vice Chair

The staffing at the elementary school is particularly concerning, with some grade levels having no licensed teachers currently assigned to students. It is unclear whether unlicensed employees will be enrolled in preparation programs that align with their assigned grade level or whether they are being assigned to grade levels outside of their area of preparation. There are multiple vacancies that still need to be filled at both the elementary and high schools. Based on information reported by the District, there is concern that the Board of Directors is not considering qualified applicants; and it is unclear whether a high school counselor has been employed.

Charisse Dean
Little Rock

Dr. Fitz Hill
Little Rock

The data does not show that the granting of blanket waivers of licensure has provided the District the avenue to attract and retain quality applicants that result in a stable workforce. It is doubtful, however, that the District can find licensed candidates for the 2022-2023 school year given the late date for hire and shortage of prepared candidates. There are several candidates at your District are in various stages of preparation and license completion that provides some flexibility needed to move forward. However, the situation must be closely monitored to ensure that stability is returned to the District's staffing.

Kathy McFetridge
Springdale

Steve Sutton
Marion

Adrienne Woods
Rogers

Dr. Beth Anne Rankin
Magnolia

Randy Henderson
Blytheville

To find this balance and to provide students with the best chance of having a well-prepared teacher providing oversight for instruction, the Division will recommend that the State Board of Education classify the Helena-West Helena School District as in need of Level 5 – Intensive Support under the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act, Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2901 et seq. The Division will make this recommendation to the State Board of Education at its July 14, 2022 meeting, which will be held in the ADE Auditorium, Four Capitol Mall, Little Rock, Arkansas, at 10:00 a.m.

The main focus of the Division's classification recommendation will be ensuring District human capital system improvements. The Office of Coordinated Support and Service (OCSS) will lead the support for the District. The Division will recommend that a plan of support be developed to outline the roles and responsibilities of the Division and District, which will include but not be limited to the following:

- The OCSS will assign a deputy state superintendent to oversee the day-to-day human capital work and liaise with the District and Division concerning staffing decisions. The OCSS deputy will review all applications for vacant positions prior to recommendations for hire. Division staff members will provide technical assistance for staffing support. The Division will work with the District to implement a teaming structure that will include at least one lead teacher for each elementary grade level to provide equitable access to effective teachers.
- The Division and OCSS will monitor the master schedule and student schedules throughout the year to ensure stability of scheduling of students and staff. The Division will provide technical support for teacher and student scheduling, and all teacher and student schedules must be complete by August 8, 2022.
- The District's Teacher and Administrator Recruitment and Retention Plan (TARRP) will be comprehensive and included as part of the District Plan of Support. As a central part of the TARRP, the District will implement an Educators Rising Chapter and the Pre-Educator Program of Study as part of its Career and Technical Education program. If the District does not have staffing for the courses, the OCSS and Division will work with Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas to ensure that a Memorandum of Understanding and Concurrent agreements are in place for students. The TARRP will include support from the Great River Education Service Cooperative's Recruitment and Retention Coordinator.

Pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2915(c)(1) and Section 8.09 of the Division's Rules Governing the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act ("Rules"), the District may appeal the Division's recommendation to the State Board by filing a written appeal with the Office of the Secretary of Education via certified mail, return receipt requested, within twenty (20) calendar days of the receipt of this written notice. If the District files an appeal, the State Board will conduct a hearing at its July 14, 2022 meeting in accordance with Section 8.09.5 of the Rules. A copy of the Rules can be found on the Division's website at [Final AESAA Rules \(Effective May 31, 2022\) Legal.pdf \(arkansas.gov\)](#).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Stacy Smith at 501-683-4783.

Respectfully,



Johnny Key, Secretary
Arkansas Department of Education