

ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

MAY 14, 2026

12:30 P.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

BOARD MEMBERS:

MS. ADRIENNE WOODS, Chair
MR. JEFF WOOD
MS. LEIGH KEENER
MR. KEN BRAGG
MR. RANDY HENDERSON
MR. DAVID PEACOCK
DR. AARON ABBOTT

NON-VOTING BOARD MEMBERS:

MR. JACOB OLIVA, Secretary of Education
MS. JEANIE WILCOXIN, ATOY

ALSO APPEARING:

MS. STACY SMITH
MR. ROSS WHITE
MS. WHITNEY JAMES

LOCATION:

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
- Auditorium/Zoom
#4 Capitol Mall
Little Rock, Arkansas

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1 you recall, back in November, we brought quite a few
2 standards in front of you for approval. This is just
3 the next batch. Within that, those committees
4 made-up of about 72 individuals. Thirty-five K-12
5 educators, 16 post-secondary partners and 21 business
6 and industry partners for the specific 19 standards
7 that are in front of you today. There is a bit of a
8 timeline of what that looks like, and then, of
9 course, you all have the standards in front of you.
10 These are the sets that are with you today, grouped
11 by the path where they are. So agri-business,
12 agriculture, power, structural, and technical, animal
13 systems, the Arkansas Tourism Recreation, aviation,
14 career pathway standards and then plant science.

15 So with that, I'll take any questions you have.

16 CHAIR WOODS: Anybody have questions?

17 (NO RESPONSE)

18 CHAIR WOODS: I did have a procedural question.
19 Do we need to take each one of these individually, or
20 can we just put them as a batch?

21 MR. WHITE: That's a great question.

22 CHAIR WOODS: As a batch.

23 SECT. OLIVA: Yeah. I think you can do them all
24 together.

25 CHAIR WOODS: Perfect.

1 All right. Then I will need a motion to approve
2 all of the revised standards of the 19 courses that
3 we went over yesterday.

4 MR. BRAGG: I make that motion.

5 CHAIR WOODS: I have a motion to approve by Mr.
6 Bragg. Do I have a second?

7 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

8 CHAIR WOODS: Second by Mr. Henderson. All in
9 favor, say aye.

10 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

11 CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed? Hearing none, motion
12 passes.

13 MR. WHITE: Thank you.

14 CHAIR WOODS: Thank you for all your work on
15 this.

16 SECT. OLIVA: That's a lot of work.

17 CHAIR WOODS: This is incredible.

18 All right. Looking forward on that, Ms. Smith.

19 MS. SMITH: With the music. Thank you. Thank
20 you.

21 CHAIR WOODS: The woman of the hour.

22 MS. SMITH: That's right.

23 Stacy Smith, deputy commissioner.

24 All right. Good afternoon.

25 MR. WOOD: Jump on that trap door.

1 MS. SMITH: That's right.

2 All right. So yesterday we talked about these
3 four sets of rules during our work session. And so
4 today I'm going to kind of hit them quickly. Today,
5 three of the rules are just being released -- all
6 four of the rules are being released for public
7 comment. One of them does have an emergency call on
8 it, so when we get to that one, I'll note that for
9 you. Again, the process for this is State Board
10 releases them for public comment. They go out for 30
11 days for public comment. If there's any kind of
12 substantial change, it would go back out again for
13 public comment. If not, it comes back to this Board
14 for final approval. Once you approve -- final
15 approval, it then goes to the Arkansas Legislative
16 Council for review. All right. So today -- all of
17 the rules today are in that first batch of going out
18 for public comment.

19 **2. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST TO RELEASE THE RULES GOVERNING**
20 **PUBLIC SCHOOL POLICIES RELATING OVERNIGHT TRAVEL AND USE OF**
21 **PUBLIC SCHOOL LAVATORIES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

22 MS. SMITH: The first one here is rules
23 governing overnight travel and use of lavatories.
24 This was previous rules that had some amendment in
25 legislation. We gave clarification to athletic event

1 and athletic personnel, and it also amended it so
2 that athletic personnel could enter if they were
3 supervising or treating or addressing student
4 athletes during an event.

5 So if there are no questions about this one, I
6 would ask for a motion to release this one for public
7 comment.

8 CHAIR WOODS: Any questions?

9 (NO RESPONSE)

10 CHAIR WOODS: If not, I need a motion to approve
11 to release for public comment.

12 DR. ABBOTT: I move we release them for public
13 comment.

14 CHAIR WOODS: I have a motion by Dr. Abbott. Do
15 I have a second?

16 MS. KEENER: Second.

17 CHAIR WOODS: Seconded by Ms. Keener. All in
18 favor, say aye.

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed? Hearing none, motion
21 passes.

22 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

23 **3. CONSIDERATION OF THE RULES GOVERNING GRADING AND COURSE**

24 **CREDIT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

25 MS. SMITH: Second set of rules, this is one we

1 talked about quite a bit yesterday, with rules
2 governing grading and course credit. Again, this is
3 really making some of the adjustments to the rules
4 really centered around what happened in ACCESS. And
5 as a state, us moving to a mindset of acceleration
6 first, instead of remediation first; right? And so
7 it's creating some pathways, strengthening the
8 current pathways that we have and actually making
9 some courses that may have been looked at before as
10 not important, important, including some virtual CTE
11 courses that we recognize as being rigorous.

12 So I would ask the Board for a motion to release
13 these for public comment.

14 CHAIR WOODS: Anyone have questions?

15 (NO RESPONSE)

16 CHAIR WOODS: If not, I need a motion to release
17 for public comment.

18 MR. PEACOCK: I'll make the motion.

19 CHAIR WOODS: I have a motion by Mr. Peacock.
20 Do I have a second?

21 DR. ABBOTT: Second.

22 CHAIR WOODS: Seconded by Dr. Abbott. All in
23 favor, say aye.

24 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

25 CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed? Hearing none, motion

1 passes.

2 **4. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST TO RELEASE THE RULES GOVERNING**
3 **CONSOLIDATION AND ANNEXATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS FOR PUBLIC**
4 **COMMENT AND TO ADOPT THE AMENDMENT AS EMERGENCY RULES**

5 MS. SMITH: The next set of rules, this has an
6 emergency rule with it today. So I'm asking you,
7 one, to release it as an emergency rule at the same
8 time, releasing it for public comment.

9 These rules were amended to -- in response to
10 Act 919 of 2025, and it expands access to the
11 consolidation and annexation incentive funding for
12 school districts that were having a detachment
13 because of previously being consolidated with an
14 isolated school. So this is providing access to
15 those funds to kind of keep everybody fiscally
16 neutral as that's moving forward. So two things
17 happening here. With your vote today, you're
18 allowing it to go as an emergency rule, so the
19 process can get started, but you're also at the same
20 time releasing it for public comment.

21 Courtney, under emergency rule, how many -- how
22 long is a good for?

23 SECT. OLIVA: Four weeks.

24 MS. SALAS-FORD: Four months.

25 MS. SMITH: Four months.

1 CHAIR WOODS: So we don't need to bifurcate the
2 rule; correct?

3 MS. SMITH: Correct.

4 CHAIR WOODS: Like, we don't need two different
5 motions?

6 MS. SMITH: No, you can do it all in one motion,
7 but you need to do both.

8 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. So I need a motion to
9 approve the emergency rules as well as release for
10 public comments if there are no questions.

11 MR. BRAGG: I'll move we approve the emergency
12 rule.

13 CHAIR WOODS: And release for public comment?
14 All right.

15 I have a motion by Mr. Bragg. Do I have a
16 second?

17 MR. HENDERSON: I second.

18 CHAIR WOODS: I have a second by Mr. Henderson.
19 All in favor, please say aye.

20 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

21 CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed? Hearing none, motion
22 passes.

23 **5. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST TO RELEASE THE RUELS GOVERNING THE**
24 **COURSE CHOICE PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

25 MS. SMITH: All right. And the last set of

1 rules that we discussed yesterday had to do with
2 rules covering forced choice. This is a new set of
3 rules. This is -- came out of the LEARNS
4 legislation. And so this is expanding access to
5 high-quality courses throughout the state for our
6 students in grades 6 through 12.

7 So I would ask for a motion for this rule to be
8 set for public comment.

9 DR. ABBOTT: I move --

10 CHAIR WOODS: Okay.

11 DR. ABBOTT: -- that we --

12 CHAIR WOODS: All right. I have a motion by Dr.
13 Abbott to release for public comment. Do I have a
14 second?

15 MR. PEACOCK: I'll second.

16 CHAIR WOODS: Second by Mr. Peacock. All in
17 favor, say aye.

18 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

19 CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed? Hearing none, motion
20 passes.

21 MS. SMITH: Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

22 **6. CONSIDERATION OF THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL**
23 **LICENSURE STANDARDS BOARD FOR CASE NO. 25-293 - DERRICK COOK**

24 CHAIR WOODS: All right. The next item we have
25 is the Professional Licensure Standards Board case

1 number 25-293.

2 Ms. James.

3 MS. JAMES: Good afternoon.

4 This is a State Board review of the request of
5 the educator regarding Derrick Cook. Just a quick
6 reminder of the hearing procedures. First, the Chair
7 will swear in the educator or anyone who's
8 testifying, which really is only going to be the
9 educator. Then the educator will have ten minutes to
10 make an argument, followed by the PLSB, ten minutes.

11 CHAIR WOODS: All right. Is the educator here?

12 MR. KEES: He is.

13 Mr. Cook.

14 Do you need to swear him in?

15 CHAIR WOODS: Could you please stand and I'll
16 swear you in. Would you please raise your right
17 hand? Do you swear or affirm that the testimony
18 you're about to give to be the truth, the whole truth
19 and nothing but the truth?

20 MR. COOK: I do.

21 CHAIR WOODS: Thank you. Go ahead and proceed
22 with your case.

23 MR. KEES: To the board, this is the best mood
24 I've ever seen y'all in, so hopefully that bodes well
25 for Mr. Cook. I can't get a gauge on Mr. Wood, he's

1 the one I'm really always worried about. But I saw
2 him smile a few times.

3 CHAIR WOODS: We fed him. He's in a good mood.

4 MR. KEES: Good. Well, then I'll try to start
5 coming back in afternoons then.

6 We're asking for a review on behalf of Mr. Cook,
7 who is a 34-veteran educator. He was an
8 administrator in the Mississippi school system and
9 then began teaching at Lakeside at Lake Village. Dr.
10 Billy Adams is the superintendent there.

11 A couple of key things to note here, we're not
12 disputing ethics violation. That is clear. It is
13 the punishment, essentially. The initial committee
14 recommended suspension, and we asked for a hearing
15 because we felt the more appropriate remedy or the
16 more appropriate discipline would have been
17 probation. And things obviously didn't go so great
18 for us in that hearing because we came out with a
19 revocation. And I have some thoughts on that, but I
20 don't know if it's really germane for what -- what
21 we're doing here today.

22 What we're asking for is for you to take a look
23 at this in the totality and see that Mr. Cook is not
24 a danger to students. He's still employed. He's
25 still a science teacher there. In fact, he shared

1 with me earlier that he is the middle school teacher
2 of the year this year at the middle school. And
3 based on the testing that was just received, he had
4 the most growth in the middle school of all teachers.
5 And so I know he has the support of the
6 Superintendent, Dr. Billy Adams. You'll see that in
7 the record. He had his principal speak on behalf of
8 him.

9 So a very unfortunate, unprofessional, and we
10 would say unethical reaction to a student. But he
11 was allowed to come back to work and the student
12 remained in his class this year. So obviously the
13 relationship with the student and the parent was
14 mended because he remained in his classroom. And so
15 given his 34 years of experience, this is the first
16 ethics issue at all. Given his support of his
17 administration, that he's still employed there, that
18 revocation would essentially be -- under the rule he
19 would not be able to teach, substitute teach,
20 volunteer for ten years. And so that would
21 essentially end his career.

22 There was some things about a maltreatment was
23 the finding. DHS investigated and they determined
24 that there was no maltreatment. I know it's
25 different standards. I just want to make sure you

1 know that the DHS finding was no maltreatment. And
2 so I thought there was a little bit of confusion, or
3 the panel came away saying that there was
4 maltreatment. That's a legal term and that was not
5 there.

6 And so we would ask in light of all of this,
7 that a more appropriate sanction would be probation,
8 with training, all of those various things, and we
9 want to ensure that you know -- I know the concern is
10 if we put you back in the classroom, will there be
11 the propensity or the likelihood that another student
12 -- and I just don't see that here. The track record
13 doesn't show that, and the fact that he's had a year
14 since -- because this was March of '24, excuse me,
15 March of '25, so since there's been a year with no
16 incident, coupled with the 34 years, I don't think
17 that's a concern.

18 And so did you want to say anything, Mr. Cook,
19 just for the Board's sake? And then they may have
20 some questions for us.

21 MR. COOK: I've been in education for over half
22 my life. And I'm dedicated to helping young children
23 to better themselves, become a better person and help
24 society. And I got into education in lieu of going
25 to medicine so that I could have an impact on their

1 determination on the way to go in life. And the
2 incident that occurred -- I'm not going to go over it
3 with you -- but I just, you know, just sorry that it
4 ever happened. I never seen it coming. I apologized
5 to the kid; the kid apologized to me; talked with the
6 parent, you know, mended everything. And I don't
7 want to a blemish where we look at mistakes that have
8 been made -- because I'm quite sure everyone has made
9 mistakes, but how do we recover from those mistakes?
10 And like I said, my track record, I've never had
11 anything like this, never been written up, anything
12 like this. Maybe for a lesson plan or two, but
13 that's about it all. But otherwise -- I love
14 children. That's why I'm here in education, to help
15 children. And being named Teacher of the Year this
16 year, you know, it's -- I'm just -- I'm here instead
17 of, you know -- matter of fact, it's today where I
18 get recognized. But I chose to be here because it's
19 important to me that I have the opportunity to
20 continue to help children. You know, show them the
21 way.

22 MR. KEES: Okay. That's all we have.

23 CHAIR WOODS: All right.

24 Ms. James.

25 MS. JAMES: Good afternoon.

1 Mr. Derrick Cook is a veteran educator, over 34
2 years of experience, and he holds a teaching license
3 and an administrator's license. We are here today
4 because on March the 12th of 2025, a middle-school
5 student slapped Mr. Cook in the face. This was the
6 first time that had happened in Mr. Cook's career.
7 That's the first time he had experienced that. But
8 you will see how he responded, and hopefully you had
9 a chance to watch the video. After he had time to
10 cool off, as he said, he went into the classroom and
11 sought out the student so he could take him to the
12 office. But what happened was more of a
13 confrontation and essentially an assault on the
14 student. Again, this was after Mr. Cook had the
15 opportunity to, as he said, cool down. He said he
16 was going to take the student into the office, but
17 when it became clear the student wasn't going to
18 cooperate, and the student hid from him and avoided
19 him, he continued to engage with the student. There
20 is video evidence of him throwing the student to the
21 ground, grabbing the student, kicking the student,
22 and striking the student repeatedly with a yardstick.
23 Of note, prior to the evidentiary hearing, he only
24 admitted that he waved the yardstick over the
25 student. That is simply not true.

1 Mr. Cook has consistently downplayed, minimized
2 and mischaracterized what happened. He didn't seem
3 to initially express remorse, but when interviewed by
4 the PLSB, he gave a version of events that was quite
5 different from what was on the video.

6 This Board is not bound by the decision of DHS,
7 and it is not bound by the decision of the district
8 to continue to employ him following this. And we had
9 to date an educator who lost his temper and rather
10 than handle the situation in a professional, ethical
11 manner or involved administrators, he engaged with a
12 student unprofessionally and unethically. He clearly
13 and without a doubt violated the Code of Ethics.

14 We had a lengthy evidentiary hearing. I think
15 it was about eight hours long. We heard from the
16 educator. We heard from his witnesses and our
17 witnesses. And this does not happen very often, but
18 the hearing panel found that the conduct was so
19 egregious that they raised the sanction from
20 suspension to revocation. And it was unanimous.
21 That very rarely happens. But that was based on
22 eight hours of testimony, a very long day, very long
23 hearing, watching the video, I don't know how many
24 times. We argue that the recommendation of
25 revocation should be upheld.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIR WOODS: Thank you.

3 All right. I'll start to my left.

4 Mr. Peacock, do you have any questions?

5 MR. PEACOCK: Not at this time.

6 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. Dr. Abbott?

7 DR. ABBOTT: No.

8 CHAIR WOODS: Ms. Keener?

9 MS. KEENER: No questions.

10 CHAIR WOODS: Mr. Henderson?

11 MR. HENDERSON: Yes. When the altercation took
12 place, were there other witnesses, students that was
13 around them?

14 CHAIR WOODS: Can you come up here and verbally
15 answer?

16 MR. COOK: Yes, sir, there were.

17 MR. HENDERSON: Okay. What was the timeline as
18 far as the incident? And you had time to cool off
19 before going back to him. What was the timeline
20 there?

21 MR. COOK: Maybe, it was about give or take ten
22 to 15 minutes.

23 MR. HENDERSON: Okay.

24 MR. COOK: We was outside, moved to the inside,
25 got the kids under control and got the classroom

1 covered.

2 MR. HENDERSON: I don't know if I can ask this
3 question in regards to the student. Do you have any
4 documentation of prior or previous misconduct before
5 the altercation?

6 MR. KEES: He would know because he knows the
7 student.

8 MR. COOK: Prior to that, the student was -- had
9 several suspensions, and I'm under oath, so he had
10 several suspensions. I was his mentor. I still am
11 his mentor and he -- he was in trouble with the law,
12 threatening probation. And so that's one reason I
13 gave consideration not to involve the administration
14 head off because I know that's breaking the law.
15 Immediately, that would have been, you know, he'd
16 been arrested for striking a teacher. Since then, he
17 was placed back in my class because he had to go to
18 summer school because of grades, and he got kicked
19 out of summer school, which caused him to fail and
20 returned back to my school. We have a small school
21 district. So he returned back to school, back in my
22 room, and the teacher and the -- well, the principal
23 and superintendent asked, I said, yeah, I have no
24 problem. We have no problem. We're fine. Mom's
25 fine. No -- no problem. And he was back in my

1 class, but other things in other classes, he did some
2 things. He eventually got several suspensions,
3 several absentees and was placed in ALE, alternative
4 running. You know, he was kicked out. And also --
5 I'm not going to speak on everything I've heard. I'm
6 just going to speak what I know. Several fights. He
7 got caught with several -- vaping in the classroom.
8 And he got in an altercation, verbal altercation with
9 another teacher, which she threatened to leave. And
10 that's when I think he ended up in ALE. So, yes.

11 MR. HENDERSON: Beyond your mentorship, did the
12 district seek help from the student, you listed
13 services, several different items there?

14 MR. COOK: Yes. He had counseling.

15 MR. HENDERSON: Okay.

16 MR. COOK: School counseling, and outside
17 counseling brought to him. Given the opportunity, he
18 was allowed to become part of a program that I'm with
19 changing Boys to Men. He's currently -- so he was in
20 that program until ALE. And -- but, you know, I
21 reckon his home environment outside influence is
22 greater than ours, so that's what it led to.

23 MR. HENDERSON: Thank you.

24 MR. COOK: Yes, sir.

25 CHAIR WOODS: Mr. Bragg? Mr. Wood?

1 MR. WOOD: I'll just say, Mr. Cook, in the
2 number of years that I've had to be involved in these
3 types of things, certified staff and classified
4 staff, you'll find me on the record supporting
5 employees that are responding in a similar fashion in
6 a defensive posture. The problem I see here is the
7 passage of time between the two events. What the
8 student did to you, certainly offensive and wrong.

9 MR. COOK: Yeah.

10 MR. WOOD: But the amount of time you had
11 between that and coming back into the room and the --

12 MR. COOK: May I address that?

13 MR. WOOD: Well, sure.

14 MR. COOK: If you watch the film, you'll see I
15 walked away. I attempted to go get him. He didn't
16 want to go. So I said, well, let me go on down to
17 the office and do whatever. He walked behind me
18 twice. He was -- extreme profanity. Requesting that
19 we step outside and do what we do. And by the time I
20 turned around to see how close he was up on me, he
21 was up on me. And it was right back, you know. But
22 I do want to go on record. I never kicked that kid.

23 MR. WOOD: You what?

24 MR. COOK: I never kicked that kid.

25 MR. WOOD: Well, the video is pretty bad. I

1 wouldn't --

2 MR. COOK: I understand.

3 MR. WOOD: -- try to defend that. I'm not sure.
4 I guess -- I guess someone could try to persuade me
5 that -- that Mr. Cook's actions were defensive in
6 nature, but the video that I've seen, they appear to
7 be offensive in nature.

8 MR. COOK: But I was walking.

9 MR. WOOD: I'm sorry. I mean -- what did you
10 say?

11 MR. COOK: I said I was walking off. I was
12 trying to walk away from him.

13 MR. WOOD: Well, explain that to me.

14 MR. KEES: Only video that he's seen is the
15 video of the classroom.

16 MR. COOK: That's the one I'm talking about.

17 MR. KEES: Okay.

18 MR. COOK: Inside the classroom.

19 MR. WOOD: Did I miss something? I did not -- I
20 did not see a video where you're walking away, and
21 you are assaulted and you respond. I see a different
22 video. Am I -- am I wrong?

23 MR. KEES: I --

24 CHAIR WOODS: I don't know that we had a video
25 of you getting assaulted. I may be wrong.

1 MR. PEACOCK: We don't have the one from the
2 playground that -- when I read --

3 CHAIR WOODS: Right.

4 MR. PEACOCK: -- the details.

5 MS. JAMES: There wasn't a video from the
6 playground. The only one that we have is the one
7 that you saw. Yes, sir.

8 MR. PEACOCK: The -- well, my perspective,
9 clearly the video is disturbing; right? But I think
10 the mistake was made that -- I think you were trying
11 to do the right thing when you went back to take the
12 student and follow the procedures. I think it got
13 out of hand again and instead of walking away a
14 second time, you reacted a second time. But I -- I
15 do see it as a reaction as opposed to you going in
16 there to grab the kid.

17 CHAIR WOODS: Have you ever had any other issues
18 in your teaching tenure?

19 MR. COOK: No, ma'am. Thirty-four years, never.

20 MR. PEACOCK: This is difficult for me because
21 clearly the video shows you in an extremely bad
22 light; right? And you earned the reaction that
23 everybody has to the video. I'm not going to
24 discount that. Part of my concern is children can't
25 learn in an environment that doesn't have discipline

1 and good order and conduct. And clearly, that did
2 not exist in the room. And clearly, from what we --
3 I read, the student contributed or created some of
4 that environment. And so my worry is, how do the
5 rest of our professional teachers react to your
6 mistake? I think that if I'm a teacher, I'm going to
7 see that, and I don't ever want to be on a video
8 doing that. But I'm worried that the pendulum will
9 swing so far in the other direction that they won't
10 allow kids to misbehave and disrupt the learning of
11 the rest of the children in the school with --
12 depending on the severity of the punishment. I think
13 you need to be punished in some form. I think that
14 we will get to that here in a little bit. My
15 question is, taking you out of teaching permanently
16 -- Teacher of the Year, there's a lot of things
17 written up there that supported your activity. How
18 do -- is that in the best interest overall, or is
19 there somewhere in between doing nothing and a full
20 revocation? And I don't know that there's a question
21 in there. I just wanted to share, that's the
22 question in my head right now.

23 MR. KEES: And I would say that's what -- the
24 point I wanted to implore Mr. Peacock. We'd be open
25 to all of that, just maintaining the ability to

1 continue in the classroom and anything the Board sees
2 fit. We're -- he's open to that, obviously, and we
3 recognize that the Board would need those assurances.

4 MS. KEENER: May I?

5 CHAIR WOODS: Yes, please.

6 MS. KEENER: So first and foremost, I want to
7 thank you for coming here today, for being an adult,
8 and talking about this with regret and remorse and
9 being willing to admit your mistakes. That doesn't
10 always happen when folks come forward, and instead
11 they spend their time defending their actions. I
12 really appreciate that. I also believe that the
13 final step in sort of those natural line of
14 consequences is to accept the consequence rather than
15 fight it. But before we get to that point, I had two
16 little questions. Well, three, I guess, one maybe
17 for Ms. James. But you spoke a lot about the child
18 and behavior issues that were ongoing, both
19 historically and sort of in that immediate moment.
20 And I wanted to know, since I didn't have any sound
21 on there, I don't know if I -- maybe I didn't list
22 it. But the understanding your closest to the
23 student as a mentor, what led to -- what student
24 behavior led to you laying hands on the child? Was
25 it sort of the culmination? Was it the immediate --

1 was it -- I just wanted to hear from you and your
2 thought process at that moment.

3 MR. COOK: I intended to go back in the room,
4 mind was clear, to go get him, bring him down to the
5 office, talk with the administrators on hand. He ran
6 from me. The child snatched his phone and gave him
7 the phone. I said, okay, well, I'll take his phone
8 and go to the office. As I was leaving, he came up
9 using some extreme profanity, threatening, you know.
10 And as I turned around, he was right up on me and
11 called me out asking me, you know, to step outside,
12 do this, do that. And he was just too close, you
13 know?

14 MS. KEENER: What were you feeling in that
15 moment?

16 MR. COOK: When I turned around?

17 MS. KEENER: Uh-huh.

18 MR. COOK: Well, I thought he wanted to fight
19 me. Yes, ma'am. That's how close he was.

20 MS. KEENER: So I guess what I was -- the
21 correct answer there is that there is no behavior
22 that a child can show historically in the immediate
23 moment that ever means it's okay to put a hand on
24 them, especially as an educator, especially as a
25 mentor, especially as someone who they should feel

1 only care and love --

2 MR. COOK: Right.

3 MS. KEENER: -- and support from, whether that
4 includes discipline. I think what led to it was your
5 lack of control, your frustration. The only thing we
6 can control is our own responses and our own
7 behaviors. What I'm concerned about is in this --
8 you said you didn't see it coming. Help us feel
9 better about the fact that if another situation
10 arises, you're not going to have the same reaction.

11 MR. COOK: Well, I admit I took a more
12 aggressive tone to help myself. I've been to my
13 minister, you know, on counseling to see why did it
14 occur and how can I prevent it? I know it's just
15 that my love for children -- I try to put things in
16 place so that things, they won't do things to
17 (unintelligible) because, you know, if it's not me,
18 it may be someone else. And I try to teach them in
19 such a fashion that they wouldn't consider doing
20 that. And -- but I have no control over them. I
21 have control of me. So therefore, I constantly,
22 constantly work on my patience. And I definitely had
23 a lot of that. But also to correct the error that I
24 made, you know, and talk with my colleagues as well
25 because it could have been one of them that it could

1 have happened to. And I think, what happened? What
2 happened? Always allow time to bring that energy out
3 of, you know, I took about 15 minutes, maybe I should
4 have took 30, the whole period, maybe the end of the
5 day. And as I look back, you know, we perfect
6 history, you know. But the only thing I can say is
7 that my affinity to teach children and to care for
8 them -- and I can't say, I'd rather walk off and
9 leave the job than cause a child pain, hurt physical
10 or emotional, you know. I'd rather do that than have
11 that take place ever again. I have children of my
12 own, grandchildren, and I even thought about what if
13 that was my child that did that and the adult reacted
14 like that, you know? And it just put me in a bad
15 place in my mind where it's just difficult. I can't
16 say what if it was you? I can't even say that. What
17 if it was you? You know, you wouldn't want your
18 child put like that. And to think an adult did that.

19 MS. KEENER: Well -- and I'll remind you that
20 the greatest example we can set for children is
21 imperfection. It is making mistakes and working
22 through it and showing them that there's the other
23 side at the end. And so doing exactly what you did
24 instead of walking away, but remaining connected to
25 that student, handling it in a way that shows them

1 you can come back from this, but also learn from it
2 and don't do it again; right?

3 MR. COOK: Right.

4 MS. KEENER: And so I applaud you for that. And
5 that is a better lesson than this moment.

6 My question for Ms. James, and I may have missed
7 it, was there injury? Was there a reported injury?
8 Was there -- I saw a lot about the witnesses, but I
9 didn't notice -- maybe I've just missed it.

10 MS. JAMES: I don't believe that there was any
11 evidence of injury to the student, but I also don't
12 think he went to the nurse to be examined. I believe
13 that was in the rationale.

14 MS. KEENER: Okay.

15 DR. ABBOTT: I have a quick question. I'm
16 trying to reconcile to two different things. I think
17 I heard it and I maybe just kind of misheard
18 something. But at one point I think you said that
19 you didn't want to take the student to the office
20 because you -- some back -- his background. You were
21 afraid what might happen to him. But then --

22 MR. COOK: Not that I didn't want to take him to
23 the office. I didn't want to write him up because
24 then it becomes official, whereas he wouldn't have to
25 get arrested.

1 DR. ABBOTT: Okay. But does taking him to the
2 office -- does that -- does a write-up not
3 automatically happen at that point?

4 MR. COOK: I would have asked them for leniency.

5 DR. ABBOTT: Okay. So you --

6 MR. COOK: Oh, yeah.

7 DR. ABBOTT: Right. You didn't want to take --
8 but -- well, you didn't want to write him up. Okay.

9 MR. COOK: Right. Right.

10 DR. ABBOTT: And so when you had started to walk
11 out of the room, your intention was to go to the
12 office? What -- you were going to go to the office
13 to ask for leniency for him at that moment?

14 MR. COOK: No. I was going to go ahead and let
15 it take the place because I had given him the
16 opportunity to come with me and let's talk this out.
17 Let's see what happens if we can make the right out
18 of this wrong.

19 DR. ABBOTT: Right.

20 MR. COOK: But he chose not to. And so I was
21 like, well, you know, I got to do what I got to do.
22 And that's when I started to walk off.

23 DR. ABBOTT: Okay. Thank you.

24 MR. WOOD: Did you get arrested?

25 MR. COOK: No.

1 MR. WOOD: You haven't been prosecuted for this?

2 MR. COOK: No. They did call for the state
3 police and stuff in, but they didn't see evidence
4 where I had harmed the kid or, you know, caused harm
5 to him or anything. And that's when they say give
6 him a court date because I had to do the court thing
7 and the judge found me -- I didn't harm him.

8 MR. KEES: You're talking about DHS or are you
9 talking about something else?

10 MR. COOK: Both.

11 MR. KEES: Okay.

12 MR. COOK: DHS and the state police.

13 MR. PEACOCK: Let me clarify. The hearing that
14 you're talking about is -- in conjunction with this,
15 it's not -- it wasn't a criminal proceeding? There
16 was no trial or --

17 MR. COOK: No.

18 MR. PEACOCK: -- no criminal --

19 MR. COOK: No.

20 MR. PEACOCK:

21 MR. PEACOCK: You didn't get arrested? I think
22 that your answer sort of muddied the waters a little
23 bit from my understanding.

24 MR. KEES: Yeah. I don't want to step in that
25 because I wasn't aware of it. It's -- DHS is the

1 only thing that I've seen and that's -- I believe we
2 referred to. It was, you know, how DHS will first do
3 an investigation and state police will be involved.
4 And that was a no finding. And I agree with Ms.
5 James. I think it was largely because there was --
6 the law requires an injury and there was no at least
7 reported injury since.

8 DR. ABBOTT: So the student didn't go to the
9 nurse? Did the student have -- I'm guessing, had the
10 opportunity to go to the nurse?

11 MR. COOK: He did. There wasn't no injuries
12 though.

13 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. If there's no further
14 questions at this time --

15 MR. KEES: And then you reached out to his mom
16 that night?

17 MR. COOK: Yes.

18 MR. KEES: And then he reached out to his mother
19 that night to, I think, just make sure she was aware
20 of it and let her decide if there is anything
21 injury-wise.

22 MR. COOK: Right. She had the opportunity to.
23 She chose not to. And we get along to this day, she
24 and I.

25 CHAIR WOODS: You may have a seat.

1 Ms. James, remind me, do you have to find that
2 there was a violation of the statement of ethics?

3 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

4 CHAIR WOODS: Do we have to find a motion for
5 the punishment and then also the rationale?

6 MS. JAMES: Yes.

7 CHAIR WOODS: Three motions?

8 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am. That is correct. If
9 you need a reminder regarding what the rationale was
10 or what either of the previous sanctions were, I can
11 provide that for you.

12 CHAIR WOODS: Excellent. I'll find out what my
13 colleagues are thinking.

14 I do -- I was just pulling up the PLSB
15 sanctioning guideline for those that haven't pulled
16 it out. If you look at physical contact with a
17 student resulting in injury, would automatically go
18 to suspension; physical contact resulting in no
19 injuries, probation. Whether he was injured is still
20 kind of gray. And then the last page is your
21 potential mitigating and aggravating factors.

22 MS. JAMES: And that's just -- just suggestions.
23 Yes. Yes, ma'am.

24 CHAIR WOODS: I want to make sure everybody has
25 this.

1 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

2 CHAIR WOODS: So we can have further discussion
3 or if somebody would like to present a motion. Do we
4 need a motion if they're not contesting the statement
5 of ethics, the violation of the code of ethics?

6 MS. JAMES: It would just be a motion that there
7 was -- that there was a violation of the standards.
8 And the standards --

9 CHAIR WOODS: And the standards that were
10 violated. Okay.

11 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

12 MS. KEENER: So I'll make a motion that we find
13 there was a violation of standard 1A, 1B, 2A and 2B.

14 CHAIR WOODS: All right. So I have a motion by
15 Ms. Keener to find that we -- there was a violation
16 of the Code of Ethics: 1A, 1B, 2A and 2B; is that
17 correct?

18 MS. KEENER: Uh-huh.

19 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. Do I have a second?

20 MR. BRAGG: I'll second.

21 CHAIR WOODS: Second by Mr. Bragg. All in
22 favor, say aye.

23 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

24 CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed?

25 Hearing none, motion passes.

1 As far as the consequences.

2 MR. PEACOCK: I'll make a motion that the
3 punishment is probation.

4 CHAIR WOODS: Is there a length of time?

5 MR. PEACOCK: I'm sorry?

6 CHAIR WOODS: The length of time.

7 MR. PEACOCK: What's the range that would --

8 MS. KEENER: I would -- the suggested was two
9 years. Pulling up his license, his license is valid
10 from '25 until December 31st, '29.

11 MR. PEACOCK: Yeah.

12 MS. KEENER: So I would --

13 MR. PEACOCK: Through the duration of his
14 license.

15 MS. KEENER: Of his current license, at which
16 point they'll --

17 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. So I have probation for I
18 think three years. Do you have any sort of course
19 recommendations that he take? Do you want to defer
20 to the Department or just probation?

21 MR. PEACOCK: This is getting more complicated.

22 CHAIR WOODS: I know.

23 MR. PEACOCK: That's why everybody was waiting.

24 MS. KEENER: So --

25 MR. PEACOCK: I do think that he needs -- that

1 -- there -- that it's in his interest and the school
2 and the students' interest that he has some type of
3 formal counseling going forward.

4 MS. KEENER: Okay.

5 CHAIR WOODS: I can tell you that the
6 recommended training and coursework's were "Creating
7 a Culture that Connects," the Code of Ethics part 4,
8 which is professional responsibilities, Code of
9 Ethics part 7, an educator's influence, and then a
10 written explanation of how you will apply each
11 training to your practice.

12 MS. KEENER: And the completion of an anger
13 management course.

14 CHAIR WOODS: Okay.

15 MR. PEACOCK: Yes.

16 CHAIR WOODS: So keep those in addition to the
17 --

18 MR. PEACOCK: Correct.

19 CHAIR WOODS: So recommended coursework.

20 MS. JAMES: And also, if you want to assess the
21 fine.

22 MS. KEENER: I'm not --

23 CHAIR WOODS: You good? Okay.

24 So I have a motion by Mr. Peacock for the
25 probation for a term of three years and to also

1 continue with the recommended training coursework,
2 monitor progress, anger management and then all of
3 the Code of Ethics. Do I have a second?

4 MR. HENDERSON: I Second.

5 MS. KEENER: Second.

6 CHAIR WOODS: Second by Mr. Henderson.

7 Okay. I'm going to do a roll call.

8 Mr. Peacock?

9 MR. PEACOCK: I vote yes for that.

10 CHAIR WOODS: Dr. Abbott?

11 DR. ABBOTT: Yes.

12 CHAIR WOODS: Ms. Keener?

13 MS. KEENER: Yes.

14 CHAIR WOODS: Mr. Henderson?

15 MR. HENDERSON: Yes.

16 CHAIR WOODS: Mr. Bragg?

17 MR. BRAGG: Yes.

18 CHAIR WOODS: Mr. Wood?

19 MR. WOOD: No.

20 CHAIR WOODS: With four votes to approve and one
21 no, the motion passes for probation for three years
22 and recommended coursework.

23 And now we need to adopt the rationale.

24 Will you read the rationale?

25 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am. I will start with the

1 rationale that the Ethics Subcommittee provided,
2 which is video footage showed physical contact
3 occurred between the educator and S1, video footage
4 showed the educator striking S1 with the yardstick
5 multiple times, video footage showed the educator
6 throwing S1 to the ground by grabbing his hoodie.
7 The educator acknowledged his actions were wrong and
8 expressed remorse. The educator initially had a DHS
9 true finding but was overturned upon appeal. The
10 educator reportedly maintained a positive
11 relationship following the incident. Witnesses
12 described S1 as having a history of behavioral
13 challenges. S1 did not sustain injuries in the
14 encounter. The incident happened in front of other
15 students. The duration of the incident was
16 approximately three minutes.

17 CHAIR WOODS: Does anybody want to adopt that in
18 whole, add to or take away?

19 MS. KEENER: I'll move that we adopt it in
20 whole.

21 CHAIR WOODS: I have a motion by Ms. Keener to
22 adopt the recommendation of the ethics subcommittee
23 in whole.

24 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

25 CHAIR WOODS: Do I have a second?

1 DR. ABBOTT: Second.

2 CHAIR WOODS: Seconded by Dr. Abbott. All in
3 favor, say aye.

4 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

5 CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed?

6 Hearing none, motion passes.

7 MS. JAMES: Okay. We'll get that order ready
8 for you.

9 MR. PEACOCK: I -- is it appropriate for me to
10 make a comment?

11 CHAIR WOODS: Yes.

12 MR. PEACOCK: Mr. Cook, I think you're very
13 fortunate that it has turned out this way. I think
14 that we recon- -- I recognize -- I won't speak for
15 the whole Board -- but I recognize the value you
16 bring. Part of this is a recognition of that. Part
17 of it is that, excuse me, the environment that I
18 think is important in schools, and I don't want to
19 send the wrong message. But please do not prove us
20 wrong in our decision today.

21 MR. HENDERSON: I'd also like to add that, you
22 know, being from a rural area, I do understand that
23 sometimes there's some challenges with some students
24 that don't exist across the entire state. But to
25 Mr. Peacock's point, definitely look at this as an

1 opportunity and take advantage of that counseling
2 because things could be a lot different if all those
3 things don't take place.

4 MR. KEES: Did you say four or five first? What
5 were the --

6 CHAIR WOODS: That it was four.

7 MR. KEES: You said --

8 CHAIR WOODS: Five, I'm sorry.

9 MR. KEES: Okay.

10 CHAIR WOODS: Sorry. Thank you for that.

11 SECT. OLIVA: For the record, it was five.

12 MR. KEES: I was not correcting you.

13 CHAIR WOODS: You can absolutely correct me. I
14 am very fallible.

15 MR. KEES: Yeah. Thank you all.

16 CHAIR WOODS: So five votes for yes and one no.

17 MR. KEES: Thank you.

18 **8. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF 2026-2027 STATE BOARD OFFICERS**

19 CHAIR WOODS: All right. Moving on. So next on
20 the agenda is the nomination and election of the
21 2026-2027 State Board officers. At this time --
22 typically in the past, we've had it as a side
23 meeting, but they decided to put it on the agenda and
24 just have discussion here. I know from people that I
25 have talked to, I know everybody seems open to the

1 idea of being the vice chair. Not many people want
2 to step up and be the chair. It's only like 40 hours
3 a month. So -- I'm just kidding.

4 MS. KEENER: Like girl.

5 SECT. OLIVA: I mean, you're not selling it.

6 MS. SALAS-FORD: You get the benefit of working
7 with Kelcie and I.

8 CHAIR WOODS: It's basically we're with Courtney
9 and Kelcie and they do a good job and will do.
10 whatever you need them to, or they will let you do
11 what you want to do. They're always a quick text and
12 phone call away. So --

13 MS. KEENER: Before we say anything, I want to
14 express my gratitude to you, coming in and really
15 taking the reins and setting a great example.
16 Unfortunately, I've already asked and she can't serve
17 again, but I do appreciate your work.

18 CHAIR WOODS: I appreciate that. I stepped into
19 big shoes from Dr. Moore --

20 MS. KEENER: Yes.

21 CHAIR WOODS: -- for those of you that remember
22 her, so -- I don't know that I lived up to them, but
23 I really appreciate that you guys this year. So with
24 that, we are open for discussion if anybody wants to
25 make a nomination. I've gotten feedback from Ms.

1 Hunter and from Dr. Arnold. So --

2 MS. KEENER: What's the -- timeline-wise, I know
3 this -- your term is ending very shortly. Who is the
4 next -- I know traditionally -- we shouldn't do
5 things just because that's why they've always been
6 done, but traditionally the year before you leave is
7 the year you serve as chair.

8 CHAIR WOODS: I wouldn't say that because Sarah
9 served two years and then we had a year way before
10 y'all's time, Charisse served for a year, and then
11 she was still a member for a year.

12 MS. KEENER: Oh, okay.

13 CHAIR WOODS: So we do not have to go by length
14 of time.

15 MS. KEENER: Okay.

16 CHAIR WOODS: I will say the only people that
17 are not eligible are Dr. Abbott and Mr. Peacock
18 because they've just not served a long enough time.
19 So that leaves --

20 DR. ABBOTT: Bummer.

21 CHAIR WOODS: Bummer. I know. That leaves Ms.
22 Hunter, Dr. Arnold, Ms. Keener, Mr. Henderson, Mr.
23 Bragg and Mr. Woods available.

24 MR. WOOD: I don't think I'm eligible either.

25 CHAIR WOODS: There's that trap door that you

1 need right at that moment.

2 DR. ABBOTT: Can we just ask, is anyone
3 interested in it?

4 CHAIR WOODS: That's a great question. This is
5 --

6 DR. ABBOTT: No one --

7 CHAIR WOODS: This is the response that I get.
8 I'm like, anybody?

9 MR. WOOD: Randy, will you turn it down if
10 nominated?

11 MR. HENDERSON: I'm probably the most busiest
12 board member.

13 CHAIR WOODS: What did you just say, say?

14 DR. ABBOTT: He said he's busiest.

15 (Soto voce conversation)

16 CHAIR WOODS: I know Lisa has said that she
17 would serve as vice chair again.

18 SECT. OLIVA: She was chair -- vice chair.

19 CHAIR WOODS: She was our current vice chair,
20 yes, and she would serve again. I know Dr. Arnold
21 has said he would be open to vice chair. Anybody
22 else on this board can be, not everybody else on this
23 board.

24 MS. KEENER: Everybody but you guys.

25 CHAIR WOODS: Everybody but you guys.

1 DR. ABBOTT: That's okay.

2 CHAIR WOODS: Mr. Bragg are you interested in
3 vice chair?

4 MR. BRAGG: Pardon me?

5 CHAIR WOODS: So I was saying that Ms. Hunter is
6 willing --

7 SECT. OLIVA: Is this on?

8 CHAIR WOODS: Dr. Arnold has said he would be
9 open if he was nominated for vice chair. I want to
10 open that up to you because I know you're --

11 MR. BRAGG: I'll go with Dr. Arnold.

12 CHAIR WOODS: Dr. Arnold? Okay.

13 MS. KEENER: Really. Okay. I look forward to,
14 you know, you gentlemen breaking the glass ceiling.
15 I've had nothing but female leadership. So it will
16 be --

17 CHAIR WOODS: That's true.

18 So it sounds like I have a nomination for Mr.
19 Henderson, and he has tentatively accepted.

20 MR. WOOD: Begrudgingly

21 SECT. OLIVA: Someone will need to --

22 MR. WOOD: I will nominate Mr. Henderson to be
23 board chair.

24 CHAIR WOODS: Okay.

25 MR. WOOD: Randy, I very much appreciate your

1 service on this Board. You are a great public
2 servant. You go all over the state. You represent
3 our Board quite well. You represent your industry
4 quite well. And your friends might give you a hard
5 time back at the office for sleeping through
6 meetings. But you don't. And that's not fair. And
7 you are a very hard worker. And I look forward to
8 you having the opportunity to gavel us in and run the
9 meetings and lead our board.

10 CHAIR WOODS: I would just also like to echo
11 that I think you're one of our strongest, quietest
12 speakers on this Board and that cannot be understated
13 or overstated enough. So I would love to pass the
14 gavel to you.

15 MR. WOOD: You're going to have to speak up when
16 the timer hits three minutes. So --

17 CHAIR WOODS: Yes.

18 MS. KEENER: I'm going to try and elbow you
19 until you do.

20 I'll second that motion and I look forward to
21 working with you.

22 CHAIR WOODS: All right. So I have a nomination
23 for Mr. Anderson to become the chair of the 2026-2027
24 State Board. I have a second by Ms. Keener. All in
25 favor, say aye.

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(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed? Hearing none --

MS. KEENER: No, you wish.

CHAIR WOODS: Congratulations.

Was there a nomination for vice chair? Dr. Arnold? Yeah. So Mr. Bragg has nominated Mr. Arnold as vice chair.

DR. ABBOTT: Second.

CHAIR WOODS: Second by Dr. Abbott. All in favor, say aye.

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed?

MS. KEENER: He's not here.

CHAIR WOODS: Motion passes.

(The action agenda concluded at 2:03 p.m.)

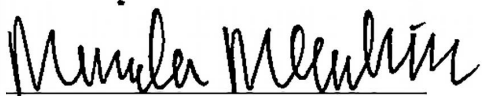
C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss
 COUNTY OF PULASKI)

I, Miranda McEntire, Certified Court Reporter #852, do hereby certify that the facts stated by me in the caption on the foregoing proceedings are true; and that the foregoing proceedings were reported verbatim through the use of the voice-writing method and thereafter transcribed by me or under my direct supervision to the best of my ability, taken at the time and place set out on the caption hereto.

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