

**Minutes
State Board Meeting
June 11, 2026**

Present: Adrienne Woods, Chair; Lisa Hunter, Vice Chair; Dr. Aaron Abbott; Dr. Gary Arnold; Ken Bragg; Randy Henderson; Leigh Keener; David Peacock; Jeff Wood; Jeanie Wilcoxon, 2025 Arkansas Teacher of the Year; Jacob Oliva, ADE Secretary.

Absent: Jeff Wood

Call to Order

The Arkansas State Board of Education (State Board) met Thursday, June 11, 2026. Adrienne Woods, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

Recognition

IV.1. Jaime Garcia — 2025 Milken Educator Award Winner

Item IV.1. was presented by Stacy Smith, Deputy Commissioner.

Created by philanthropist and education visionary Lowell Milken, the Milken Educator Awards provide public recognition and individual financial rewards to K-12 teachers, principals, and specialists from around the country who are furthering excellence in education. Jaime Garcia is the sole Arkansas 2025 Milken Educator Award Winner. Mr. Garcia is a former mathematics teacher and the current Dean of Academics at LISA Academy North Middle-High School.

IV.2. Arkansas Excellence in Teaching Fellowship

Item IV.2. was presented by Stacy Smith, Deputy Commissioner.

The Arkansas Excellence in Teaching Fellowship is a nine-month program launched in summer 2025 to recognize and support some of the State's top educators, particularly those earning merit pay, while highlighting exemplary teaching for the public. In its inaugural year, the Arkansas Department of Education selected 23 high-performing educators from across the State to participate.

Present were Carlie Qualls; Hayleigh Harris; Jessica Adair; Lance Walters; Lissa Monroe; Lyndsey Laster; Mark Bauer; Melissa Rogalla; and Monica Brewton.

IV.3. Stephanie Williams — 2026 Arkansas Teacher of the Year

Item IV.3. was presented by Stacy Smith, Deputy Commissioner. Present was Stephanie Williams, 2026 Arkansas Teacher of the Year.

To recognize and celebrate excellent teachers, the Arkansas Department of Education coordinates the Arkansas Teacher of the Year program (ATOY). The ATOY program is part of the National Teacher of the Year program that is coordinated by the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Stephanie Williams, a K-4 music teacher at Mountain View Elementary, Benton School District, was named the 2026 Arkansas Teacher of the Year in October 2025. Ms. Williams will begin her year of service on July 1, 2026.

IV.4. Arijit Sarkar — StateScoop 50 Award Winner

Item IV.4. was presented by Secretary Jacob Oliva. Present was Arijit Sarkar, ADE Chief Information Officer.

StateScoop is a U.S.-based media and events platform focused on state and local government technology.

Arijit Sarkar, ADE Chief Information Officer, has been named a State Leadership Award winner by StateScoop. Mr. Sarkar was selected as a public sector disruptor helping government implement new technologies, secure systems, revolutionize operations, and make big changes.

Changes to Agenda

None

Action Agenda

VI.1. Standards Waiver Request for Employment of Superintendent by Rural Special School District

Item VI.1. was presented by Hope Worsham, Assistant Commissioner – Public School Accountability. Also present was Dr. Delena Thompson, Superintendent.

The Rural Special School District requested a standards waiver for employing a full-time Superintendent.

A motion was made to approve the waiver request for employment of a superintendent by Rural Special School District. The motion was made by Ken Bragg, seconded by Dr. Aaron Abbott. The motion unanimously passed.

VI.2. Request for Waiver - LA-26-001- Trina Grant

Item VI.2. was presented by Daniel Shults, Chief Legal Counsel. Also present was Trina Grant, educator.

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) received information that the educator was convicted of a disqualifying criminal offense. Per Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-410, the State Board shall not issue a first-time license to a person who has pled guilty or nolo contendere to or has been found guilty of an enumerated offense by a court in the State of Arkansas or of any similar offense by a court in another state or by a federal court. The educator requested a waiver under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-410(f).

A motion was made to approve the waiver request for Trina Grant, educator. The motion was made by Dr. Aaron Abbott, seconded by Randy Henderson. The motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes to 1 No (David Peacock).

VI.3. Consideration of Request to Release the Rules Governing Student Special Needs Funding for Public Comment

Item VI.3. was presented by Stacy Smith, Deputy Commissioner.

The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education requested the Rules Governing Student Special Needs Funding be released for public comment. This amendment reflects changes made by Act 911 of 2025.

A motion to approve the Rules Governing Student Special Needs Funding for release for public comment was made by Lisa Hunter, seconded by Leigh Keener. The motion unanimously passed.

New Business

None

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes
2. District Conversion Charter Application for the Global Innovation Academy (Fort Smith)
3. Renewal of Existing Charter for the Future School of Fort Smith
4. Renewal of Existing Charter for Arkansas Connections Academy

A motion to approve the Consent Agenda was made by Davd Peacock, seconded by Lisa Hunter. The motion unanimously passed.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment

Adrienne Woods, Chair adjourned the State Board meeting at 10:30 AM.

Minutes recorded by Angela Scaife.

Jacob Oliva, Secretary
Arkansas Department of Education

Randy Henderson, Chair
State Board of Education