

**Southwest Arkansas Education Cooperative Board's Minutes
February 20, 2025**

Schools Present: Genoa, Texarkana, Spring Hill Proxy- Peter Maggio, Nevada, Hope, Lafayette Proxy- Harvey Sellars, Prescott

Schools Not Present: Fouke, Blevins

Co-op Staff Present: Phoebe Bailey, Monica Morris, Gina Perkins, Jenny Smead, David Hampton, Vicki Jewell, Shannon Puckett, Kendra Powers

Guest Present via Zoom: Brandi Benton and John Ashworth- Virtual Arkansas

The meeting was called to order by Phoebe Bailey.

Roy McCoy made a motion to approve the minutes from January. Debbie Huff seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Debbie Huff made a motion to approve the financial and expenditure reports from February. The motion was seconded by Peter Maggio. The motion was approved.

Virtual Arkansas- Brandi Benton and John Ainsworth joined via zoom to share updates from Virtual Arkansas for the 2025-26 school year. They went over a few of the services they offer. A few mentioned were college credit classes, dedicated teacher program, and credit recovery. They also shared their updated price list for the upcoming school year. They asked that anyone with questions to please contact them. Their presentation will be shared in the google folder.

Personnel- Ms. Bailey proposed employment for Heather O'Shields for DESE as the Technology Outreach Coordinator effective February 21, 2025. She asked the board to accept the resignation of Capri Salaam as DESE Monitoring Specialist effective February 17, 2025. She also asked that we accept the resignation of Angie Gentry as ECH Coordinator effective June 30, 2025. A motion was made by Roy McCoy to accept these as presented. The motion was seconded by Robert Poole. The motion was approved.

SWAEC Policy- Ms. Bailey presented a list of changes that needed to be approved for SWAEC policy. A motion was made by Debbie Huff to approve the changes. The motion was seconded by Peter Maggio. The motion was approved.

SWAEC Officer Election- There was a brief discussion about officer elections and board attendance. Roy McCoy made a motion to replace the current president with Jonathan Crossley and that he serve as board president for the remainder of the 2024-25 school year in addition to serving as board president for the 2025-26 school year. The motion was seconded by Lloyd Jackson. The motion was approved. A motion was made by Robert Poole for Lloyd Jackson to serve as vice president of the board for the 2025-26 school year. The motion was seconded by Roy McCoy. The motion was approved. A motion was made by Lloyd Jackson for Robert Poole to serve as board secretary for the 2025-26 school year. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Crossley. The motion was approved.

Mentoring Updates- Vicki Jewell shared information concerning novice numbers updates. She also asked that all districts make sure that teachers' years of service are documented correctly in eFinance otherwise it will pull incorrectly into Cycle 2 reporting.

School Dashboard- Mrs. Morris wanted to remind everyone about the SWAEC School Support Dashboard. It shows how often our specialists are providing services to your district. These are updated weekly. This can be accessed through the SWAEC web page.

Teacher Center Updates- Monica Morris-

Letter Grades- Ms. Morris went over the new formula being used to calculate school letter grades. These are expected to be released April 25, 2025. She has links attached in her notes for additional information and for upcoming webinars about this.

High School Focus- This is the time to ensure that you are working toward ensuring students have access to Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate/ Cambridge AICE Diploma courses. Schools should also be focusing to ensure that there is alignment of career-focused credits available to allow students to complete a H2 success-ready pathway.

Annual Ratings/Merit Pay- April 30 is the deadline for entering evaluation data. Data will be pulled on May 1. Superintendents should run a monthly report to see that evaluations are being entered. Mrs. Morris has listed in her notes on how to run this report and also what components are necessary in order to be eligible for merit pay. March 4 is the final annual ratings webinar.

Mental Health Series- SWAEC purchased a subscription for all of our 9 districts to share mental health resources for parents and families. These monthly resources are shared with your Family Engagement Coordinators. She shared a few charts on how many people are accessing this and what districts they are from.

Commissioner's Memos- 2025 Safety Grant: applications are due February 28. Funding information can be found in the memo COM-25-048. Also, the updated CTE Pathway Revision Guide has been released. There will be a meeting April 3 at SWAEC to discuss this. ESOL Institute Registration is now open. LS-25-023.

Jonathan Crossley commended Shannon Puckett for the outstanding job she is doing supporting all of our districts and recommended that she be nominated for CTE Administrator of the Year Award. There was a motion made from Robert Poole to nominate Mrs. Puckett. The motion was seconded by Peter Maggio. The motion was approved. Ms. Bailey will get the application completed and submitted.

Director Updates- Phoebe Bailey

AEPA Updates- this has officially been launched and we are already having purchases made. AEPA ensures all contracts meet legal requirements and are locally supported for seamless implementation. Ms. Bailey has linked the website for this in her notes. She commended Monical Morris, Gina Perkins, and David Hampton on all their hard work in getting the website up and running.

State Updates- Ms. Bailey went through several of the state bills that are now law and some that are being proposed. She has a spreadsheet that is shared with each of the district's superintendents where they can keep track of all of these.

Federal Updates- The 504 lawsuit was filed last fall by 17 States, is known as *Texas v. Becerra*, and is focused on clarifying that gender dysphoria cannot be considered as a disability under updated Section 504 rules. However, the states are asking the Court to not only eliminate the parts of Section 504 they disagree with, but to repeal the entire law. Unlike the funding provided for special education students under IDEA, districts do not receive federal funding for complying with Section 504. The only exception is if their state permits them to bill Medicaid for healthcare services provided to Section 504 students. Ms Bailey has also linked in her notes how to calculate the impact of federal funding cuts.

At 11:45 a.m., Jonathan Crossley proposed they go into executive session to discuss Ms. Bailey's contract. Roy McCoy made the motion to go into executive session with a second by Robert Poole. The board returned from executive session at 12:33 p.m. Peter Magio made a motion to return to regular session. The motion was seconded by Roy McCoy. The motion was approved. Peter Maggio made a motion to renew Ms. Bailey's contract for the 2025-26 school year with the provisions that were discussed. The motion was seconded by Roy McCoy. The motion was approved.

With no further business, a motion was made by Robert Poole to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Peter Maggio. The meeting was adjourned.