



APPROVED 8/19/2025

Arkansas Connections Academy (ARCA)

Board Meeting Minutes

July 22, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

1009 Beau Terre Drive, Building O, Bentonville, AR 72712

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I. Meeting Notice

Below is an agenda of all items scheduled to be considered. Unless otherwise stated, items may be taken out of the order presented on the agenda at the discretion of the Chair. Reasonable efforts will be made to assist and accommodate persons with a disability. Please contact Nicole Stephens at 479-662-9468.

II. Call to Order and Roll Call

Dr. Beck called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. when all participants were able to hear each other.

Board Members Present: Dennis Beck, Melissa Cruise, and Virginia Walden Ford (via videoconference);

Board Members Absent: Kelly O'Brien;

Guests Present: Nicole Stephens, School Leader (at the school location); Erin Lieblong, Savannah Mizell, and Beth Lee, School staff; Laura Johnson, Brian Rosta, Alicia Raspa, and Diana Johnson Teague, Pearson Virtual Schools staff (via videoconference).

III. Public Comment

There were no public comments at this time.

IV. Routine Business

a. Approval of Agenda

Dr. Beck asked the Board members whether there were any changes necessary to the Agenda that has been posted in accordance with Arkansas Open Meeting law. There being no further changes noted, a motion was made and seconded as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Agenda for the July 22, 2025, Arkansas Connections Academy, Inc.

Board Meeting, as presented, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

V. Oral Reports

a. School Leader Report

Ms. Stephens reviewed the school's current enrollment numbers with the Board, including a breakdown of new and returning students. The Board noted that the school is on track to meet the enrollment goal for the 2025-2026 school year.

(Ms. Lee joined the meeting at 10:03 a.m.)

Ms. Stephens reported that preparations for the school's charter renewal are underway. She also discussed the timeline for test scores and the annual school rating to become available.

1. Summer Leadership Conference Update

Ms. Stephens reported that the school leadership team attended the Connections Academy Summer Leadership Conference in late June. She highlighted honors received by ARCA staff as well as awards received in recognition of student academic achievement and parent satisfaction. She also noted that the conference provided the team with valuable in-person time for collaboration and planning for the 2025-2026 school year.

Ms. Stephens shared the dates and location for the staff back-to-school in service, noting that the school will be celebrating its tenth year.

b. Director of School Operations Update: Key School Metrics

Dr. Rosta commended school staff on the presentations they gave at the Connections Academy Summer Leadership Conference as well as the awards received. He reviewed the Key School Metrics, as included in the Board meeting materials, highlighting continued high course pass rates and the teacher retention rate. The Board complimented the school culture as contributing to teachers' desire to remain at ARCA year over year.

c. Financial Report

Ms. Raspa presented the financial report on behalf of Mr. Steve O'Brien. She reviewed the financial information contained in the Board meeting materials, noting that a final reconciliation for the 2024-2025 school year is in progress.

VI. Consent Items

Dr. Beck asked the Board members whether there were any items for the Consent Items that

they wished to have moved to Action Items for discussion. There being no discussion or changes requested, a motion was made and seconded as follows:

RESOLVED, the Consent Items:

- a. Approval of Minutes from the June 17, 2025 Annual Board Meeting;
- b. Approval of Staffing Report;
- c. Approval of Teaching & Learning Technical Services Contract Literacy Support between the Arkansas Public School Resource Center and ARCA for the 2025-2026 School Year; and
- d. Approval of 2025-2026 Parent and Family Engagement Policy; are hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Action Items

There were no action items at this time.

VIII. Information Items

- a. Pearson Virtual Schools (PVS) Update

Dr. Rosta presented the PVS update on Mr. Johnson's behalf. He shared that both he and Ms. Johnson will attend the school's back-to-school in service, at which they will present an update on new Pearson initiatives to school staff.

Dr. Rosta discussed the upcoming charter renewal and outlined the support that PVS teams will provide to school leadership in compiling artifacts, narratives, and data that the state will review as part of the process.

(Ms. Johnson joined the meeting at 10:22 a.m.)

Ms. Stephens thanked the Board for their approval of Consent Item (c), the Teaching & Learning Technical Services Contract Literacy Support between the Arkansas Public School Resource Center and ARCA, which will allow the school to obtain a literacy specialist and a literacy coach to support grades 4-12. She shared that the school has been compiling data showing the positive impact these supports have on summative assessment scores.

The Board inquired about the impact of changes at the federal level on free and reduced meals (FARM) funding. Ms. Johnson advised that the FARM program is administered by the Department of Agriculture, and that no changes to this program have been reported at this time. She further noted that PVS is continuing to monitor changes at the federal level and identifying ways to maximize school funding.

Discussion followed regarding how to best support students in financial need. Ms. Stephens highlighted community partnerships throughout state that the school can leverage to ensure the needs of students are met.

Dr. Rosta discussed with the Board the potential impact of changes at the federal level, such as protections for students receiving special education services and accountability for schools.

IX. Adjournment and Confirmation of Next Meeting on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

Dr. Beck noted that the Board was at the end of its agenda and that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on August 19, 2025, at 10:00 am. At 10:31 a.m. a motion was made and seconded:

RESOLVED, that the adjournment of the Arkansas Connections Academy, Inc. July 22, 2025, Board meeting, is hereby approved.

The motion was approved unanimously.