



LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT  
810 WEST MARKHAM STREET  
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**  
**November 20, 2014**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 20, 2014, in the boardroom of the administration building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Greg Adams presided.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Greg Adams  
Joy Springer  
Jim Ross  
Dianne Curry  
Leslie Fiskien  
C. E. McAdoo  
Tara Shephard

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Dexter Suggs, Superintendent of Schools  
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of the Minutes

**I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**

Mr. Adams called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. Six members of the board were present at roll call; Ms. Curry arrived at 5:40 p.m. The teacher ex-officio, April Agrew kindergarten teacher from Chicot Primary School, and the student representative, Arontae Smith, student council secretary from Hall High School, were also present. Student Erica Braswell from Hall served as the ex officio at the November 13<sup>th</sup> agenda meeting.

The student ex officio was asked to read the 2014-15 board goals and the teacher ex officio was asked to read the cultural imperatives.

**II. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**A. Citations / Commendations**

At the agenda meeting, Dr. Suggs introduced Pamela Smith for the presentation of citations and recognitions.

The Central High School boys' tennis team won the conference tournament and each of the members made it to the state 7A tournament. Edward Zhao placed third and Anil Chakka placed first. Other team members included Connor Smalling, Kess McSwain, LeDarrien Ledbetter, and Connor Bierbaum. It was noted that Anil Chakka was ranked first in the state high school singles and has been selected by the Arkansas Democrat Gazette as the All-Arkansas Preps Tennis Player of the Year for the 2014 season. He was to be recognized in the Sunday sports section of the Democrat-Gazette.

One female player was also recognized for her participation in the state tournament. Becky Sherman placed third. Coach Stephanie Mann was also introduced and recognized for her team's accomplishments.

## **B. Remarks from Citizens**

Matthew Farr, music teacher at Mabelvale Magnet Middle School, addressed the board regarding their upcoming trip to Carnegie Hall. They are in the process of fundraising so that the students will be able to participate.

Zartashia Javid, AVID tutor for the LRSD, is employed at McClellan High School. She addressed the board regarding concerns surrounding her inability to access appropriate ACT test prep materials. She stated that taking these concerns to the principal resulted in "forceful" administrative methods. She stated that she was chastised for contacting board members by email, and she felt belittled.

## **SUSPENSION OF THE RULES**

Mr. McAdoo suspended the rules and requested to reorder the agenda. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

The Geyer Springs G & T Academy presentation was made at this point in the agenda, but will be reported as printed in the agenda.

## **C. Update: Racial & Cultural Diversity Commission**

Erica Benedicto was unable to attend, but will be invited to a future meeting.

## **D. Partners in Education**

At the agenda meeting, Debbie Milam thanked the citizens of Little Rock for volunteering to read on ViPS reading day, Tuesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>. She also introduced one new partnership. The partnership was approved at the board meeting on November 20<sup>th</sup>. The motion was made by Ms. Shephard, seconded by Ms. Curry, and **carried unanimously**.

The partnership presented was:

**Cloverdale Aerospace Middle School**, represented by *Dr. Angela Dallas*, in partnership with the **Milton Crenshaw Aviation Training Academy**, represented by members of the Board, *Reba Wingfield, Michelle Wright, Barbara Dobbins Wright, Raymond Rogers, Tammy East, Ron Wingfield, and Allen Green*.

### E. Donations of Property

Arontae Smith, student ex officio, read the list of recent donations to the district. Ms. Fiskien made a motion to accept the donations; Ms. Springer seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**. The donations are listed in the following chart:

#### DONATIONS

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Baseline Elementary School	Donation of refreshments and gift cards for the monthly celebration of "Party with the Principal" valued at \$340.00	Rev. Tommy Covington and First Assembly of God, LR Campus
Baseline Elementary School	Donation of school supplies valued at \$100.00	St. Andrew Methodist Church
Central High School	Donation of refrigerator valued at \$523.19	Mr. Jon Kyle Cartwright
Central High School	Donation of items valued at \$19978.73 for the Science Department	Philander Smith College
Gibbs Magnet Elementary School	Donation of gift certificates valued at \$75.00	City of Refuge Community Church
Hall High School	Donation of golf clubs valued at \$100.00	Mr. James B. Gonzalez
Hall High School	Donation of golf clubs valued at \$100.00	Mr. James F. Gonzalez
JA Fair High School	Donation of \$250.00 cash to the Band	St. Mark Baptist Church
JA Fair High School	Donation of \$500.00 cash to the Football Team	Drive Clean Carwash Operations
JA Fair High School	Donation of \$100.00 cash to the Band	Greater Second Baptist Church
JA Fair High School	Donation of \$250.00 cash to the Baseball Team	Kinco Constructors, LLC
Pulaski Heights Middle School	Donation of Supplies and materials valued at \$104.00 for 6 <sup>th</sup> grade math class	Office Depot
Pulaski Heights Middle School	Donation of supplies valued at \$1168.00 used to transform classroom into Google work place	Anonymous
Watson Elementary School	Donation of art supplies valued at \$1166.00	The Thea Foundation
Wilson Elementary School	Donation of school supplies and uniforms valued at \$20000.00	St. Andrews Church
Wilson Elementary School	Donation of school supplies valued at \$200.00	Office of Governor Mike Beebe
Wilson Elementary School	Donation of school supplies valued at \$300.00	Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

### F. Legal Update

Mr. Heller was present with no new litigation to report. He noted there were a couple of issues pending in federal court and a couple at the state level. One was filed by an employee who was non-renewed and received a board hearing. He also noted he expected to hear from the Office of Civil Rights regarding their investigation at Hall High by the end of the year.

In addition, Mr. Heller responded to a question regarding the legality of charging a \$25 fee for students to take home an iPad or laptop. He had provided a memo to board members regarding the laws and statutes related to this question. If having a computer, equipment, or textbooks, is required and an integral part of the education system, then the District is required to pay without charging for their use. Students can be required to pay for supplies, but not textbook or curriculum program requirements. Since the fee was to cover insurance costs for the students who needed to take the computers home, it would need to be determined if having the computer was required or discretionary. We would also need to determine whether the ability to pay the fee has an effect on individual students. The question has to be answered whether the computer is an integral part of the educational system and how the ability or inability to take them home might affect their ability to learn. It's possible that an assessment should be made as to whether students on free or reduced lunch are eligible for a waiver of the fee?

Dr. Ross had requested the information, and stated his belief that the LRSD should not charge a fee for students to use the equipment. He reported he had refused to pay the fee for his own child, and felt the computers should be used and returned the same way books are checked out and returned. In addition, he expressed intent to make a motion and take board action if necessary. However, Dr. Suggs agreed to work through the schools that have charged a fee and process refunds where appropriate.

Ms. Curry asked if the schools in Academic Distress were current and up to date with technology. Dr. Suggs provided a response regarding the incorporation of technology and virtual-based platforms in all high schools. Fair and McClellan are the pilot schools where enhancements are being made to the computer labs. All secondary schools will be implementing the enhanced technology. Baseline Elementary will also be included in upgrades to the availability of technology, and schools not included in this year's pilot will be included next year.

## **SUSPENSION OF THE RULES**

Ms. Curry made a motion to suspend the rules to move the custodial contract agreement and ratification clause up to this point in the meeting. Ms. Springer seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**. Action will be reported as it was printed in the agenda.

### **G. Little Rock PTA Council**

No representative present and no report.

### **H. Little Rock Education Association**

Ms. Kohler thanked board members for taking action on the custodial contract. She noted that this was the last contract negotiated by Michael Coleman prior to his leaving the organization. She thanked him publically for 25 years of contributions to the education professionals in Arkansas.

She also reminded listeners that this is American Education Week, and that we should all be grateful for free public education which provides opportunity for all students. She expressed gratitude for open and honest dialogue where we can either come to agreement over issues or agree to disagree. The important thing is to remain focused on the students and on providing equity of opportunity for all students.

#### **IV. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

##### **A. Remarks from Board Members**

Mr. McAdoo reminded the audience that we “live in a world of testing” and that he would be focusing on the importance of taking the ACT and other required achievement tests. He expressed gratitude for the LRSD and for those who work for educational excellence. He said he was looking forward to working together and to ending the school year on a positive note.

Ms. Curry reported she had read to students at Mabelvalr, Watson and Dodd Elementary Schools. She was excited to see students engaged in learning. She wished the staff and the administration and patrons a safe Thanksgiving holiday.

Ms. Shephard asked questions about Hall and the district’s truancy plan. Dr. Suggs responded that the information on the truancy plan would be included in the quarterly report, which would be provided to the Board in December.

She also requested information on the schools designated in academic distress and the barriers identified in the weekly monitoring reports. That information was to be provided in the Friday update and in the next curriculum and instruction worksession in December.

Ms. Fisken expressed appreciation to Debbie Milam and Tammy Blaylock in the VIPS office. They do an incredible amount of work coordinating the volunteer efforts across the district, including the assignment of readers for the annual VIPS reading day. These two are a great example of how a few people can be productive and even though small in staff continue to do the work of the district.

Ms. Fisken also commented on the Hall High reconfiguration proposal. She reported that she serves on that committee with Mr. Burton as the lead administrator. She reported that the subcommittees are at work and conduct very good collaborative and informational meetings. She thanked Mr. Gonzales and Ms. Lafear for their input, and said it was an honor to be a part of the committee to build on the progress of Hall, to help identify the things at Hall that are working, and determine what’s not working so changes can be made.

Ms. Springer stood at the podium for her comments. She thanked Janice Wilson and the staff at Rockefeller for hosting the National Black Authors tour a few weeks ago. She also thanked Debbie Milam for providing lunch for the group of participants. This event featured authors from around the country promoting reading and literacy. Ms. Springer also reported she enjoyed reading at Rockefeller on VIPS reading day, and that she will soon be visiting other schools in her zone.

Ms. Springer had a PowerPoint presentation and discussed the duties and responsibilities of a board member, the power to enforce and obey district policies, and employ staff. She mentioned policy BBA, legislative and policy making authority related to the recent discussion regarding policy IL and IL-R. She also stated that she intended to present documents to show that her statements and motion made in the Oct board meeting were proper.

Mr. Adams questioned Ms. Springer's decision to make a presentation before the board as opposed to the Board's usual practice of making individual comments. He asked that she make her comments brief and for the board to have additional discussion if more formal presentations were to become a Board practice.

Ms. Springer continued with a comparison of the present policy IL, regulation IL-R, and expressed belief that the language was basically the same as the previous policy. Her conclusion was that the difference between the 2001 version and the 2013 version was that transparency was eliminated, and that the Curriculum and Instruction Department was now evaluating its own programs.

Mr. Adams congratulated the Parkview High School football team who won playoff game. They will play Benton tomorrow night. He also announced the all-region choir workshop at Harding University on Saturday. He read at three elementary schools on VIPS reading day, and noted it was School Security Officers' appreciation day. He especially thanked Mr. Coleman from M. L. King and Mr. Poole, the administration building security officer.

Mr. Adams closed by emphasizing the importance of the Board's goals, and the evidence of their importance in that the Board spent four hours in a worksession discussing what is being done to improve learning and achievement in the schools designated as in Academic Distress. He wanted the public to be aware that this Board is spending time and energy on the things that are important, and are finding ways to represent their individual communities and work well together to focus on the District priorities.

## **B. Update: Hall High Reconfiguration**

Mr. Burton provided a brief update by PowerPoint which gave an overview of the work being done as a means of focusing on the improvement of student outcomes. The intent of the reconfiguration is to increase the graduation rate, improve college and career readiness, improve the students' ability to think and problem-solve, to equip students with the ability to work within a system of collaboration, and to increase student opportunity and awareness of careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Members of the steering committee provided brief information on their perspective and commitment to the logistics, curriculum development and professional development for the faculty.

Marilyn LeFear introduced herself as a teacher of 14 years at Hall High School. She teaches business education and was a 1977 graduate of Hall High School. Her report included her perspective on the impact at Hall of frequent leadership changes at the school and district level. She had seen many promising programs begun, but aborted after the dollars were spent, either because the programs failed or they were not implemented with integrity. Hall High teachers strategize and sacrifice to make a difference for their students, and they all want to do what is necessary to improve the outcomes. The planning committee is focused on improved and sustained academic achievement in our school.

Amanda Warren, social studies teacher, works on the curriculum and professional development subcommittees. The concerns she addressed were regarding the perception that the small learning academies which are already being implemented at Hall High, were ineffective or unnecessary. The academies are working, and she and others at Hall believe there are several programming components which are currently working, especially with the Newcomers Center and ELL students. Teachers want to ensure their investment will result in results. Some of the programs being discussed didn't work before with the Hall High student population, so they are skeptical. The teachers at Hall are committed and they want to see their students achieve.

Dr. Suggs and Mr. Burton responded to questions regarding the tenure of the teachers at Hall, the shift in administrative leadership, the student population shift with more Hispanic students and fewer African American and White students. Some programs at Hall High are very successful and have stood the test of time. AVID is one example, another was the Teachers of Tomorrow program; there is no intent to remove the programs that are currently effective. Additional wrap around services are needed, and are being identified by the committees working on the reconfigurations. The committee recommendations will be written and shared with the board for their review and to determine the future of Hall High. A survey has been given and responses have been received from 425 students. The survey results will identify student interests and needs.

Mr. Gonzales, Hall High security supervisor, introduced himself as a member of the logistics committee. He has been at Hall since 2004, and during that time there have been seven principals. He is most interested in the changes proposed for Hall because he believes that they will bring stability. Every change in leadership brings a new administrative style and the students are affected by this instability. It is his belief that the students want to learn, and although some of the people at Hall are skeptical of change, he believes it will be the best thing for their student population.

Mr. McAdoo asked if the reconfiguration plans are related to the strategic plan and how those plans will affect the school's academic distress status. He then moved for a suspension of the rules to make the Hall High Reconfiguration proposal an action item. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

Mr. McAdoo made a motion to direct Dr. Suggs and the central office administrators to cease the Hall High reconfiguration efforts and suspend any efforts for six months or until the end of the school year test period. Ms. Springer seconded the motion.

In discussing his motion, Mr. McAdoo felt the energy and resources should be focused on having all schools off academic distress. Ms. Springer spoke in support of Mr. McAdoo's motion.

Further discussion included a statement that the administration "should be multitasking," and implementing the plan that has been given to the state by enhancing and supporting student achievement.

Ms. Fisker spoke in opposition to the motion. In response to comments regarding the "rumor mill", the statements are invalid in that the committee is just starting the research and investigation as to what will work best at Hall High School. There are many wide-ranging problems and issues at Hall, and the Board has a responsibility to the students.

Ms. Warren responded to questions from the board. She specified that students are involved in testing for ten weeks, and during the testing period teachers lose that much instructional time. She said changes were desperately needed at Hall so that students know they are in a safe environment. She discussed the need for additional “wrap-around” services that will help the students to succeed. However, they also need basic services outside of the school day to assist them in being successful in the classroom. “We have to find a way to do it that will be sustainable.”

Ms. LaFear also agreed that changes need to be made. Teachers realize it’s not “just a Hall problem” but teaching is their livelihood and sensitivity must be considered when making reassignments during a restructuring.

Mr. Adams expressed concern regarding the motion, especially in waiting until the end of the testing period or the end of the school year. The school is in academic distress and we have to put all our energy into making improvements. He reminded the Board that this is just the beginning of a process. The board voted to allow the committee to do a study to determine what needs to be done. The committee has just begun their work.

Dr. Suggs responded to some of the statements made, including misstatements of the “rumor mill.” He asserted that educators are professionals at “multi-tasking,” and are called upon every day to multi-task. Teachers and building administrators will continue to focus on instruction, academic achievement, and all other things which need to be done. To make significant improvement at Hall, “we need unique skill sets” of teachers to reach the Hall High student population. We have to stop trying to maintain the status quo. This conversation is not just about Hall, it’s about the entire district and it’s about the kids. To complete the planning and research will take 7 – 14 months, and we need to move with a sense of urgency.

Dr. Ross spoke in opposition to the motion, asking questions regarding the implications of approving this motion. Allowing the process to move forward will allow the staff to be more prepared, and will provide valuable input in the process for the Board. He spoke of the educational structure of Hall and most of our high schools, calling it antiquated. We have to start one by one making drastic changes.

Ms. Curry did not position herself for or against the motion, but asked that the impact of the committee be kept in mind. We have to ensure the members of the committee have an impact. Ms. Shephard clarified the time frame for the reconfiguration was for the 2015-16 school year. The real concerns have been with staffing, the actual model, and the inclusion of wrap-around services.

Mr. Burton responded to questions from the board and Ms. LaFear spoke once again in support of setting high standards and celebrating small educational milestones for the students at Hall High.

The motion and the second were withdrawn, and **no action was taken.**

*The board took a brief recess at 9:14 p.m. They returned at 9:31 p.m.*

## **SUSPENSION OF THE RULES**

Ms. Curry made a motion to suspend the rules to reorder the agenda to take action on Policy JCA – School Choice. Mr. McAdoo seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**. A brief presentation and action was taken at this point in the agenda, but will be reported as printed in the agenda.

### **C. Update: Schools on Academic Distress**

Mr. Glasgow was present to review the district's plan to support the schools on academic distress. Board members received a report by email in a previous Friday update. During the report, they requested a copy of the RFP, which will also be provided in a Friday update. A worksession was scheduled for board members to review information from the schools on academic distress on December 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **D. Update: Geyer Springs Gifted & Talented Academy**

Earlier in the meeting, students and staff members from Geyer Springs GT Elementary School were present and made brief remarks regarding the after school program activities at Geyer Springs GT Academy.

Principal Cynthia Collins introduced third grade students who have been working on an interactive technology project with students in Wisconsin. Eighty two students participate in the afterschool program on Monday and Wednesday afternoons. They are involved in literacy and math enrichment, and also belong to a "club" on a topic of their choice, including photography, garden club, drama, cooking, art, and technology.

Students discussed their projects, including a "turkey exchange" where they learned to Skype students in another school and create a turkey using instructions they were given. The lessons learned are exhibits of cooperation, teamwork and following directions. The presentation included a video highlighting the after school program activities.

## **V. CONSENT ITEMS**

There were no objections to the consent agenda, and it was **approved**.

### **A. Minutes**

Minutes from meetings held on October 6 and October 23, 2014 were presented for review. They were approved with no objections.

### **B. Internal Auditors Report**

Mr. Becker's report was provided as part of the board's agenda.

## **VI. BOARD POLICY AND REGULATIONS REVIEW**

### **A. First Reading: Board Policy Revision IKF General Education Graduation Requirements**

Revisions to policy IKF, General Graduation Requirements, were discussed at the agenda meeting on November 13<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Glasgow reviewed the updates and responded to questions. Ms. Shephard made a motion to approve the revised IKF on first reading. Mr. McAdoo seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

### **B. Regulation Revisions: IKF-R, General Graduation Requirements; IKEC-R1 Credit for College Dual-Credit Courses and College Summer Enrichment Programs**

Regulations to policy IKF were printed in the board's agenda. No action was required.

### **C. First Reading: Board Policy Revision – GBEC Drug Free Workplace**

Linda Young was present at the agenda meeting and responded to questions regarding the update to policy GBEC. This policy addresses the basic elements of the Drug-Free Schools Act of 1988 and the Drug-Free Schools and Community Act Amendments of 1989. A policy of this nature is required for the district to be eligible to receive federal grant funds. Ms. Shephard made a motion to approve GBEC on first reading. Ms. Fiskens seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

### **D. First Reading: Board Policy Revision – JCA School Choice**

Board policy JCA, School Choice, was presented for first reading revision. Due to the LRSD being granted unitary status by the courts, and in order to comply with Act 1227, Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act of 2013, the policy was revised and presented for board review.

Linda Young was present at the agenda meeting to respond to questions. The board had questions regarding the communication of the policy to the public; the response from Ms. Young included communication during town hall meetings, publication on the LRSD website, and information for parents during the open enrollment student registration period in January.

Student registration office staff members, Nina Scaife and Brenda Anderson, were present at the board meeting on November 20<sup>th</sup> to respond to questions. The superintendent recommended approval on first reading. Mr. McAdoo moved to approve, and Ms. Shephard seconded the motion. It **carried unanimously**.

## **VII. GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

### **A. Resolution: Public Comments at Board Meetings**

A resolution had been presented several months ago which would move the public comments section of the regular meeting to the agenda meeting. Mr. McAdoo drafted an information sheet for gathering information from the speakers at the board meetings, including name, contact information, their student's name if applicable.

There was to be additional discussion or presentation of a resolution at a follow up meeting; however at the board worksession in December the item was removed from the action items at this time. Additional discussion will be held and brought back at a later date.

## **VIII. HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **A. Custodial Agreement Ratification Clause**

A motion to reorder the agenda resulted in action on this item being taken earlier in the meeting.

Board members had been provided with copies of the ratification clause and a copy of the custodial employees contact agreement. Dr. Suggs recommended approval of the ratification clause. He also recommended a special meeting following a worksession on December 4 in order to review the custodial agreement and take action on the full contract at that time.

Dr. Ross made a motion to ratify both the contract agreement for the custodial employees and the ratification agreement. Ms. Curry seconded the motion. The Board specified that action was being taken on both items with one motion and it **carried unanimously**.

### **B. Personnel Changes**

Routine personnel changes were printed in the board's agenda. Mr. McAdoo moved to approve the changes as submitted. Ms. Curry seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

## **VII. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **A. Minority and Women Business Enterprise (MBE/WBE) Monthly Report**

The report was not complete in time for attachment to the agenda. It will be included in the December meeting agenda.

### **B. Monthly Financial Statements**

Mr. Bailey responded to questions regarding the monthly reports which were attached to the agenda.

As a follow up to previous discussions, Ms. Shephard and Ms. Curry will draft a resolution for board travel. It should be ready for review and approval in December

## **VIII. CLOSING REMARKS**

### **A. Announcements & Reminders**

Pamela Smith provided reminders regarding upcoming events, including a Hall High Career Fair on Saturday at Hall High, a reception on December 9<sup>th</sup> at City Hall

recognizing the district's Academic Scholars, and a ribbon cutting ceremony on December 12<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the opening of the Health Clinic at Franklin Elementary.

### **B. Superintendent's Comments**

Dr. Suggs asked parents and guardians to spend quality time reading to and with their children. "Working together we can and will improve literacy in the LRSD."

### **C. Executive Session**

An executive session to establish goals for the evaluation of the superintendent was on the agenda. However, the board elected to move it for discussion after the worksession on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 10:39 p.m.

APPROVED: 12-18-14

Originals Signed by:  
Greg Adams, President  
Jim Ross, Secretary