



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

**MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
January 22, 2009**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 22, 2009, in the Boardroom of the Administration Building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Dianne Curry presided.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dianne Curry
Charles Armstrong
Jody Carreiro
Mike Daugherty
Melanie Fox
Baker Kurrus
Katherine Mitchell

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

ALSO PRESENT:

Linda Watson, Superintendent
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Ms. Curry called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. All members of the board were present at roll call; **Charles Quarles**, student at McClellan High School and **Leigh Scanlon**, teacher at Forest Park Elementary, were present as ex officio members of the board for the month of January.

Ms. Curry welcomed members of the audience including State Senator Joyce Elliott and Martin L. King Commission Executive Director, Sean Scarborough. She then asked Dr. Watson to proceed with the commendations.

III. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

A. Superintendent's Citations & Commendations

There were no citations or recognitions. Certificates of appreciation were presented to the teacher ex officio, Leigh Scanlon and student ex officio, Charles Quarles.

B. Partners in Education

Prior to the partnership presentation, Debbie Milam reminded the audience that January is National Mentoring Month. She thanked her mentor, Brownie Ledbetter, who happened to be in the audience. She encouraged participation in the many partnership opportunities available in the district.

Ms. Milam presented new school / business partnerships for the board's consideration and approval.

Bale Chevrolet Honda, represented by members of the Bale family, partnering with **Bale Elementary School**, represented by *Barbara Anderson* and *Carol Blann*

Dr. Mitchell made a motion to accept the partnership; Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. Remarks from Citizens

Terrence Bolden, president of Community Advocates for Public Education (CAPE) addressed the board regarding the organization's focus on ensuring equal access to educational opportunities for all students. He briefly discussed the significance of the historical events related to the inauguration of Barak Obama and the celebration of the Dr. Martin Luther King birthday holiday.

Mr. Bolden then asked the board to consider what is best for all children in the school district as they address the budget reduction items on the agenda later in the meeting, saying that "inaction is not an option." He stated that CAPE supports the reduction of central office administration before budgets are cut at the school level. He asked that program evaluations be given a higher priority in order to eliminate programs that aren't working. The group also opposed the closure of Woodruff and asked that each district facility be maintained at a high level. He closed by asking the board to think about the children and to put the needs of the students ahead of their own special interests.

Angela Tolbert and **Dennis Burrow** spoke to the board regarding formation of the Little Rock Truancy Committee. Ms. Tolbert thanked the board for their support of the dropout prevention task force, and she stated that truancy has an impact on the overall dropout rate. She asked for support in pursuing proactive and preventive efforts to reduce truancy and promote graduation. They are seeking greater community involvement and legislation to form a truancy board. She distributed a copy of the proposed legislative act and she asked the board to consider development of a policy in the LRSD that would create a district truancy board. Ms. Tolbert suggested that this board include representation from the school district, the police department, the city board, the mayor's office, the prosecuting attorney's office, and other representative from the community, the business community, and the chamber of commerce. They asked that the board move quickly to have the Truancy board in place by the fall of 2009.

D. Little Rock PTA Council

Patty Barker reminded the board of the upcoming Founders' Day luncheon, February 10th, at the Second Presbyterian Church. She thanked Mr. Peterson and others at the Metropolitan Career & Technical Center's culinary arts program for providing the January Council Meeting luncheon.

Ms. Barker also welcomed Senator Joyce Elliott and thanked her for focusing on education in her work at the capitol. Ms. Barker stated that she and Senator Elliott served together on a legislative task force for reducing the achievement gap, and she encouraged the district to continue with ongoing efforts to increase parental involvement in the schools. She pledged continuing support of the PTA Council in efforts to involve parents and community members.

E. Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association

Cathy Kohler addressed the board and asked other members of the Classroom Teachers' Association executive board to stand with her. She directly addressed the student ex officio, saying that the presence of the student each month reminds her of why we are here, and that quality public education is for every student. She noted that although it is not appropriate for the CTA to take a stand on the budget reduction recommendations, they will advocate for cuts that have the least impact on the classroom learning conditions and on employee working conditions. She asked the board to unite to form a district which serves all students equally.

Ms. Kohler reminded the board that there was a rally scheduled for Saturday morning at 10:00 a.m. on the steps of the state capitol. The group is asking for the state to increase funding for public school health insurance.

IV. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Remarks from Board Members

Ms. Fox thanked the speakers and expressed support for the formation of a truancy committee and district policy.

Mr. Carreiro reminded listeners how blessed we are to live in such a great country, stating that "only in America can two diverse powers shake hands and pass the baton in peace." He reminded the audience that the LRSD open enrollment period begins next week and he encouraged parents to consider enrollment in the LRSD. "We have a great school district . . . better than anything else out there." He acknowledged the tough budget decisions to be made, but stated that he was grateful that the decisions aren't as difficult as they could be.

Dr. Mitchell thanked the speakers who addressed the board and stated that she was encouraged by the remarks, which indicated that the public really wants to be involved in our schools and in our district. She thanked them and encouraged them saying, "we are willing to accept your assistance, we need you and we are pleased that you have come forth with an offer to assist us." Dr. Mitchell reported that she had visited Forest Heights Middle School for the media tour of the new facility, and that she had read to second grade students at Chicot Elementary School. She has pledged to go at least once a month to read to the students.

Mr. Kurrus thanked the audience and Senator Elliott for attending the meeting. He also expressed appreciation to the North Little Rock School District board for having the courage to challenge the recent tax increment financing decision in the city of North Little Rock, explaining that this particular TIF district would capture revenue from properties that have already been redeveloped, diverting funds back to the city that should be directed to operation of the schools.

Mr. Kurrus closed by encouraging listeners to check out the Little Rock School District, "give us a chance, give us a look . . . you will be pleased with the product that we offer."

Dr. Daugherty agreed with the comments made by Mr. Carreiro, saying that it was wonderful to serve on a board with good people. ". . . we are going to argue, fuss and fight because we think differently and we have passion for our beliefs." He assured the audience that even though board members may disagree; they all believe in providing quality educational opportunities and they would come together when the tough decisions have to be made.

Mr. Armstrong thanked the audience members who addressed the board and encouraged participation in the school district by the business community, parents, and others. He asked for continuing support saying that the future would be lost if we lose quality public education. He expressed confidence in President Obama's plans for improving American education and closing of the achievement gap. He asked for continuing support in marketing our product and motivating our students to do their best.

Ms. Curry thanked the speakers for their comments. She said that her "heart was lifted" on Tuesday with the swearing in of the new president and with the peaceful transition. She encouraged listeners to continue to pull together, work together, to make a difference in our city, state, country.

Ms. Scanlon, teacher ex officio, commented from a teacher's perspective and encouraged continuation of early intervention with the three and four-year-old programs.

B. Legal Update

Chris Heller provided a brief update for the board's information. He had attended a joint budget meeting earlier in the day at the state legislature where Senate Bill 48, proposed by Senator Hendren, was discussed. This bill would eliminate state desegregation funding for the three districts in Pulaski County and would shift those funds to the state teacher retirement system. Mr. Heller expressed belief that a majority of the legislators would recognize that this would put the state in a difficult position with the federal courts. He reminded the board that when the state proposed a few years ago to create a school district in Jacksonville without going through the federal courts, they were harshly criticized. Mr. Heller promised to keep the board informed on this and other education-related bills and legislation.

Mr. Heller also reported that he had continued meeting with the other parties involved in the desegregation settlement. They are continuing to work on a proposal that would be supported by all the parties and could be presented to the state for consideration. Their discussions have resulted in modifications which were provided by Mr. Heller to board members in draft form.

Mr. Heller responded to questions from the board regarding the approval of additional charter schools in Pulaski County, with Dr. Daugherty noting that fourteen of the twenty-four charter schools in the state are located in Pulaski County. He asked Mr. Heller to continue discussions with the state and other parties to determine what the LRSD can do to prevent additional charters, to get the state to enforce oversight at the state level, and to ensure that the current charter schools are operating as specified in their charter applications.

Mr. Heller agreed with Dr. Daugherty and stated that he doesn't believe the state is currently enforcing the charter school laws and regulations, but that the issue was one that should be pursued in the legislature with discussions between the school district, the Pulaski County delegation, and the state board of education.

Mr. Kurrus thanked Mr. Heller and stated that he supported attempts to settle the desegregation suit with the state. He stated that the proposal presented by Mr. Heller seemed to be a fair, and he encouraged "give and take" on the terms of the settlement. The board agreed by consensus to approve Mr. Heller's submission of the settlement proposal for the desegregation.

Mr. Kurrus made a motion to suspend the rules for consideration of a settlement proposal presented by Attorney Khayyam Eddings. Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

As part of the legal update, Mr. Eddings provided a settlement agreement between the LRSD and All Season's Roofing. The suit alleged that because our roofing bids required the use of a certain manufacturer's product, it restricted certain vendors from bidding on jobs within the district. The settlement recommended removing limitations on specific manufacturers' products and did not impose a financial penalty for previous restrictions. Mr. Kurrus made a motion to approve the settlement; Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. Summary – IRC and Other Administrative Staff

Summary reports of staff at the district's instructional resource center and other administrative staff were provided as part of the board's agenda. No additional information was requested.

D. Budget Update

Chief Financial Officer Anne Elfrink provided an overview of the west Little Rock School construction project as requested by the board. The agenda included summary information on the funding available and the projected need for issuance of second lien bonds.

E. Federal Programs Budget Update

Mr. Adams provided a report as part of the board's agenda and he was present to respond to questions. Ms. Fox expressed concern regarding parent involvement funds at the local schools, indicating that these funds weren't being spent at all in some instances. She asked the administration to determine what can be done to encourage schools to hold parent night and to use those funds to encourage and increase parental participation.

F. Internal Auditors Report

Mr. Becker's report was provided as part of the board's agenda. No additional information was requested.

V. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS

A. Donations of Property

The Board was asked to approve acceptance of recent donations to the District. Charles Quarles, student ex-officio representative, read the listed donations. Mr. Armstrong made a motion to accept the donations as listed; Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**. Donations are listed in the following chart:

DONATIONS

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Central High School	Three (3) 86" x 128" NFPA-certified fire resistant table covers, valued at \$195.00 each	Ms. Deborah Schwartz
LRSD Computers for Kids Program	\$1,000 check to the Computers for Kids Scholarship Fund	LR Public Education Foundation, as underwritten by Bank of America
LRSD CHESS Clubs	\$5,000 check to defer costs associated with chess competitions, trophies, and general operating costs	Anonymous

B. Minutes

Minutes from the regular board meeting in December 2008 and from a special meeting on January 8, 2009, were presented for the board's review and approval. Mr. Armstrong moved to approve the minutes as submitted; Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VI. BOARD POLICY & REGULATIONS REVIEW

A. Second Reading: IKF – General Education Graduation Requirements

As district programs change and state standards are revised, district policies are updated in order to remain consistent and accurate. The International Baccalaureate Diploma Program at Hall was added since Policy IKF was last updated, and Arkansas accreditation standards require that the Smart Core Curriculum and Core Curriculum graduation requirements consist of the same number of units.

Policy IKF has been updated to reflect these changes. The listing of graduation requirements for the years 2006-2009 was deleted since those years expire with the current graduating class.

The administration requested approval of the revision to policy IKF. Dr. Daugherty made a motion to approve policy IKF on second reading; Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

B. First Reading: Revision of IKE – Promotion and Retention of Students

In order to be aligned with Arkansas law, the board was asked to approve a revision to policy IKE Promotion and Retention of Students. The policy was revised to include language from Arkansas Act 2243 of 2005 which specified that students who are not proficient on the state Benchmark exam in either math, literacy or science must participate in his/her academic improvement plan (AIP) in order to be promoted from one grade to the next.

The administration requested approval on first reading. Ms. Fox moved to approve the recommendation; Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. Regulation Revisions: IHCC-R; IKA-R; IKC-R; IKE-R; IKF-R

As district programs and state laws and regulations change, the updating of regulations is necessary to ensure accuracy and alignment. The board was asked to review the following regulations, however no action was required.

- IKE-R Promotion, Acceleration, Retention, and Administrative Placement of Students, PreK-12: aligned with Act 2243 of 2005 which contains specific language that students who are not proficient on the state Benchmark Exams must participate in an improvement plan in order to be promoted to the next grade.
- IKA-R Nine-Week/Semester/Yearly Grading Procedures and IKF-R General Graduation Requirements revised to include the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program at Hall High, the modification of the fourth year of mathematics when Algebra I is taken at the 7th grade, and the correction that United States Government may no longer substitute for the state required Civics course.
- IHCC-R Pre-advanced Placement and Advanced Placement Courses Grades 6-12, placement procedures were removed to ensure open access for all students to the most rigorous courses.
- IKC-R Class Rankings/Grade-Point Averages include language changes which provide clarification of the utilization of NovaNET and Plato as the district's credit recovery program.

VII. ADMINISTRATION

A. Budget Reduction Recommendations

Detailed budget reduction recommendations were presented for the Board's review at the December board meeting and again at a special meeting on January 8th, 2009. Based on discussions since that time, additional detailed information was presented for consideration and board approval.

Ms. Elfrink addressed the recent discovery of coding discrepancies from the 2007 report of the Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research. As changes are made in the coding of district expenditures, it is expected that this and future yearly reports will be accurate. The BLR is not expected to make an official corrected report, but the district's administrative costs are now more accurately reflected as comparable to other districts across the state.

The board took a brief recess at 7:40 p.m. and returned at 7:55 p.m.

When the board returned, Ms. Elfrink continued with an overview of budget reduction proposals from the administration. In addition, Mr. Hartz and Dr. Mitchell reviewed the specific reductions recommended by the administration and responded to questions from the board. The specific reductions would be evident in a reduction in staff by attrition; a proposal to reduce the length of 12-month, 250 day administrative staff by ten days; the elimination of the TAP program at Stephens and Rockefeller; the conversion of Woodruff Elementary School to a pre-kindergarten center; and conversion from a true block schedule to a modified block schedule at the middle schools.

The board voted on each item separately.

- On the proposal to reduce central office support staff by attrition and by administrative reassignment, Dr. Daugherty made a motion to approve the recommendation. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion, and it **carried 5-2** with Ms. Fox and Ms. Curry voting no. *After the vote, Ms. Fox and Ms. Curry stated that they had intended to vote in support of the proposal.*
- On the recommendation to reduce the length of the contract days for 250 day employees to 240 days, Dr. Mitchell made a motion to approve the recommendation and Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion. The **motion failed** with Dr. Daugherty, Dr. Mitchell and Mr. Armstrong voting in favor; Ms. Curry, Ms. Fox, Mr. Carreiro, and Mr. Kurrus voting no.
- On the recommended conversion of Woodruff Elementary School to a pre-kindergarten / early childhood center, Dr. Daugherty moved to approve the recommendation; Dr. Mitchell seconded. The motion **carried 5-2**, with Ms. Fox and Mr. Kurrus voting against the motion.
- On the recommendation to eliminate the TAP program at Stephens and Rockefeller Elementary Schools, Dr. Daugherty made a motion to approve. Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion, and it **carried 4-3**, with Mr. Carreiro, Ms. Fox and Mr. Kurrus voting no.
- On the superintendent's recommendation to implement a modified block schedule at the middle schools, Dr. Daugherty made a motion to accept the recommendation. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion. There was brief discussion regarding the proposed modifications with Dr. Watson assuring the board that the building principal, campus leadership team, school staff, and parents would have input on the development of each school's schedule. The motion **carried 6-1**, with Ms. Fox casting the no vote.

VIII. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

A. Course Approval at Central High School, 2009-2010

The board was asked to approve the addition of a course in marine biology and oceanography at Central High School for the 2009-2010 school year. This course would allow students to apply the knowledge and laboratory skills they learn in physical science and biology courses as they study a diverse ecosystem and the physical processes that shape it. The study of marine biology and oceanography connects all the core sciences that students are traditionally exposed to in high school. Ms. Fox moved to approve the recommendation; Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

B. Grant Submission: US Department of Education – Teaching American History

The administration proposed to submit a Teaching American History grant application to implement high-quality professional development for all American history teachers. The purpose of the program is to raise student achievement by improving teachers' knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of traditional American history. It is expected that the program will improve instruction and raise student achievement. The grant would provide \$1,000,000 over the three year grant period and would build upon the 2006 Teaching American History initiative which will expire in June 2009.

The grant partners would include the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Department of History, National History Day, the Clinton Library, and the Central High National Historic Museum. Dr. Daugherty made a motion to approve submission of the grant application. Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it **carried 4-2** with Ms. Fox and Mr. Kurrus voting no. Mr. Armstrong was absent at the time of the vote.

IX. HUMAN RESOURCES

A. Personnel Changes

Routine personnel changes were provided as part of the board's agenda. In addition, employee Larry Ray who was scheduled for a board hearing after the meeting, resigned prior to the hearing. His resignation was added to the list of recommendations for the board's consideration and approval. Mr. Carreiro moved to approve the personnel changes as amended. Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

X. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

The monthly financial reports were provided as part of the board's agenda.

XI. CLOSING REMARKS

Dr. Watson announced the annual Magnet School Fair, to be held this weekend at McCain Mall. She also reminded the audience of the district's open enrollment period, which runs from January 26 to February 6, 2009, and the west Little Rock School groundbreaking ceremony which is scheduled for Tuesday, February 3, 2009.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

The board met briefly to review the instrument that will be used to conduct the annual evaluation of the Superintendent. Mr. Kurrus moved for approval of the instrument, with one correction of a typographical error. Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

The board recessed at 9:25 and returned at 9:45 to conduct a closed employee hearing.

EMPLOYEE HEARING

The board convened a closed employee hearing at 9:45 p.m. Attorney Khayyam Eddings represented the district; Attorney John Walker represented <the employee>. Mr. Eddings and Mr. Walker opened by reviewing documents from a board hearing held in December 2005. In that hearing, the board voted to provide a salary adjustment for <the employee> from grade 37 to grade 40 and to pay back pay for the time frame when <the employee> and another employee . . . were in the same position doing the same work.

Mr. Walker argued that when <the employee> was promoted from a grade 37 to a grade 40 her salary actually went down and that he had been trying to get the administration to address the matter since the December 2005 hearing. He provided copies of an e-mail from . . . Department Director . . . whereby <the employee> and <other employee> were told that the district's reorganization would result in a change to their contracts and that they would be promoted to a grade 43.

Mr. Walker reported that employees 1, 2, and 3 asked for a review of their placement on the salary schedule in November, and that they had asked for the salary review committee to resolve a dispute in their salary placement. These employees had also requested a hearing with the superintendent regarding their placement.

Robert Robinson, coordinator of classified employees, responded to questions from Mr. Walker regarding the varying pay schedules for clerical employees and the difference between steps within the pay grades. Mr. Robinson explained that the salary, grade level and steps are specified by the responsibilities of the job description and may differ according to the levels of responsibility detailed by the vacancy documents. Mr. Eddings objected to additional questions from Mr. Walker which were related to the hiring of another clerical employee in the Human Resources Department.

Beverly Griffin, recorder of the minutes, responded to questions from the attorneys regarding the approved minutes from the December 2005 board hearing for <the employee>. Mr. Walker asked for an explanation about an insertion that was made "*(the same daily rate of pay)*" which was included in the minutes approved by the board. Ms. Griffin responded that any insertions within parenthesis would have been requested by a board member prior to the board taking action to approve the minutes.

<the employee> responded to questions regarding her current salary placement and stated that during the time of the reorganization she was promised an upgrade on the salary schedule to a grade 42. She currently remains on grade 40. She stated that she had tried to work through her issues with Mr. Robinson and the salary review committee, but that she had been unable to reach a resolution.

The board deliberated briefly and reconvened prior to the Recorder returning to the room. Mr. Carreiro provided a written copy of the motion made by Mr. Kurrus. Mr. Kurrus moved to grant back pay computed as grade 40, 220 days, and prior to the original hearing which is \$10,488.00. Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion. The motion **carried 6-0.**

Mr. Kurrus asked that the administration follow the grievance policy on the remaining issue of increasing the salary from grade 40 to grade 42. Mr. Armstrong then moved to grant reasonable attorneys fees to Mr. Walker for representation of <the employee>. Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion, and it **carried 6-0.**

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 11:33 p.m. on a motion by Ms. Fox, seconded by Mr. Armstrong.

APPROVED: 02-26-09

Originals Signed by:
Dianne Curry, President
Jody Carriero, Secretary