

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

**MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
May 22, 2008**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 22, 2008, in the Boardroom of the Administration Building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Katherine Mitchell presided.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Katherine Mitchell
Charles Armstrong
Melanie Fox
Larry Berkley
Dianne Curry
Robert M. Daugherty
Baker Kurrus

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

ALSO PRESENT:

Linda Watson, Interim Superintendent
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Dr. Mitchell called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Six members of the board were present at roll call; Dr. Daugherty arrived at 5:52 p.m. Barbara Wood, teacher at Bale Elementary School and Sasha White, student at McClellan, were present as ex officio members of the board for the month of May.

Dr. Mitchell welcomed members of the audience and asked Dr. Watson to proceed with the citations and commendations.

III. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

A. Superintendent's Citations & Commendations

Dr. Watson introduced **Anne Ye** and **Cyrus Bahrassa**, Central High School seniors who were recently named 2008 Presidential Scholars. The Presidential Scholars program honors the best students around the country and is the highest honor a high school student can receive. Anne and Cyrus were the only two students selected from the state of Arkansas this year.

Five students and five teachers from the LRSD were selected as 2008 Stephens Award winners. The students were: **Anne Ye, Cyrus Bahrassa, Brent Sodman, Elaine Zhou** and **Cameron Zohoori**, all from Central High School. The teachers were **Stella Cameron,**

Kathleen Holladay, and **Stacey McAdoo** from Central High School; **Alan Sharlow** from McClellan Magnet High School; and **Emily Matson Lewis** from Parkview Magnet High School.

The **Central High School Fed Challenge** team won the national championship for the second year, competing against eleven other regional winners in Washington, DC. They presented an analysis of the current state of the national economy and a monetary policy recommendation for the Federal Open Market Committee. The participants were: **Aaron Campbell**, **Jack DeLoach**, **Hilary Ledwell**, **Brent Sodman**, **Farhan Syed**, and **Cameron Zohoori**. Teacher **George West** is the team's advisor.

Marilyn Johnson, science specialist at Washington Magnet Elementary School, was named Little Rock School District Educational Service Cooperative Mentor of the Year for her work with a novice teacher, Patricia Goodman. As Mentor of the Year, Marilyn will receive expenses towards travel, registration and lodging to a two-day mentoring conference this fall.

Parkview Magnet High School "Green Matter" project students and their sponsor, **Dr. Dexter Booth**, were recognized for retrofitting a school bus, to run on biodiesel fuel. The bus was parked in front of the Administration Building during the meeting and the students were available to discuss their project with visitors. The students raised all the funds necessary to purchase the used bus and materials for the conversion. The students were: **Kundan Das**, President of the Chemistry Club, and participating students **Patrick Dinkins**, **Zain Fanek**, **Drew Gibson**, **Esther Im**, **Bukola Odeniyi**, **Dolapo Odeniyi**, **Yvette Wanchia**, and **Waltin Zomaya**.

Mr. Charles Stewart, vice president of Regions Bank, was recognized for the bank's recent donation of items for use by the district's athletic department. The donation was valued in excess of \$1,000 and included miniature footballs and rain ponchos.

Sasha White, student from McClellan High School, and **Barbara Wood**, teacher from Bale Elementary School, served as ex officio representatives for the month of May.

B. Remarks from Citizens

Cornelius Roberts thanked the board for their service to the district and the community. He stated his personal belief that our students need to be challenged, and that if they are they will strive to achieve. He stated that students needed to be motivated to do more than merely sit in a classroom and that all students should be taught the same curriculum. He asked the board to consider providing truancy officers to reduce the number of student absences and to enforce handbook policies on attendance.

C. Little Rock PTA Council

Patty Barker, the new PTA Council president, addressed the board regarding the council's goal of increasing PTA membership at all schools and improving programming so that all schools are better served by the council. She reported that she had attended the state PTA spring conference in Springdale, where the LRSD won several of the awards for membership categories, as well as being named Arkansas PTA Council of the Year. The administrator of the year was Nancy Rousseau; teacher of the year was Patty Irwin, the outstanding PTA unit was Forest Park Elementary, and Pulaski Heights Elementary won the communications award. One student Nicole Kendall from Pulaski Heights Middle School was named a national winner in the literature category.

D. Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association

Cathy Kohler addressed the board and quoted Ghandi; "we should be the change we want to see in the world." She thanked Dr. Watson and stated that this has been a positive year in the development of a new partnership between the district and the teachers.

Ms. Kohler reported that her son would be graduating from Central next week, and she thanked all of the teachers and principals who worked with her children over the years in the LRSD. She encouraged attendance at the ACC graduation and commended Ms. Norman & the teachers at the ACC who work with students, like her son, who attend the ACC in order to achieve the number of credits needed to graduate with their class. She asked the board to continue to support and embrace the alternative education programs.

IV. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

A. Remarks from Board Members

Dr. Mitchell thanked everyone for their prayers and expressions of support during her recent illness.

B. Legal Update

Mr. Heller reported that mediation was unsuccessful in settling employee grievances for Angela Munns, Cassandra Norman, James Washington, and Stephanie Walker-Hines. He reported that a discovery dispute had been resolved by Judge Moody and that depositions would be taken by the end of next week. Mr. Heller reported that he would set time to speak individually with board members to discuss the terms of the negotiations.

Mr. Heller also reported that a recent class action lawsuit filed by Michelle Bonds on behalf of all employees negatively affected by the 2005 reorganization had not been officially served on the district board members or the administration. He reported that it had been filed in court, but since the district had not been served no response was due at this time.

In the appeal of the desegregation settlement, Mr. Heller reported that it had been two months since oral arguments before the Eighth Circuit Court in St. Louis, and that a decision was expected any day now.

C. PRE Quarterly Update

Dr. DeJarnette responded to questions regarding the evaluation of *Target Teach* and how this and other program evaluations will impact the formulation of next year's budget. Dr. Watson responded to questions, and stated that it was possible that federal funds could be used to continue *Target Teach*.

Sadie Mitchell responded to questions regarding summer school and reported that 694 students were currently enrolled. Efforts to maintain a low student / teacher ratio at Geyer Springs, Romine, Brady & Washington summer sites will provide intensive learning opportunities for students. Additional summer programs will be held for students at Wakefield, Watson, Chicot, Bale, and Mabelvale. Professional development will be provided

for the summer teachers prior to the first day of summer school. Middle level summer school will be held at Mann; Mabelvale and Cloverdale Middle Schools received state funding for intensive summer remediation and support for their students. High schools will provide credit recovery summer programs with seniors attending the ACC program at Metro for any credits needed for graduation.

D. Budget Update

No report.

E. Internal Auditors Report

Mr. Becker's monthly update was printed in the board's agenda. It was noted that approximately 2,500 computers had been recycled and distributed or prepared for distribution to students through the *Computers for Kids* program.

F. Discussion: Request for State Audit

Mr. Armstrong reported that he had requested a discussion among board members regarding a request for a state audit of the district's finances. He reported that he had learned that a state official would have to request the audit by the state and that he would continue to seek assistance in that arena.

V. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS

A. Minutes

Minutes from the board meeting held on April 24, 2008, were presented for the board's review and approval. Ms. Fox made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion. Mr. Kurrus requested an amendment to the minutes to clarify his statement regarding the district's offer to purchase land in west Little Rock from Rocket Properties. That amendment will be incorporated into the final minutes for the meeting; the minutes as corrected were **approved unanimously**.

VI. BOARD POLICY AND REGULATIONS REVIEW

A. Second Reading Board Policy Revision – CFD: Campus Leadership

Board Policy CFD Campus Leadership describes the process of site-based decision making and the frameworks for parental involvement in the school administration. The campus leadership teams are charged with assisting in developing and evaluating campus goals and objectives through planning, budgeting, curriculum development, staff development and staffing needs to support the District's commitment to the sustained improvement of schools. The superintendent recommended a revision to the policy to ensure that the district is fulfilling its responsibility to schools identified for school improvement under No Child Left Behind. The revisions were approved on first reading at the April board meeting; the superintendent requested second reading approval.

Mr. Armstrong made a motion to approve the policy revisions on second reading; Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VII. ADMINISTRATION

A. Recommendations for Organizational Realignment

The superintendent requested that the organizational recommendations be left as tabled until such time that a board worksession can be scheduled for additional review of the organizational realignment. The board agreed by consensus and suggested a worksession after the June agenda meeting.

VIII. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

A. A T & T High School Success Special Grants Program

Linda Young, coordinator of grants, responded to questions from the board regarding the A T & T High School Success Grants Program. If funded, this grant will provide additional services to students who participate in the ninth grade Freshman Academy at Central High School. Approximately 100 to 120 students will be selected based on their individual need for academic support services. The grant will provide up to \$100,000 a year and is renewable for four years. Dr. Daugherty made a motion to approve submission of the grant application; Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried 6-1** with Mr. Kurrus voting no.

Ms. Fox requested a status report on grant applications and on grants as they are approved or received.

B. Pre-Kindergarten Parent Handbook Revisions

Revisions to the Pre-K parent handbook were presented for the board's review and approval. The revised handbook incorporates information for serving three-year-olds who will begin attending at Chicot and Washington. Dr. Daugherty made a motion to approve the handbook as presented; Mr. Kurrus seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

IX. STUDENT SERVICES

A. Student Handbook Revisions

Proposed revisions to the Student Handbook for 2008-2009 were presented in draft format. Dr. Daugherty moved to approve the revisions to the handbook as submitted; the motion died for lack of second.

Board members questioned some of the revisions and asked Dr. Watson to provide additional information. Mr. Berkley made a motion to table; Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**. Dr. Watson asked the board to consider convening a special meeting at the agenda meeting to approve the handbook revisions so that the handbook can be printed prior to the start of school in August 2008.

X. HUMAN RESOURCES

A. Personnel Changes

Routine personnel changes were printed in the board's agenda. Mr. Kurrus made a motion to approve the personnel items as submitted. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

The board requested separate motions to approve additional personnel items presented. Dr. Watson recommended the appointment of Mr. Freddie Fields as the Special Assistant to the Superintendent / Sr. Director of Student Services. The job description posted in the agenda was incorrect; a corrected posting was provided indicating the position as a Grade 81 on the administrators' salary schedule.

Mr. Kurrus stated that he would support the recommendation, but he expressed concern about making additional administrative appointments prior to approval of the reorganization and budget for the 2008-2009 school year.

Dr. Daugherty made a motion to approve the appointment of Mr. Fields; Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried 6-0-1**, with Ms. Fox abstaining.

Ms. Rhonda Hall was recommended by the administration for appointment as the principal at Hall High School. Ms. Fox made a motion to approve the recommendation; Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

The recommendations for two additional summer school administrators were provided in the board's agenda. They were Robin Baylark and Keith McGee, assistant principals for middle level summer school. Dr. Daugherty made a motion to approve the recommendations; Ms. Fox seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

Mr. Armstrong made a motion to reorder the agenda to move the consideration of the superintendent's contract to the end of the meeting. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

B. Contract – Superintendent of Schools

Board members had received a draft contract from Mike Moore, attorney with the Friday firm. Mr. Moore was present to respond to questions from the board. Ms. Fox made a motion to convene an executive session for the discussion of personnel matters. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

The board returned from executive session and reported no action was taken. Mr. Armstrong made a motion to approve the contract as presented with the exception of the deletion of a portion that included a bonus. Ms. Curry seconded the motion.

Mr. Berkley spoke in opposition to the three-year contract, saying that he would have supported a one-year contract. He expressed concerns regarding the hiring process, stating that it was flawed and that others might have come forward to apply for the position if there had been an open application and interview process. Because of the manner in which the board went about appointing Dr. Watson, Mr. Berkley stated that there was no way of knowing who else might have applied.

Dr. Daugherty spoke in support of the contract, stating that Dr. Watson was uniquely qualified for the position by her past experience in the district. Mr. Armstrong and Ms. Curry expressed similar support.

Mr. Kurrus stated that he would support the contract and would support Dr. Watson, but that he was concerned about the challenges that would be facing the district over the next three years.

The motion to approve the amended three-year contract for superintendent of schools **carried 6-1** with Mr. Berkley casting the no vote.

XI. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

A. Monthly Financial Reports

The financial reports for the month of April 2008 were provided as part of the board's agenda. No action was required.

Ms. Ring responded to questions from the board regarding the financial reports and cash flow projections. The board requested an update on budget at the next worksession.

B. Donations of Property

The Board was asked to approve the acceptance of recent donations to schools and departments within the District. The donations are listed in the following chart. Student ex officio, Sasha White, read the items listed in the Board's agenda. Ms. Fox made a motion to accept the donated items, Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

DONATIONS

| SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT | ITEM | DONOR |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Bale Elementary | \$1,000 cash for the KABOOM playground project | UALR / Children's International |
| J. A. Fair Magnet | \$200 cash to the baseball program | Shriners of Arkansas, Everett D. Rowland |
| Forest Heights Middle School | \$500 cash to the CBI class for student materials for portfolio development (February) | Gregg and Cathie Mueller |
| | \$500 cash to the CBI class for student materials for portfolio development (March) | Gregg and Cathie Mueller |
| Geyer Springs Elementary | \$100 cash for student incentives during the Benchmark tests | Geyer Springs PTA |
| | \$50 cash for student incentives during the Benchmark tests | Carmeshia Dickerson, PTA president |
| Gibbs Magnet Elementary | \$45,000 to be used for playground improvements | Gibbs Magnet PTA |
| M. L. King Magnet Elementary | Computer desk and credenza valued at \$1,500 for the parent center | Ms. Torrey Robinson |
| Woodruff Elementary | \$200 cash for incentives and materials for faculty and staff members | DaySprings Behavioral Health Services of AR |
| LRSD Athletic Department | Ponchos, pom-poms, and plastic footballs, valued at approximately \$1,300 | Charles Stewart, Regions Bank |

XII. CLOSING REMARKS

Dr. Mitchell closed by expressing support for Dr. Watson as she begins working under the new contract. Mr. Hartz responded to questions regarding the vacant CFO position and interview of candidates.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m. on a motion by Ms. Fox seconded by Ms. Curry.

APPROVED: 06-26-08

Originals Signed by:
Katherine P. Mitchell, President
Melanie Fox, Secretary