

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

**MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
November 20, 2008**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 20, 2008, 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
Melanie Fox
Baker Kurrus
Katherine Mitchell

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Robert M. Daugherty

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. Six members of the board were present at roll call; Dr. Daugherty was absent. **Chenita Owens** student at J. A. Fair High School and **Boyce Pearson**, teacher from Dodd Elementary School, were present as ex officio members of the board for the month of November.

Ms. Curry 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 **Chris Johnson** a senior at McClellan High School and **Pat Kirwin**, a teacher at McClellan who serves as Chris' golfing coach. Chris was the first golfer from McClellan, and the first African-American student to compete in the state golf tournament. He participated in the 5-A Southeast Conference Tournament in Pine Bluff, and finished in first place for individual golfers. He entered the state tournament as the #1 seed in individuals, and he finished state 2nd in individuals. His ranking in this tournament puts him in the top one percent of all Arkansas high school golfers.

Members of the inaugural class of **UALR Children International's "New Generation: A Leadership Academy"** were introduced to the board. This program is designed to build youth leadership skills by teaching teamwork, communication skills, conflict resolution and service project planning. The academy offers field trips and workshops with community leaders at UALR Children International headquarters where students design and implement a service project. Participants included: **Lindsey Johnson**, Youth Coordinator; **Ricky Armstrong, Amber Bass, Donyel Culverson** and **Brittany Tate** from Dunbar Magnet Middle School; **Brittany Brown** and **Nathaniel Nash** from Hall High School; **Tiffany Gaston** and **Raheem Purdiman** from McClellan Magnet High School; **Tamron Hampton** from Pulaski Heights Middle School; **Quincy Hollister** from J.A. Fair Magnet High School; **Anthony Joseph, Shakur Joseph** and **Danny Lewis** from Little Rock Central High School; **Donte Lewis** from Forest Heights Middle School; **Mitzi Pena Romero** from Cloverdale Magnet Middle School; **Tierra Robinson** from Henderson Magnet Middle School; **Raven Two Rivers** and **Brittany Wright** from Mann Magnet Middle School; **LaKimmy Jones** from North Little Rock High School-East; and **Andri'ynne Peel-Coleman** from Joe T. Robinson Middle School.

The student ex-officio for November, **Chenita Owens** from J. A. Fair High School, and the teacher representative, **Boyce Pearson** from Dodd Elementary School, were also given certificates in recognition of their service for the month of November.

B. Partners in Education

Ms. Milam expressed appreciation to all volunteers who participated in the ViPS Jane Mendel Reading Day on Tuesday, November 18th. She reported that there was at least one reader in each elementary classroom that day.

One partnership was presented for the board's review and approval:

Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission, represented by *Dewayne Graham*, partnering with the **W.D. "Bill" Hamilton Learning Academy**, represented by *Wanda Hamilton* and principal *Krishna Young*

Mr. Armstrong made a motion to accept the partnership. Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. Remarks from Citizens

No speakers.

D. Little Rock PTA Council

Patty Barker, representing the PTA Council, thanked the Wakefield Elementary PTA for hosting the November Council luncheon meeting. She reported that they had toured the dental clinic at Wakefield, which is sponsored and supported by UALR Children's International. Students in six LRSD elementary schools receive dental services through the UALR Children's International Healthy Smiles / Dental Clinic partnership.

Ms. Barker announced the date of the next council meeting, Tuesday, December 9th, at Mabelvale Elementary. At that time they expect to receive a legislative update from Commissioner Ken James and Senator Shane Broadway.

E. Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association

Cathy Kohler greeted the board members and audience. She stated that the CTA would not be taking a specific stand on the proposed budget reductions, but that they clearly understood that there were serious financial hurdles and many reasons for the current budget issues facing the district. She expressed confidence that the board would carefully consider all options to ensure that teachers are available to serve the students and that the proposed reductions would have the least amount of impact on the student's classroom learning environment.

IV. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

A. Remarks from Board Members

Ms. Fox reported that Central High was one of seventeen high schools in Arkansas being awarded the 2008 college readiness award. She wished everyone a happy thanksgiving.

Mr. Carreiro applauded the music departments in our schools. He reported that on Saturday night the all region choir of high school students would be performing, with 85 from the LRSD. Middle schools would also be represented at these state choral competitions.

Dr. Mitchell commended the administrative team that had been working on the budget recommendations. She noted the number of hours spent in carefully considering all options and recommendations for presentation to the board. She reminded fellow board members that it was their charge to review the recommendations and decide which should be implemented in order to operate for efficiently.

Mr. Kurrus acknowledged the difficult financial condition of the district, and agreed that there was no use in discussing how we arrived at this point. He asked for clear discussion about the process that will take us "where we ought to be and how we need to get there." He noted that across the board cuts are easier, but that sometimes specific areas should be identified where expenses can be reduced. He asked that the board invest in the things that make a difference and focus on those things in order to become stronger and more efficient.

Mr. Armstrong addressed the diversity of society where it is more acceptable to place blame than to accept responsibility. He asked that parents work with their students and teach their children to give respect in order to receive respect.

Ms. Curry thanked Dr. Watson for the hard work that went into the budget reductions and recommendations provided to the board. She encouraged listeners to participate in the schools, visit classrooms, and take part in the education of their students.

B. Legal Update

Chris Heller provided a progress report on the settlement discussions regarding the state's remaining financial obligations in the desegregation case. He also provided comments on the recent approval of new charter schools by the ADE.

On the state's most recent settlement proposal, Mr. Heller reported that he planned to provide additional information and more specific figures by the December board meeting. He and the attorneys for the North Little Rock and Pulaski County school districts are developing a counterproposal and have planned to make a coordinated presentation to the state to ensure that funding requests are similar and comparable among the three county districts.

Dr. Daugherty requested information from Mr. Heller about the possibility of litigation to prevent the state's approval of additional charter schools within Pulaski County.

Mr. Heller offered four options for addressing the current status of ADE Charter School considerations and approvals. He stated that litigation would be his last option with the first being an attempt to amend the current charter school law to include provisions that would require that students are recruited from across achievement levels. Currently charter schools are hand-selecting the highest achieving students and the state board doesn't feel it has the responsibility or authority to regulate recruitment to limit enrollment in proportion to students within a basic or below basic levels. Another factor would be to require transportation of charter school students to insure attendance by students within the lower socio-economic levels. Currently public schools are being left with higher levels of students in poverty at lower achievement levels resulting in less money each year to educate students of greatest need.

Mr. Heller also suggested negotiating with new and existing charter schools to coordinate recruitment efforts and to establish our own conversion or open enrollment charter schools. He stated that districts are allowed to convert existing schools to charter schools and to partner with other non-profit (501c3) organizations to establish charter schools in which the district would participate in the operation.

Finally, Mr. Heller expressed his belief that any litigation in relation to the approval of charter schools would be based on Judge Wilson's previous decision which stated that charters should not be approved by the state if they negatively impact the district's ability to maintain desegregated schools. Mr. Heller believes that some of the most recent charters are being approved in violation of state law and in violation of the 1989 settlement agreement. State law specifies that the ADE cannot approve any charter school if it negatively affects desegregation in any manner. The law also specifies that each application be carefully reviewed to ensure that it doesn't have any negative effect on the local schools.

C. LRSD Achievement Gap Task Force

Dennis Glasgow reported on the progress of the district's achievement gap task force. He reported that the district and the CTA had collaborated on the Community Conversations in order to develop solutions to meet the needs of students who are not achieving at proficient levels. He reported that this committee would meet again on December 5th to complete work on the "next steps" and to complete recommendations for the board's consideration and approval.

D. Update - - Baseline Data for Board Goals

The Board's agenda contained information regarding three broad goals dealing with 1) academic achievement of students, 2) communications with parents and the community, and 3) operational efficiency. Each of these goals was divided into subparts and the performance measures and measurable performance targets were identified for each. Data collection is being done by the PRE Department and additional information was provided as part of the board's agenda. Dr. DeJarnette was present to respond to questions and reported that additional data would be complete by the end of the year for reporting to the board in January.

E. Communications Recruitment Plan

Tiffany Hoffman provided a brief overview of strategies being developed to recruit students and promote the LRSD across the city. She also reported that the district's strategic planning committee would be reinstated to begin the process of identifying areas of concern and developing ways to improve.

F. Update: Discipline Strategies & Interventions

Dr. Daugherty requested a report on strategies interventions being used to curb student discipline problems in the schools. Mr. Fields prepared a report for inclusion in the agenda and Dr. Watson responded to questions and comments from the board.

G. Budget Update

Ms. Anne Elfrink presented a brief update on the budget which was approved by the board for submission to the state in September. She reported that one significant factor impacting our financial status is the declining enrollment from first quarter 2007 to first quarter 2008; however, the LRSD is also experiencing economic problems similar to other businesses and families. She predicted that investment income might come in as high as \$1 million less than the amount previously projected, and that utility costs, fuel prices, and other rising costs would also have a significant impact on our operations. She stated that the board would be faced with decisions that might include a hiring freeze and the elimination of up to 44 budgeted positions which are currently vacant. Additional information and projections will be presented to the board in a worksession at the December agenda meeting.

H. Internal Auditors Report

Mr. Becker's monthly report was provided in the board's agenda.

V. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS

A. 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, Chenita Owens, read the items listed in the Board's agenda. Mr. Armstrong made a motion to accept the donated items, Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

DONATIONS

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Dodd Elementary	42" Envision flat screen LCD TV & flat wall mount, valued at approximately \$1,060.	Perfect 10
	School supplies valued at \$500 and food items valued at \$63 for PTA fall carnival	Transamerica Worksite Marketing
	School supplies valued at \$250.	Office of Federal Probation & Pre-Trial Services

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Dodd Elementary	Barbeque sauce and paper products for parent event	Life Skills for Youth
J. A. Fair	\$100 for the J. A. Fair Golf Club \$400 check to be divided between Fair teachers J. Jacobs, C. Cagle, C. Scruggs, D. Troutman	Camille Johnson Lide Thomas & Martha Rains
LRSD Computers for Kids Program	42 Dell, Gateway and Compaq desktop PC's, 26 Dell & Gateway laptops & 21 HP printers	USDA Information Technology Services
LRSD Computers for Kids Program	Three Conquest II Desktop Computers	U. S. Department of Labor ESA / Wage & Hour Division

B. Minutes

Minutes from the October meeting of the board were presented for review and approval. Ms. Fox moved to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously.**

VI. ADMINISTRATION

A. Budget Reduction Recommendations

Dr. Watson presented the recommendations for reducing the district's budget using a three tiered approach to effect reductions in spending over a three year period. Dr. Watson suggested a review of the district's requirements in the school improvement arena and what can be done to save resources for interventions required to improve student achievement. Revenue is determined on the three quarter attendance average and with the reduction in enrollment, a reduction is expected in ADE funding. She assured the board that she was not recommending a reduction in force for the 2009-2010 school year, but that she would recommend an elimination of positions by attrition.

The board agreed to utilize the next couple of weeks to review the recommendations and to hold a budget worksession in conjunction with the December agenda meeting.

Board members asked that principals be consulted to determine ways in which they believe reductions should be made. It was also suggested that a review of the organizational chart be done in order to reduce salaries and positions at the upper administrative levels.

VII. HUMAN RESOURCES

A. Personnel Changes

Routine personnel changes were provided in the board's agenda. Ms. Fox moved to approve the changes as submitted. Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously.**

VIII. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

A. Appointment of District Treasurer

The board was asked to approve a Resolution appointing the new Chief Financial Officer, Anne Elfrink, as the district's treasurer. Ms. Fox made a motion to approve the resolution as presented. Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

B. Monthly Financial Statements

The monthly financial statements for October were provided as part of the board's agenda. No action was required.

IX. CLOSING REMARKS

A tentative date of December 8th was set for a joint meeting between the LRSD and City of Little Rock boards. Board members were asked to submit items for the agenda.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Fox made a motion to convene an executive session to discuss the evaluation instrument to be used in a performance evaluation of the superintendent. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

The board returned from executive session at 8:15 p.m. and reported that no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m. on a motion by Mr. Kurrus and seconded by Ms. Fox.

APPROVED: 12-18-08

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