

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

**MINUTES  
REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
December 18, 2008**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 18, 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  
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 5:34 p.m. Five members of the board were present at roll call; Mr. Armstrong arrived at 6:15 p.m. and Dr. Daugherty arrived at 6:45 p.m. **Sia Peterson** student at Hall High School and **Kate Runder**, teacher from Fair Park Early Childhood Center, were present as ex officio members of the board for the month of December.

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**

**Sandra Brown, Teresa Conner**, and **Elise Siegler** from Baptist Health, along with **Donnie Cook**, president of the Central Region of Bank of America, presented information on Project Fit. Project Fit is a collaborative effort between Baptist Health and several schools in the LRSD, including King, Carver, Meadowcliff and Wilson. Principals Diane Barksdale and Beverly Jones were present.

**Willie Morris**, president of the Parkview Mustangs board of directors, made a brief report to the board regarding the Mustang's 2008 football season. Several members of the football team were present with their coaches, William Givens, Willie Givens, Jr., Gerren Frazier, and Eric Stone. Mr. Morris asked that the relationship between the LRSD and the Mustangs Youth Football & Cheerleading organization be strengthened and asked for the board's continuing support of efforts to provide a positive athletic experience for our students.

Dr. Watson announced that thirty seven (37) teachers in the Little Rock School District recently achieved certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. This is the highest number of LRSD teachers ever to earn their certification in one year and is an indication that an educator has met high and rigorous standards as a classroom instructor.

The teachers were introduced to the board: **Sabreen Al Uqdah**, Stephens Elementary School; **Sherri Betton**, Mabelvale Magnet Middle School; **Yvonne Bolden**, Mann Magnet Middle School; **Kathleen Brotherton**, Jefferson Elementary School; **Michele Brown**, McClellan Magnet High School; **Stephanie Brown Neal**, Stephens Elementary School; **Jennifer Buck**, Stephens Elementary School; **Renitia Bullard**, Cloverdale Magnet Middle School; **Catherine Burns**, Forest Heights Middle School; **April Chandler Loyd**, Stephens Elementary School; **Charlotte Cook**, Carver Magnet Elementary School; **Jennifer Croft**, McDermott Elementary School; **Brenda Dorman**, Jefferson Elementary School; **Sharon Faulkenberry**, Stephens Elementary School; **Rhonda Fowler**, Central High School; **Kelli Fuller**, Rockefeller Elementary School; **Courtney Gasper**, Meadowcliff Elementary School; and **Gladys Godley**, McClellan Magnet High School.

**Lequjeta Grayson**, Central High School; **Renee Hill**, Hall High School; **Sarah Jane Isgrig**, Rockefeller Elementary School; **Stephanie Jones**, Mann Magnet Middle School; **Nancy Keyes**, Central High School; **Kristi Kyzer-Schoening**, Henderson Magnet Middle School; **Lori Martin**, Stephens Elementary School; **Amy Noble**, formerly with J.A. Fair Magnet High School; **Cindy Price**, Chicot Primary School; **Muneerah Qasim**, Gibbs Magnet School; **Bernestine Rhodes**, Hall High School; **Leigh Scanlon**, Forest Park Elementary School; **Sarah Schutte**, Central High School; **Yolanda Shelton**, Brady Elementary School; **Paulette Stephens**, Cloverdale Magnet Middle School; **Myrna Thomas**, Woodruff Elementary School; **Mary Tippin**, McClellan Magnet High School; **Lula Turner**, Stephens Elementary School; **Sonja Williams**, Hall High School.

Dr. Watson introduced the most recent class of the LRSD Leadership Academy. These individuals are undergoing training to be future principals and building administrators. The class included: **Darnell Bell**, Assistant Principal, Lynch Drive Elementary; **Marie Boone**, Algebra Teacher, Hall High School; **Lori Brown**, Assistant Principal, Otter Creek Elementary School; **Dr. Sharon Cauley**, Assistant Principal, J.A. Fair High School; **Ellean Cleveland**, Assistant Principal, Mabelvale Middle School; **Linda Davis**, Special Education Teacher, Parkview High School; **Connie Green**, Assistant Principal, Mabelvale Middle School; **Connie Jackson**, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, Williams Magnet School; **Keith McGee**, Assistant Principal, Mann Magnet Middle School; **Brent Mitchell**, Assistant Coordinator, Hamilton Alternative Learning Academy; **Clausey Myton**, Assistant Principal, McClellan Magnet High School; **Emma Nowden**, Assistant Principal, Henderson Middle School; **Jeremy Owoh**, Assistant Principal, Mills High School; **Patricia Phillips**, GT Specialist, Romine Elementary School; **Stephanie Pickett**, Assistant Principal, Watson Intermediate School; **Earl Smith II**, Assistant Principal, Dunbar Magnet Middle School; **Kelan Watson**, Assistant Coordinator, Hamilton Alternative Learning Academy; **Jonas White**, English Teacher, Henderson Magnet Middle School and **Rick Woole**, Assistant Principal, Mabelvale Magnet Middle School.

**Mark Perry** with *New Futures for Youth* shared information with the board regarding a grant that New Futures is preparing for submission in January. They will be requesting \$1 million from the Department of Labor Employment Training Administration to provide recruitment, training and employment for central Little Rock residents, including high school students.

The student ex-officio for the month of December was **Sia Peterson** from Hall High School, and the teacher representative was **Katie Runder** from Fair Park Early Childhood Center. They received certificates of appreciation for their service to the board.

## **B. Partners in Education**

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

**Coldwater Creek on Chenal Parkway**, represented by *Cindy Autry*, partnering with **Chicot Elementary School**, represented by *Shoutelle Richardson*

**Arkansas Community Dispute Resolution Centers, Inc.**, represented by *Angela Tolbert*; **Safe Places**, represented by *Angela McGraw*; **Arkansas Baptist College**, represented by *Arma Hart*, and **Therapeutic Family Services, Inc.**, represented by *Mike Grimes*, partnering with **Felder Learning Academy**, represented by *Judge Evans and Linda Johnson*

Dr. Mitchell made a motion to accept the partnerships; Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

## **C. Remarks from Citizens**

Joy Springer addressed the board regarding the district's commitment to evaluate programs which have been implemented over the years to insure academic achievement of African American students. She asked whether any programs currently in use have been successful in addressing the academic disparity and whether continued assessments will remain a priority.

## **D. Little Rock PTA Council**

Patty Barker greeted the board and provided an update on recent activities of the Council. She thanked Principal Smith and the staff at Mabelvale Elementary for hosting the last Council meeting in their new media center. Ms. Barker reported that Shane Broadway, of the Senate Education Committee, and Dr. Ken James, Commissioner of Education, were guest speakers. They reported that education funding was a priority of the state and of Governor Beebe and that this legislative session would include issues in support of public education.

Ms. Barker encouraged parents to help by making education a priority in the household by keeping in touch with teachers, monitoring progress, and attending parent teacher conferences. She thanked the new partners, Mark Perry, and others in the community who support the public schools.

#### **D. Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association**

Cathy Kohler addressed the board regarding the recent budget discussions and encouraged them not to “pass the buck.” She agreed that there were tough choices to be made, but she asked that they consider the totality, not the individual pieces. She reminded the board members that they represent all schools in the district, all employees, and all students.

Ms. Kohler reported that the next Community Conversation was scheduled for January 27<sup>th</sup> at Philander Smith College. She also notified the board that public school employees across the state would gather on the steps of the state capitol on January 24<sup>th</sup> to ask for increased funding for public school employee health care. Governor Beebe has indicated he would ask for an increase in funding for state employee health care benefits, but has not proposed increases in funding for public school employees.

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

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

Ms. Fox commended the transportation department for their service during the recent week of inclement weather. She also thanked the administration for the procedures used to decide whether to open or close schools and for communicating with the board and public. She wished everyone a restful holiday.

Mr. Armstrong reported that he was happy to be back after having some health problems. He commended the new partners and thanked them for reinforcing the belief that all students can learn if they are provided with the right support and motivation. He encouraged parents to pay close attention to what their children are doing, both in school and out of school, and he asked them to actively participate in their children’s education.

Mr. Carreiro wished the audience a Merry Christmas and happy holiday season. He noted that there was important work to be done by the board and that their decisions were important for the children. He closed by congratulating the newly announced national board certified teachers.

Dr. Mitchell reported that she attended the recent Arkansas School Boards Association meeting, and especially enjoyed the sessions on community and parental involvement. She thanked Kay Rainey and the LRSD parent involvement office for conducting one of the workshops to share what is being done in the LRSD with board members from across the state.

Mr. Kurrus greeted the audience and welcomed Mr. Armstrong back from his recent illness. He stated that he would have comments on the budget items, but reserved those comments for later in the meeting.

Ms. Curry commended the national board certified teachers and their continuing efforts to encourage and motivate students to learn in a better way. She also thanked Debbie Milam for coordinating the community partnerships in the district.

## **B. Legal Update**

Chris Heller addressed the board regarding the potential for settlement of the desegregation case and the possibility of litigating issues with the ADE charter school regulations and processes.

Dr. Daugherty made a motion to suspend the rules to reorder the agenda and to address the issues under agenda item *VI. Administration* - regarding the desegregation settlement and charter school litigation at this point in the agenda. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

Action under *VI. ADMINISTRATION* was taken at this point in the agenda, but will be reported under **VI. A Approval of Desegregation Settlement Recommendations** and **VI. B. Charter School Recommendations from Legal Counsel**

## **C. Strategic Planning Update**

Linda Young provided a brief overview of the strategic planning process that would be used to revise the district's current strategic plan which was in effect from 2003 – 2008. Tiffany Hoffman, Debbie Milam & Freddie Fields were assigned by the superintendent to assist in coordinating the strategic planning process. A timeline was provided which would bring a plan for the board's review and approval in March 2010. The process includes a thorough review and renewal of the original strategic plan including the mission statement, the beliefs, objectives, action steps and alignment of district priorities.

Although this was presented for discussion and review only, Mr. Kurrus and Ms. Fox spoke in opposition, stating that it was untimely and unnecessary to spend \$50,000 on strategic planning while the district is facing difficult budget reduction decisions. Ms. Young responded that the first step to any strategic planning process would include a review of the existing plan by district staff and a status report to the board on whether the goals and objectives have been met.

Ms. Fox asked that the administration conduct an internal review of the existing strategic plan to see if it requires a complete overhaul. No additional action was taken.

## **D. Budget Update**

There was no budget update.

## **E. Internal Auditors Report**

Mr. Becker's report was provided in the board's agenda. In addition, he announced that the Public Education Foundation had provided a donation of \$1,000 to provide computers for families of early childhood students who do not have access to a computer in the home.

**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. Mr. Carreiro moved to accept the donations as printed in the agenda. Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. The donations are listed in the following chart.

**DONATIONS**

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Dodd Elementary	Christmas tree, valued at approximately \$250.00	Lisa Black
Fair Park Early Childhood Center	\$10,000 cash to purchase playground equipment and classroom materials	Roy & Christine Sturgis Charitable & Educational Trust
Woodruff Elementary	<p>\$100.00 cash to pay for use of NLR Community Center for Harvest Feast</p> <p>\$600 cash to be used for incentives &amp; materials for faculty &amp; staff and \$200 cash to be used for incentives &amp; materials for faculty &amp; staff</p> <p>Coats &amp; jackets for students valued at \$300</p> <p>\$265 cash to be used to purchase student supplies &amp; incentives and School uniforms &amp; supplies valued at \$500 for students in need</p> <p>\$280 cash to purchase student incentives</p> <p>\$90 cash to purchase student incentives</p> <p>\$300 cash to purchase student incentives</p> <p>Turkeys &amp; hams, valued at \$300 to families of students in need</p> <p>Cash to purchase books for students in need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- \$10.00</li> <li>- \$20.00</li> <li>- \$20.00</li> <li>- \$20.00</li> <li>- \$200.00</li> </ul>	<p>Ms. Rose Johnson</p> <p>DaySprings Behavioral Health Services of Arkansas</p> <p>Danny Acker &amp; Department of Pathology at UAMS</p> <p>The House of Delegates at UAMS</p> <p>The Department of OB/GYN at UAMS</p> <p>Lance Levi of the C Street Group, LLC</p> <p>EDS – AR Title XIX</p> <p>Denise &amp; Russell Pearson          Christopher &amp; Lori Berry          Rochelle Kaskowitz          Walter Minteer          House of Delegates at UAMS</p>

**B. Minutes**

Minutes from the November board meeting were presented for review and approval. Dr. Mitchell moved to accept the minutes as presented. Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

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

### **A. Course Additions & Deletions 2008-2009**

Board Regulation IGE-R2 requires the Board to approve all new courses and to submit the new course paperwork to the Arkansas Department of Education for approval. The board was asked to approve one new course to be offered at Dunbar Magnet Middle School, International Dance, which would fulfill ½ credit for Physical Education. A matrix provided in the agenda specified several courses that would be deleted for the 2009-10 school year. Dr. Mitchell moved approval of the course additions and deletions as requested by the administration. Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

### **B. Revision of Board Policy IKF – General Education Graduation Requirements**

The administration requested approval of a revision of Board Policy IKF – General Education Graduation Requirements. Recommended changes were needed to make the policy consistent with changes in state standards and district programs. Ms. Fox moved to approve the revision on first reading; Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

## **VII. ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. Approval of Desegregation Settlement Recommendations and**

### **B. Charter School Recommendations from Legal Counsel**

Attorney Heller addressed the board and reported that he had sent an outline to the board earlier in the day for their review and consideration. He asked for the board to allow him to make a counter offer to the state on the settlement of the remaining obligations of the desegregation lawsuit. He reported that CFO Elfrink had assisted him in preparing the outline by developing financial models to determine the best position for the district to take in settlement negotiations.

In addition, he asked the board to provide input on the types of amendments the district would propose to the legislature to seek a revision in the current charter school laws and appropriate remedies for local school districts if the current laws remain in force.

Mr. Heller had previously stated his belief that the current charter school laws are in direct violation of Judge Wilson's order in the Pulaski County desegregation lawsuit. The state has continued to allow charter schools to be concentrated in Pulaski County which is detrimental to efforts to maintain desegregated public school systems.

Mr. Heller suggested that the district ask the state to develop a system of evaluating charter schools which would require the inclusion of information on the students' socioeconomic and academic levels when they leave the public schools. Those factors would be considered as part of the performance reports required from the charter schools.

Mr. Kurrus expressed reluctance to litigate against the state on the issue of desegregation funding and charter schools. He noted that the LRSD is a wealthy school district with a high millage rate and a firm tax base, especially when compared to other districts across the state. He stated that the LRSD receives a high rate of per pupil funding and that only a portion of that goes with them when they transfer to other schools. He repeated comments from a previous meeting - - that the LRSD should strive to become more competitive and more efficient in operations. "The reality is we spend too much money on administration, but we aren't putting it to good use." He again asked the administration to focus on how to make the district better to draw students back.

Mr. Heller agreed with statements made by Mr. Kurrus regarding litigation, but stated that the district would be forced to file suit if the settlement process fails. He reported that Act 395 requires the state to sue us in order to end the state's obligations for desegregation funding, and that the state would sue to withdraw all future desegregation funding if the districts in Pulaski County didn't attempt to negotiate for future revenue related to the continuing obligations of a desegregated educational system.

Dr. Daugherty and Ms. Curry agreed with comments made by Mr. Kurrus, with Dr. Daugherty stating that high achieving African American students are being targeted for recruitment to the charter schools, leaving behind the children who require more resources.

Dr. Daugherty then made a motion to accept Attorney Heller's recommendation regarding a settlement proposal to the state; Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion.

Mr. Heller asked the board to also consider the charter school issues and funding for facilities. Dr. Daugherty withdrew his motion; Mr. Armstrong withdrew his second.

*Dr. Daugherty left the meeting at 7:55 p.m.*

Mr. Heller asked the board to consider the settlement funding "wind down" as recommended in the information they had been provided. He asked the board to provide authorization for him to continue settlement negotiations based on the financial implications included in the proposal provided by Ms. Elfrink. Mr. Heller advised that it was legitimate to ask the state to consider protection from any fiscal distress that might be caused by the district's attempts to settle.

Mr. Carreiro asked Mr. Heller to continue the settlement process and to request concessions from the state on the charter school regulations. He then made a motion that authorized Mr. Heller to proceed with settlement discussions along the lines of the financial outline that was presented for the board's review. Ms. Fox seconded the motion.

Mr. Heller reported that any final settlement proposal would come before the board for approval. He also stated that he would meet with representatives of the North Little Rock and Pulaski County district, and the Joshua and Knight Intervenors to see if the proposal would be agreeable to all parties.

The motion **failed 3-1-2**, with Mr. Kurrus voting no and Dr. Mitchell and Mr. Armstrong abstaining.

*The board took a brief recess and returned at 8:26 p.m.*

Mr. Heller continued when the board returned from recess. He asked the board to take action to provide direction for him to continue discussions with the other districts in the county in order to prepare for upcoming settlement discussions with legal counsel for the state of Arkansas.

Mr. Armstrong moved to accept Mr. Heller's proposal for settlement discussions, including charter school restrictions and provisions included in the original proposal regarding any expansion or creation of new charter schools and to continue with the settlement discussion as outlined in the handout. Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion. The motion **carried 4-2**, with Ms. Fox and Mr. Kurrus voting no.

## **VIII. HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **A. Personnel Changes**

Routine personnel changes were provided in the board's agenda. Dr. Mitchell made a motion to approve the changes as submitted. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

## **IX. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **A. Adoption of the District's 403 (b) Plan Document**

In July 2007, the IRS released new regulations to Section 403(b) regarding tax-deferred annuities and/or custodial accounts. In order to be in compliance with the IRS code, the District is required to have a 403(b) Plan in place by January 1, 2009. The District's investment providers had been notified by mail as to the requirements.

The board was provided with copies of the district's plan and Adoption Agreement and was asked to approve the plan as presented. Dr. Mitchell moved to approve the recommendation; Mr. Kurrus seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

### **B. Budget Reduction Recommendations**

Board members reviewed budget reduction recommendations in a worksession held on December 11, 2008. The administration proposed reducing the budget over a three-year period beginning with the 2009-2010 school year. Items that needed immediate approval were placed in Tier 1 and Dr. Watson asked the board to approve the Tier 1 recommendations at this time so that appropriate planning may begin for the 2009-2010 school year. Detailed recommendations were attached to the Board's agenda.

Ms. Fox spoke in opposition to the recommendations presented, stating that she was not going to vote in support of any reductions at the school level where the greatest impact would be on the students in the classrooms. She requested a review of the organizational structure and asked Dr. Watson to come back with a recommendation to reduce spending at the administrative level including out of district travel, supplies, car allowances, overtime and stipends.

- The first item for consideration would close Woodruff as an elementary school and convert it to a pre-kindergarten center with the additional space used for housing district personnel currently located at the Garland building. A savings of \$1.5 million was projected.

Dr. Mitchell moved to approve the recommendation to convert Woodruff to a pre-kindergarten center. The motion failed for lack of second.

- The administration's second recommendation would eliminate TAP funding at Stephens and Rockefeller elementary schools. TAP is a merit pay system that provides financial incentives for teachers whose students perform well on the annual benchmark tests. The projection was that this would result in a savings of approximately \$300,000. The board took no action.
- Dr. Watson recommended an early retirement incentive for employees between the ages of 61 and 64. Those who elected to retire would be eligible to receive payment of their medical insurance premiums until they become Medicare eligible. The recommendation would result in an estimated savings of \$600,000 per year for three years.

Mr. Armstrong moved to approve the superintendent's recommendation to offer insurance premium payments as an early retirement incentive. Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it **carried 5-1** with Mr. Kurrus voting no.

- The administration recommended modifying the middle school schedules from A/B block to a 7-period day. The result would be fewer options for students to take electives, but the savings would range between \$2 and \$4 million.

Dr. Mitchell made a motion to approve the recommendation to change middle schools to a seven-period day; Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion. Mr. Carreiro spoke in opposition to the motion, and the motion **failed 3-2-1**, with Ms. Fox and Mr. Kurrus opposing and Mr. Carreiro abstaining.

- The board discussed Item 15 on the budget recommendations list, which would reduce the number of work days for 12 month employees and principals who are currently on a 250 day contract. The projected savings was estimated at \$600,000. Mr. Carreiro moved to reduce the contract length of 12 month employees to 11.5 months, but not to reduce any principals who are currently on 11 month contracts. The motion was withdrawn after a brief discussion.

Mr. Carreiro made another motion; to reduce contract length of 12 month employees and 12 month principals by 10 days. Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion. The reduction would be made by taking five days in March (spring break) & five days in July (week of the 4<sup>th</sup>). To clarify the intent of the motion, Dr. Watson responded that all employees who currently hold 250 day contracts would be reduced to 240 days. The motion **failed 3-2-1**, with Carreiro, Mitchell and Curry voting in favor, Fox and Kurrus voting "no," and Armstrong abstaining.

### **C. Purchase of Property at Stagecoach and Dodd Roads**

The administration recommended approval to purchase three parcels of property adjacent to Dodd Elementary School on Stagecoach and David O. Dodd Roads. Enrollment has exceeded capacity at Dodd, and currently portable buildings have been added to provide necessary classroom space.

In August 2008, the board approved the purchase of two pieces of property adjacent to Dodd Elementary, and this purchase would provide sufficient space for future expansion of the Dodd campus.

Ms. Fox made a motion to approve the purchase of property at Dodd Elementary School. Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion and it **carried 4-2**, with Mr. Armstrong and Ms. Curry voting no.

### **D. Monthly Financial Statements**

The monthly financial reports were attached to the board's agenda. No additional information was reported or requested.

### **X. CLOSING REMARKS**

None.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 9:57 p.m. on a motion by Ms. Fox, seconded by Mr. Armstrong.

APPROVED: 01-22-09

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