



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

**MINUTES  
REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
February 25, 2010**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 25, 2010, in the Boardroom of the Administration Building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Charles Armstrong presided.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Linda Watson, Superintendent  
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

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

Mr. Armstrong called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. Six members of the board were present at roll call; Dr. Daugherty arrived at 7:17 p.m. The teacher representative, LaQuita Bennett from Bale Elementary, and student representative, Alicia Morgan from J. A. Fair High School, were also present.

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

**A. Superintendent's Remarks**

Dr. Watson opened by discussing the upcoming presentation of the Strategic Plan to the board and to the general public. District staff is working on implementing components of the plan beginning with the 2010-11 school year. She assured the board and audience that there was no misunderstanding about moving forward with the recommendations made by the Strategic Planning commission.

Dr. Watson also discussed the recent negative publicity about the "roll out" or communications plan for the Strategic Plan. She reported that she had been working with the district's communications director, Ms. Hoffman, and with Myron Jackson of The Design Group. Mr. Jackson has developed a budget, made suggestions for forum sites, and suggested various groups that need to be included in the community feedback sessions.

Mr. Jackson was present to respond to questions and to help clarify the intent of rolling out the communications plan in a timely manner. He reported that the tentative plan included 6-8 individual community forums within a ten-day period. They will encourage a cross-section of the community for participation. Ms. Hoffman stated that it was expected the board would be prepared to vote on the plan in March.

Board members requested a copy of the communications plan and information on the budget. They also asked for a list of the proposed forum sites, constituency groups to be included in the forums, and that the board be given an opportunity to review the site information prior to release to the public. They asked that citizens in each board zone be given an opportunity to participate in the forums. Ms. Curry asked if a survey could be conducted on the public perception of the plan, and Ms. Kohler offered the use of the CTA's subscription to "survey monkey" as a resource to Mr. Jackson and the district.

At the agenda meeting on February 11, 2010, the superintendent presented a certificate of recognition to **Charlotte Cook**. Ms. Cook is the Young Astronaut Specialist at Carver Magnet Elementary, and is one of only 40 teachers in the nation to be awarded a fellowship with the **NASA Endeavor Science Teaching Certificate Project**. Her selection will allow Ms. Cook to participate in online interactive graduate courses with NASA and will allow her to earn graduate credit and a Certificate in STEM education from Teachers College of Columbia University in New York.

Dr. Felicia Hobbs, principal of Gibbs Magnet Elementary, introduced Susan Purvis, Gibbs art teacher, and Kr. Kristin Mann from the UALR History Department. They shared information regarding an exhibit by Gibbs Students on display at the Arkansas Studies Institute Gallery. The students researched the history and background of Judge Mifflin Gibbs, who was a prominent African American citizen of Little Rock for whom the school is named. The official unveiling of the exhibit is at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, February 12 at the Arkansas Studies Institute galleries.

The exofficio representatives to the board were presented with a certificate of appreciation for their service to the board. The student representative was **Elicia Morgan** from **J. A. Fair High School**, and the teacher representative was **LaQuita Bennett** from **Bale Elementary School**.

## **B. Remarks from Citizens**

**Kevin Scribner**, Hall High school parent, spoke on behalf of other parents and students at Hall. He stated, "Nothing is wrong with Hall . . . Hall is not a broken school." One local media outlet had recently placed a negative spin on disciplinary events at the school, and Mr. Scribner stated that "the media should not be allowed to tell the public what is going on at Hall. If you want to know what is going on at Hall, go to Hall." He asked the board to visit the school, and to believe that the faculty and staff at Hall are doing their best for all students at the school.

**Gwendolyn Thompson**, grandmother of a first grader at Romine, addressed the board regarding her grandson's academic and disciplinary problems. She expressed concern regarding her attempts to develop a strategy to assist her grandson.

**Eric McKissick**, Hall High School parent, echoed comments made earlier by Mr. Scribner. He stated that Hall is a community of 1300 students with a proud history and tradition. He expressed sadness at seeing the Hall High name “dragged through the mud.” He expressed confidence that the school administration was working to address the issues, and he stated that there remains a great deal of pride in the school. “There are good kids – excellent students – who are being painted with a broad bad brush.” He expressed support for the principal and teachers and stated that parents at Hall are still committed to excellence.

**Shari McGraw**, also introduced herself as a Hall High school parent and strong supporter. She stated that she had made it a lifelong goal to stress the importance of an excellent education for her children. She felt that excellence was being provided at Hall. She also stated that a television reporter had confronted her at Hall, but didn’t want to hear the good things she had to say. The reporter moved on until she found someone who would speak about the bad things going on. She felt that Hall appears to be the “forgotten school” in the LRSD; however she remains supportive of the faculty and staff.

**Wayne Burt** addressed the board as a member of the strategic planning commission, stating that he felt compelled to come forward as a member of the team because of a recent news article published in the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*. He expressed his initial concerns and reluctance to serve on the commission based on personal past history and experiences in the LRSD. He noted that he had met with and worked with previous superintendents, but that he was impressed by the superintendent and members of the commission. He expressed disbelief and disagreement with the letter reported in the newspaper from the co-chairmen and stated his personal impression that Dr. Watson was fully in favor of the commission’s goals and decisions.

### **C. Little Rock PTA Council**

**Patty Barker**, LR PTA Council, also reported that she had served on the strategic planning commission. She expressed surprise in the comments published in the newspaper, and noted that at the last meeting of the commission, there was unanimous support for the plan as presented by the consultants.

Ms. Barker also commented on the remarks from Hall High School parents, and stated that she was looking forward to working with the parents from Hall through the PTA. She stated “every school in the district should be a flagship school,” and that the PTA would support the parents and the school’s efforts to overcome the recent bad press.

She announced that the Founders’ Day luncheon, which was cancelled due to inclement weather, had been rescheduled for May 6. They will combine the luncheon with the annual spring meeting. Teachers and administrators who were selected for PTA awards will be notified at the next meeting on March 9 at Washington Elementary.

She thanked the district for providing support for the local PTA units through the membership incentive, and noted that the funds are deposited to the schools’ activity funds for use to support PTA activities. Ms. Barker closed by announcing that the statewide PTA convention would be held in Little Rock this year, April 30 – May 1 at the Embassy Suites.

### D. Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association

**Cathy Koehler** recognized the students in attendance and called them “the most important people in the room,” acknowledging that everyone has the best interest of students at heart. She stated that she was aware that board members had been visiting Hall for the past few years, not just since the negative press came to Hall. She noted that the media didn’t print the good news when a student from Hall won the THEA foundation scholarship, and the media doesn’t give air time to positive news. She assured the audience that there are processes in place to address concerns and the administration was not given an opportunity to address the negative reports prior to airing them on television.

Ms. Koehler went on to say that the LRSD is doing what they are supposed to do; they are reporting what is going on and are not trying to hide anything under the rug. She stated that the incident at Hall, where a student was found to be in possession of a gun, was handled in exactly the right and appropriate manner.

She closed by stating that work was underway to address some of the strategies for addressing the recommendations from the strategic plan. Conversations are being held every day, and all involved are willing to get the action plans in place to benefit the students.

### E. Donations of Property

The board was asked to approve the receipt of recent donations to the district. The student ex officio, Elisha Morgan, read the list of donations. Ms. Fox made a motion to approve the donations; Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

#### DONATIONS

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Dodd Elementary	Eight (8) cartons of mixed arts & crafts merchandise valued at approximately \$500.00	Michael’s Store #4819
Parkview Magnet High School	Several items of photography equipment valued at approximately \$1,200.00  Several items of photography equipment valued at approximately \$1,100.00	Jan Bowen  Ben Moody Photographer
Western Hills Elementary	Jenco vibraphone, valued at \$1,600.00 for the music classroom. Donation received in December 2009	Mr. Ed. Green
Woodruff Early Childhood Center	\$200.00 cash to be used to provide incentives and materials for faculty & staff members	Dayspring Behavioral Health Services of AR
LRSD Fine Arts Department	Seventeen copies of “Young Artists at the Rep,” a book of photographs to be distributed to drama teachers. Valued at \$1,020.00	Little Rock Athletic Club

## REORDER OF THE AGENDA

Mr. Carreiro made a motion to reorder the agenda to hear the report and take action on Agenda Item **VIII. A. GAAP Financial Statements and Audit Report for June 30, 2009 and Item VIII. D. Issuance and Delivery of Bonds.** Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously.**

Discussion and action on these two items was conducted at this point in the meeting, but will be reported in the order they were initially placed on the agenda.

## III. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

### A. Remarks from Board Members

**Dr. Mitchell** reported that she had attended a meeting coordinated by the administration and the ViPS mentoring program staff with members of the faith based and other community organizations. This meeting was to seek mentors for students in the district who need contact with positive role models. She encouraged the public to get involved with the students, and reported that training for mentors will be conducted.

Dr. Mitchell had also reported that she had attended a program at the Clinton Library where Parkview students presented a Black History month program. Students in the arts, music and drama department departments at Parkview participated. She had also participated in a day-long workshop on prevention of bullying. She closed by thanking the speakers from Hall High School for their comments and for their willingness to work with the staff at Hall.

**Ms. Fox** thanked the teachers who were still in the schools conducting parent teacher conferences. She announced that this was school counselor appreciation day and that the recognition for paraprofessional's day had been the previous week. She encouraged listeners to be sure and thank these employees for the good work they do in the schools for our kids. She closed by thanking the parents from Hall for attending the meeting and supporting the staff at Hall.

**Mr. Kurrus** also expressed appreciation to the parents from Hall. He relayed a story about a teacher from Hall who had taken the time out of the middle of the day to call a parent just let them know that their student was doing well. He assured listeners that the staff at Hall cares about the kids. He expressed the utmost confidence in the people at Hall to prevail in the lives the kids who are there.

Mr. Kurrus also reported that he was a member of the strategic planning commission and that their work should be judged not on the written plan and not on what is said, but what is done. The board and administration have to take the plan and put it into action. "We have to make it happen."

Mr. Kurrus closed by encouraging attendance at district athletic events. He had been to several basketball games and a state wrestling tournament. He reported that baseball season would start on Monday, and that the student athletes do their very best in athletics and academics. "Our kids do everything they can to be the best that they can be."

**Ms. Curry** reported that she and Dr. Mitchell had attended the CUBE / Federal Relations Networking Conference in DC in January. She stated that 800 districts from across the nation had participated in networking with each other and speaking with congressional representatives and school leaders from across the nation. She closed by saying that “changes are coming and we want to be on the forefront.”

**Mr. Carreiro** made comments regarding the strategic plan. He expressed commitment to doing his best to ensure that we take the plan seriously and promised that he would attend some of the community meetings. He stated that the process would be exciting and would keep the LRSD moving forward; that it would be hard work, but very important and rewarding. He closed by expressing appreciation to the employees in the student registration office. They just completed two weeks of open enrollment, and he had stopped by to see the staff “working like crazy.” He noted that there were long lines, but that they were moving along as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Armstrong** assured the audience that the strategic plan would be implemented, and that he expected the board would be ready to vote on the plan in March. He expressed his belief that the plan was a good thing for the district, and that although we are a little behind on the timeline for the media and communications planning, that the plan would be implemented.

Speaking to comments earlier in the meeting regarding the media reports from Hall High, Mr. Armstrong assured the community that the board and the administration are serious about the climate in the schools, the perception of disciplinary problems, and the safety of our students and staff. He asked for participation from parents, and he encouraged people from the churches and other community groups to become involved in providing mentors and positive guidance for students who may not have everything they need at home. He closed by saying “We have to work together to resolve the issues involved in an urban school district. Students can be motivated to want to learn.”

## **B. Legal Update**

Mr. Kurrus made a motion to suspend the rules to consider a settlement agreement presented by Attorney Eddings; Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

Action was taken at this point in the meeting, but will be reported in the order it was originally placed on the agenda.

Attorney Eddings reminded the board that the hearing in federal court for the Pulaski County Special School District would begin on Monday, March 1. He also reported that the ADE Board had approved a request from E-stem to increase enrollment at the elementary and middle school levels, but not at the high school level.

## **C. Quarterly Report: School Improvement Specialists**

Mr. Glasgow presented information which was summarized from the reports of the school improvement specialists. The report was printed in the board's agenda.

Mr. Glasgow made brief remarks regarding the reports provided by the specialists, noting that the principals in the schools might not like the process of submitting the quarterly reports, but that the requirement provided important information that was very useful in assessing the areas for immediate improvement. He noted that one requirement was to have an assessment wall to track the progress of individual student progress. This provides a highly visible reminder of strengths, weaknesses, and areas in need of emphasis.

Mr. Glasgow reported dramatic improvement in SOAR tests over last years' results, and indicated that there was a strong positive correlation between SOAR and Benchmark tests. The reporting requirements force the school administrators to think about the things they are required to report on and these requirements allow them to see the deficit areas immediately.

He closed by responding that school improvement specialists have developed strong plans for each of the schools and meet regularly to ensure the plans are being followed.

Mr. Kurrus requested a matrix that shows the school improvement status of each of the 28 schools. Mr. Glasgow agreed to provide that information.

#### **D. Safety & Security Report**

Mr. Babbs, Mr. Jones, Mr. Fields, Mr. Broadnax and Dr. Hurley were present to respond to questions regarding the safety and security and disciplinary reports provided in the board's agenda.

Mr. Carreiro asked for information on two previous years of safety & security reporting. It was indicated in the majority of cases that the school administration's recommendations are upheld. It was also noted that there are discrepancies between reports provided by the school resource officers and those provided by police and school administrators. In most cases the discrepancies are due to the differences in codes for school sanctions and the actual charges filed by police officers.

Mr. Armstrong stressed the importance of enforcing all policies districtwide. Ms. Fox agreed, asking staff to assure that all students are treated equally and that we follow due process. Once the board has adopted adequate and appropriate policies, it is up to the administration to be held accountable for following those policies.

There was a brief discussion of the prevention and intervention programs currently used across the district to reduce or eliminate violence in the schools. PRE staff was asked to evaluate those programs to see if they are adequately addressing the concerns. If action is required by the board, the safety and security staff and the hearing officers should bring recommendations through the superintendent to the board for action.

Dr. Watson addressed the extremely difficult process of trying to align district policy and sanctions with criminal offenses and charges issued by the police. For example, if a police officer witnesses a fight it might result in a police report with a criminal or misdemeanor charge of assault or disorderly conduct. The incident wouldn't necessarily fall under a criminal offense under district policy, but merely be considered "fighting." If a resource officer doesn't witness the incident, it's difficult to have them document it as an offense.

*Dr. Daugherty arrived at 7:17 p.m.*

Mr. Kurrus asked that we use the definitions provided in Arkansas statues regarding weapons and those actions that are mandated for reporting under the law to reduce the discrepancies.

Dr. Daugherty suggested working more closely with local police, especially in cases where they interact with students in the community. It would reduce conflicts in the schools if the police would report incidents that might escalate during the school day. It's important to assure students, parents and teachers that policies are being followed and that the administration and board do everything possible to safeguard the children and make our schools safer.

Ms. Kohler addressed the board regarding the district's disciplinary committee and their efforts to ensure that employees are included in the decisions made at the student hearing office. She noted that there are parents on the committee, as well as teachers, principals, and administrators. She invited board members to attend and to witness the process. Dr. Broadnax also invited board members to visit the student hearing office for additional discussion or to witness the process.

Mr. Carreiro and Mr. Armstrong asked for information and reports regarding students being moved to schools at the secondary level outside of their attendance zones. He requested a report on how many students at the high school level are assigned from their attendance zone, and how many are transfers-no-transportation or majority-to-minority transfers. Mr. Armstrong asked to ensure that Hall is not "a dumping ground" and to see where students are being assigned when they return from the alternative sites.

Dr. Watson indicated that she would review the number of suspensions or expulsions which were modified at the student hearing office, if they were returned to their attendance zone schools, and if not where they are being placed. Each offense has to be reviewed individually.

#### **E. Disciplinary Summary Reports, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10**

The disciplinary summary reports were attached to the agenda as requested. Discussion on this topic was included with the previous review and discussion on the safety and security reports.

#### **F. Budget Update**

Mr. Bailey provided a brief update. In addition, he introduced Leroy Harris to provide an update on the federal stimulus funding budget and expenditures. At the time of the meeting, no additional information had been received from the State regarding the application on additional stimulus funding from the federal government.

Mr. Harris reported that funding had been allocated for after school tutoring programs in twenty-two (22) schools, both Title I and non-Title I schools. Interactive White boards, purchased with these funds, are being installed at several schools, with installation complete at Mann.

*The board briefly recessed at 7:52 p.m. and returned at 8:07 p.m.*

## **G. Internal Auditors Report**

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

## **IV. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS**

### **A. Minutes**

Minutes from the regular board meeting held on January 28, 2010 and from a special meeting held on February 11, 2010 were presented for the board's review and approval. Ms. Curry made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

## **V. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

### **A. Grant Proposal – AR Coordinated School Health and Wellness Center Initiative**

The Arkansas Department of Education Coordinated School Health (CSH) and Wellness Center Initiative competitive grants are intended to promote health, wellness, and academic achievement in Arkansas' public schools. School based wellness centers are partnerships created by schools and communities to provide on-site services that promote the health and educational success of students.

The LRSD proposal would place a wellness center at McClellan High school. The three goals detailed in the application include: 1) to implement the CSH model to improve academic achievement, promote school health programs and garner community support through the implementation of a coordinated school health center; 2) establish a school based wellness center; and 3) develop a quality school based mental health program within the wellness center.

Grant funding would be used to employ a wellness center coordinator and a full time registered nurse, to purchase equipment to support the wellness center, and to provide materials and supplies for prevention and early intervention programs.

Margo Bushmiaer, Linda Young and Reginald Merritt were present to respond to questions. Dr. Mitchell moved to approve the submission as presented. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried 6-0**.

## **VI. HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **A. Personnel Changes**

Routine personnel changes were printed in the board's agenda. Mr. Kurrus moved to approve the personnel changes as presented; Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

### **B. Calendar Change**

#### **SUSPENSION OF THE RULES**

Ms. Fox moved to suspend the rules to consider a change to the district's student attendance calendar. Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

Students have missed five days of school due to inclement weather this winter. One day was made up on Monday, February 15, which was scheduled as a professional development day. The administration recommended student attendance on Friday, March 19, which was scheduled as a teacher record day. The remaining three days will be made up at the end of the school year, June 2, 3, and 4, 2010. Dr. Mitchell moved to approve the recommendation. Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

### **C. Negotiated Settlement Agreement**

After approval of a **suspension of the rules**, the agenda was reordered and action on this proposed settlement agreement was taken earlier in the meeting.

Mr. Eddings proposed settlement of a dispute between the LRSD and a former employee. Mr. Kurrus moved approval of the agreement which provided a total settlement in the amount of \$2,000.00. Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

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

### **A. GAAP Financial Statements and Audit Report for June 30, 2009**

Mr. Carreiro served on the district's audit committee and was asked to make comments and to introduce the audit findings. He reported that the new audit firm, Hudson Cisne & Company, had presented the findings to the audit committee and he expressed appreciation to committee members for the time they had devoted to the district. Committee members included: Bob Birch, Alonzo Williams, JoAnn Thomas, Sarah Lenehan, Bob Whitfield and Beverly Richardson.

Mr. Kurrus moved to approve the audit, Ms. Fox seconded the motion.

Corey Moline, representing Hudson Cisne & Company, identified a few "carry over" audit findings which were identified as deficiencies in internal control. At the time of the audit, these deficiencies were in the process of being corrected and were not of serious concern once steps to manage and resolve these issues were implemented.

Mr. Moline reported that the entire condition of the district was listed in the financial statements, and a “clean” opinion was given on the financial statements. With regards to federal programs compliance, Mr. Moline reported that no deficiencies were found.

Mr. Kurrus asked about the desegregation loan on the liability statement, listed at \$5 million, and he asked board members to read *Note 6* of the audit statement regarding the desegregation agreement and funding issues. He also expressed concern regarding the \$23.2 million paid each year in teacher retirement contributions. Mr. Bailey responded to questions.

After discussion, the motion **carried 6-0**. (*Dr. Daugherty was not present at the time of the vote.*)

### **B. Resolution: Adoption of the LRSD Ten-Year Facilities Master Plan**

The Ten-Year Facilities Master Plan is required by the Academic Facilities and Transportation Department of the Arkansas Department of Education. The full report is completed and submitted to the ADE on-line; however a printed copy was provided for review in the board’s conference room. Wayne Adams was available to respond to questions from the board, and he noted that no additional funding is received for the projects included in the report. A resolution approving the submission is required by the ADE and was presented for the board’s consideration. Dr. Mitchell made a motion to approve the Resolution; Ms. Fox seconded the motion, **carried unanimously**.

### **C. Approval of New Futures / Stimulus Project Contract**

#### **SUSPENSION OF THE RULES**

Ms. Curry moved to suspend the rules to consider approval of the contract with New Futures for Youth. Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion.

Ms. Fox and Mr. Carreiro expressed concern regarding the consideration of this issue until more information is received on the receipt of stimulus funding. The proposal was included as part of the district’s stimulus funding application and those funds would be required to pay the amounts required in the contract.

The motion to suspend the rules **failed 3-4**. Mr. Armstrong requested a roll call vote; Dr. Daugherty, Ms. Curry and Dr. Mitchell voted in favor; Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Carreiro, Ms. Fox, and Mr. Kurrus voted no.

Mr. Bailey addressed the question of presenting the issue for a vote. The item was included and approved by the board as part of the original stimulus application. The additional approval from the board was sought in light of the fact that Katherine Mitchell serves as a member of the board of New Futures for Youth.

Ken Richardson also briefly addressed the board regarding the proposal which places intervention specialists at Hamilton Learning Academy. These specialists work directly with students who are most in need of in-school and after school services. The outside social services and the specialists will assist them as they reenter their attendance zone schools. Mr. Richardson reported that New Futures was attempting to develop a model project which would be funded in the future through means other than federal stimulus funds.

## **D. Issuance and Delivery of Bonds**

### **SUSPENSION OF THE RULES**

Mr. Kurrus moved to suspend the rules to consider approval of a Resolution in support of the issuance and delivery of bonds. Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

Mr. Bailey reported that the district would save in excess of \$5 million by refunding these bonds. Cary Smith with Stephens, Inc. was present. It was reported that Crews & Associates had the winning bid at 4.04%. Mr. Kurrus moved approval of the resolution. Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion and it **carried 6-0**. (*Dr. Daugherty was not present at the time of the vote.*)

## **E. Monthly Financial Reports**

The monthly financial reports were provided for the boards review as part of their agenda. Mr. Bailey was present to respond to questions. No action was required.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

APPROVED: 03-18-10

Originals Signed by:  
Charles Armstrong, President  
Jody Carriero, Secretary