



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

**MINUTES
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
August 12, 2010**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held a special meeting on Thursday, August 12, 2010 immediately following the regular agenda meeting. The meeting was held 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
Baker Kurrus
Katherine Mitchell

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mike Daugherty

ALSO PRESENT:

Linda Watson, Superintendent
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Mr. Armstrong called the meeting to order immediately following the regular agenda meeting at 5:37 p.m. Six members of the board were present at roll call, Dr. Daugherty was absent. Also present was the teacher ex officio, Jason Finney from Forest Park Elementary School.

II. Revision to Student Handbook: Possession / Use of Paging Devices, Cellular Phones, and/or Other Electronic Devices

The board was asked to consider and approve a revision to Rule 26A of the student handbook for the 2010-2011 school year. According to Arkansas law, cell phone use during the school day is prohibited; use of cellular phones is disruptive to the learning environment and causes administrative complications when phones have to be confiscated. The recommended changes were highlighted in yellow in an attachment to the board's agenda. These revisions are intended to strengthen the sanctions for possession or use of a cellular phone during the school day.

Dr. Fields was present to report and to respond to questions from the board. He briefly provided statistics on student disciplinary sanctions related to use and possession of cell phones during the 2009-2010 school year. He also reported that attendees at a recent discipline summit were in support of strengthening the disciplinary sanctions to prevent students from repeatedly violating the policy.

Ms. Kohler, president of the Classroom Teachers Association, spoke in favor of the revised policy and stated support from teachers and school staff members.

Board members expressed concerns about the policy revisions presented, and asked for additional editing and revisions prior to voting. Dr. Watson agreed to make additional changes, and the item will be given additional consideration. It will be brought back for a vote at the August 26, 2010 board meeting.

III. Personnel Changes

Routine personnel changes were provided as part of the board's agenda. In addition, assistant principal recommendations were presented for approval:

- Michael Anthony – Hall High School
- Sherry Chambers – Chicot Elementary
- Stephen Fuller – Henderson Middle School
- Dorothy Doolittle – Watson Elementary
- Eric Henderson – Parkview Magnet High School
- Lisa Lollar – Fulbright Elementary
- Clifton Woodley – Dunbar Middle School

In response to questions from the board, Mr. Hartz assured them that all individuals presented for consideration were eligible for the positions they were being recommended to hold.

Mr. Carreiro moved to approve the personnel changes including in the listing and the list of assistant principals as presented. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried 6-0**.

The board recessed at 6:24 p.m. and reconvened at 7:00 p.m.

IV. Employee Hearing

<Employee>, a teacher, was recommended for termination by the building principal. He was represented by Attorney Greg Alagood. Attorney Khayyam Eddings represented the administration, and presented summary information on behalf of the LRSD. At the request of the employee and his attorney, this hearing was closed to the public.

<Employee> was accused of making inappropriate comments to a student, by cell phone text messaging. The student reported the inappropriate messages were sent over the Easter weekend, April 2, 3, and 4th. <Employee> stated that he and his wife were staying at the Embassy Suites hotel that weekend, and that they had seen the student when they went to the RAVE Theater on Friday night.

<Name removed>, the student's mother, stated in her testimony that she was out of town on the weekend the text messages were received. She reported that she was a member of the Arkansas National Guard, and that her daughter had informed her by telephone that she was disturbed by the messages received from <Employee>. The following week <Parent> contacted the principal to report the messages and that <Employee> had invited her daughter to meet him at Embassy Suites by text message.

<Name removed> a teacher, reported that the student had shown her the incoming text messages stored on her cell phone, but had asked her to keep it a secret until she could speak with her mother. The teacher reported to the principal and subsequently provided statements to the district's safety and security office.

The principal stated that she had interviewed <Employee> regarding the allegations of inappropriate communications with the student. <Employee> denied making any inappropriate remarks and stated his only telephone or text messages to the student had been in regard to passes she had given him and his wife to the RAVE movie theater. <Employee> was placed on administrative leave with pay pending the outcome of the investigation.

The student addressed the board, stating that she graduated in the class of 2010, and that she was planning to go away to college. She stated that she was an athlete and that she played volleyball, softball, basketball and ran track. She reported that she had seen <Employee> at the RAVE movie theater and that she had refunded the price of his ticket. She denied seeing his wife on the evening in question and stated that she only refunded the cost of one ticket. She admitted that she had given <Employee> her telephone number so that he could reach her regarding additional movie passes for another of his family members.

Witnesses for <Employee> included a former student and his father <Witness 1 and 2.> They both supported <Employee's> statement that he was at Embassy Suites with his family that weekend. In addition, <Witness 1>, former student, reported in his testimony before the board that it was he who had sent the messages to the student, using <Employee>' telephone. <Witness 1> stated that <Employee> was his mentor, and that he often spent time with him on the weekend. He also reported that he had dated the student making the allegations during his 11th and 12th grade years.

<Witness 3> testified in support of <Employee>. He is currently a coach in another school district. <Witness> stated that <Employee> always went above and beyond to assist students and to have an impact on their futures. He did not believe that the text messages could have been from <Employee>, and stated that he had never witnessed any indication that <Employee> would be inappropriate toward a student.

<Witness 4>, parent of a student athlete, requested an opportunity to address the board on behalf of <Employee>. He echoed comments made by <Witness 3>, and said that the students look up to <Employee> as a mentor.

<Employee> took the stand and reported that he had been teaching for 30 years, and had been with the LRSD for eight years. <Employee> denied sending any of the text messages which were specified in the letter of termination signed by Dr. Watson. He stated that student <Witness 1> had used his telephone on the weekend when the messages were sent. He asked the board to consider his appeal and allow him to return to work.

The board went into closed session at 10:39 p.m. and returned at 10:55 p.m. to report no action was taken. Mr. Kurrus made a motion not to support the recommendation of termination from Dr. Watson. Ms. Curry seconded the motion, and it **carried 4-1-1**, with Mr. Carreiro voting no and Dr. Mitchell abstaining.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

APPROVED: 09-23-10

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