



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

MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
August 26, 2010

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 26, 2010, in the boardroom of the administration building, 810 West Markham Street, 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 5:34 p.m. All members of the board were present at roll call. The teacher representative, Jason Finney from Forest Park Elementary School, was also present. The student did not attend.

II. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

A. Superintendent's Remarks

Dr. Watson reported that she had attended a forum the previous evening where U. S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan spoke in recognition of America's teachers. Mr. Duncan also met with teachers at Central High prior to holding a media event on the steps of Central High School on Thursday morning. Central High was the first stop on a tour recognizing educators across the nation.

B. Partners in Education

At the agenda meeting on August 12, 2010, Debbie Milam presented new school and business partnerships for the board's approval.

- **Wakefield Elementary School**, represented by *Principal Les Taylor* in partnership with **Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church**, represented by *Mary Lewis Dassinger*
- **Henderson Middle School**, in partnership with Little Rock Wastewater Utility, represented by *Joseph Schaffner*

Dr. Mitchell made a motion to approve the partnerships; Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. Donations of Property

The board was asked to approve the receipt of recent donations to the district. Mr. Carreiro read the list of donations and made a motion to accept the donations. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

DONATIONS

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Central High School	\$1,500 cash to be applied toward the purchase of 15 golf bags for the girls' golf program	Arkansas Federal Credit Union
Dunbar Middle School	Western Digital External Hard Drive and Flip Video camera, valued at \$197.00 for ATI participant, Cleaster Davis	AETN
Geyer Springs Elementary	LeapFrog Tag Reading System valued at approximately \$2,000.00 to the early childhood program	Melanie Fox
Pulaski Heights Middle School	Western Digital External Hard Drive and Flip Video camera, valued at \$197.00 for ATI participant, David French	AETN
LRSD Computers for Kids program	66 Pentium 4 computers with monitors valued at approximately \$5,200.00	UALR College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
LRSD Social Studies Department	75 copies of "Capital County: Historical Studies of Pulaski County Arkansas," valued at \$1,875.00	Pulaski County Historical Society

D. Remarks from Citizens

Jerry McClure, an employee of the district's maintenance department, provided a written summary of remarks which he read to the board. He alleged racial discrimination in the maintenance department and stated that he feels he has been treated unfairly and with a lack of respect as a tenured employee.

Latonya Smith addressed the board with concerns regarding the breakfast program at Terry Elementary where her son attends school. She stated that children were being turned away when they didn't arrive on time. She asked for guidelines to be provided to parents so that they know their children won't receive breakfast when they arrive late. She indicated that she had spoken with the assistant principal who advised that exceptions are made for students who arrive on a late school bus.

Gregory Higgins, a bricklayer and cement finisher in the LRSD facilities department, asked the board to look at what is going on in the facilities services department. He alleged that the title of “trade specialist” was a title reserved for white employees on the “other end” of the department. He indicated that he had been promised that he would be brought up to the proper job classification and pay grade.

Ira Nicholson, an employee in the facilities and maintenance department, stated that he had never been considered for promotion or advancement. He indicated that he loved his job, but that black employees in the facilities services department are being treated unfairly. He closed by stating that “every person should be given the opportunity for advancement when qualified.”

John Walker deferred this time to **Joy Springer**. Ms. Springer provided a written list of questions for the board’s consideration and stated she was specifically concerned with the status of creating and maintaining a data warehouse.

Mary Louise Williams reported that she retired from the LRSD in 1991 as an administrator at Hall High School, after serving 42 years as an educator. She indicated that she represented more than 200 people in her remarks and reported that she had sent a letter to board members asking for an extension of Dr. Watson’s contract. She asked the board to consider a contract extension for the superintendent, saying that the job was not one that could be done overnight.

E. Update: Community Truancy Board

Dr. Dennis Burrows reported on behalf of the Community Truancy Board. He indicated that the board had met three times, and a progress update had been provided to all attendees at each meeting. He stated his belief that it would take four or five months to completely develop a method of communicating between the LRSD information services and the IT department of the city of Little Rock.

He addressed concerns from some members of the community that the truancy board would merely speed up the process of criminalizing black males. He denied that allegation, stating that the system would provide a better way to monitor and prevent truancy. It is expected that early intervention and addressing the social issues surrounding truancy will help to reduce or eliminate entry into the criminal justice system.

He stated intent to provide a quarterly report to the board as the process develops and as more input is received from the community stakeholders. Mr. Armstrong serves as the board’s representative and Reginald Merritt serves as the administrative coordinator of the truancy board.

Dr. Mitchell requested additional information as the process is developed for dealing with the students when they are truant. She spoke in support of earlier suggestions to seek a residential charter school to serve students who are habitually truant.

Mr. Armstrong also spoke in support of preventive measures such as hiring social workers and coordinating efforts with the Department of Human Services to identify what can be done to communicate with families to help keep the children in school. He noted that chronic absenteeism and truancy are generally clustered in certain areas of the city. Ms. Curry agreed and asked if school improvement grants could be used to provide social workers to provide support in the schools where students are absent in high numbers.

F. Little Rock PTA Council

Henri Smothers, president of the LR PTA Council asked for support from teachers and parents, encouraging listeners to join their local PTA. The annual PTA Council luncheon meeting is set for Tuesday, September 14 at Roberts Elementary School. Lunch will be served at 11:00 a.m. and the meeting will begin at 11:30.

G. Little Rock Education Association

Cathy Kohler reported that it had been a great summer and a great start of school. She acknowledged the administrators, building level principals, and other school leaders for working together to ensure a successful start up.

Ms. Kohler briefly commented on the media reports on the school tour and sessions with Arne Duncan. However, they failed to report on the most important aspect of the tour was to encourage parents to get involved in their schools, and that their involvement would have a positive outcome for our students.

She closed by thanking Baker Kurrus for his years of service to the LRSD as a member of the board, stating he had "been a true servant with unselfish dedication to every student of the district."

III. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Remarks from Board Members

Mr. Kurrus thanked Ms. Kohler for her comments and stated that he intended to attend the agenda meeting in September, after which time his successor for the Zone 4 position would take his seat on the board. He said that it was the "hardest thing he's ever done to walk away from this job."

Mr. Kurrus also responded to comments and calls he had received from a number of people regarding the construction of a new school in west Little Rock. Callers have been critical about construction of a school which is primarily one race. He acknowledged that fact, stating it was also true of Stephens Elementary when it was constructed. He agreed that every school should be just as nice as the new Roberts School, and that it was the goal and the challenge of the district and board to build a new school whenever there was an opportunity to do so.

Ms. Fox welcomed everyone back to school, saying she witnessed how hard everyone worked to get the doors open and ready for the kids. She commended the employees in the schools, saying they all did a great job to make the start of school successful.

Mr. Carreiro also thanked everyone who worked hard to get the schools ready for kids on the first day of school. He noted some employees were in the schools late at night getting ready for a new school year.

Mr. Carreiro asked the teacher ex officio Mr. Finney why he became a teacher. The Forest Park teacher responded that he entered the profession through the *Teach for America* program and that he started teaching fourth grade in Newark NJ. He taught in New Orleans for several years before coming home to Little Rock. He stated that he loved the classroom. And loved teaching in the gifted program. He noted that his sister also teaches in the district at Meadowcliff Elementary.

Ms. Curry also expressed appreciation for everyone involved in getting ready for the school year. She expressed sympathy for the facilities services employees and promised that she would work hard for everyone.

Dr. Daugherty reported that he visited schools with Dr. Watson on the first day of school, including Roberts Elementary, Henderson Middle, J. A. Fair High School and Woodruff Early Childhood Center. He expressed pleasure in seeing the students enjoying school, engaged, quiet, and listening to their teachers. He expressed appreciation for the teachers and administrators for preparing the classrooms for the students. Dr. Daugherty also stated that he enjoyed meeting Secretary of Education Arne Duncan during his stop in Little Rock.

Dr. Mitchell expressed appreciation to all the principals present at the meeting, stating that she knew they had all worked hard to get ready for school. She expressed a special thank you to the Student Registration Office employees, noting that they had really had a busy few weeks getting everyone assigned to a school.

Mr. Armstrong stated that he was looking forward to doing greater things, especially through the Community Truancy Board. He noted that more of our students are going to jail instead of going to school; more students can't read and the city is building more prison beds to accommodate those who can't get a job. He asked that we continue to reach out and bring in the parents and members of the community to help us get the students to a place where they can achieve their potential.

B. Update: Strategic Plan

Dr. Carl Cohn was present and introduced members of his review team, **Karen Polacheck** and **James Randall**. Ms. Polacheck was a member of the school board in Long Beach, California for 14 years, where she was instrumental in assisting that district to achieve the Broad prize for educational excellence. James Randall is from Harvard, and is an expert in developing strategic plans for urban school districts. It was noted that he had worked with a number of boards to bring about academic improvement.

Dr. Cohn complimented the district for crafting and approving the strategic plan, stating that it was a very positive step in the right direction. He also noted the importance of having broad-based community representation on the planning committee and stated that it was "extraordinary" that LRSD had allocated the resources to get it done.

He reported that he had met individually with board members and had a productive meeting with key administrators. They have begun to divide the plan into thirty-seven specific strategies in the six key areas of the plan. Each strategy has been assigned to a staff member for added accountability and responsibility. These administrators will identify the resources, track evidence of progress, and specify a date when the task is expected to be accomplished.

C. Update: Summer Programs

Dr. Sadie Mitchell provided an update on the elementary summer programs implemented across the district. She stated that the remediation and support efforts during the summer and during the regular school year were very successful, evidenced by improved student achievement at all grade levels across the district. During the summer months, over 5,000 students participated in the programs. Dr. Mitchell introduced the summer school administrators, and recognized them for their efforts to support the students who needed the extra help that summer programs provide.

Dr. Mitchell spoke to the difficulty faced when trying to recruit teachers for summer school, and noted that this summer teachers were hired from the LRSD and from the North Little Rock and Pulaski County Special School Districts. Pre-K summer programs were held at five school sites, an intense literacy program was held at six school sites. Six reading recovery teachers worked with the summer school teachers to provide support and professional development. The ESL summer program served 170 students with two literacy coaches and fifteen teachers. A literacy lab for rising 6th grade students was conducted at Dunbar Middle School.

Although the City of Little Rock reduced their summer recreation program sites, four of these were included in remediation assistance by the provision of curriculum and literacy resources to assist their supervisors.

Karen James provided additional information on the Pre-K summer school program, which was specifically to prepare students to enter kindergarten. The instructors were provided with an accelerated literacy curriculum which was customized to meet the needs of individual students. She provided a statistical comparison between students who attended summer school in 2009 and returned in 2010.

Karen Broadnax addressed the board regarding the summer programs for English language learning (ELL) program. At Chicot Elementary School, teachers worked from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.; an hour of professional development was provided for the teachers before students arrived at 9:00 a.m. The lessons were focused on reading and writing to support student growth in literacy. She noted that on every single grade level the ELL students made significant growth on their end of year tests. .

Renee Dawson reported that she was the literacy lab summer school coordinator. This program focused on literacy interventions to rising sixth graders in comprehension, vocabulary and writing. Elementary and secondary teachers were provided professional development in teaching reading strategies and interventions. She thanked Eunice Thrasher for hosting the summer program at Dunbar. In addition, she expressed appreciation to Lola Perritt who provided science activities and cooking classes that supported the writing objectives.

Vanessa Cleaver reported on the Math Journeys program held at King Elementary School. The intent of Math Journeys is to increase motivation and the desire to learn mathematics, especially for students moving from elementary to middle school.

Mr. Babbs reported briefly on secondary summer programs; Cloverdale and Forest Heights Middle Schools provided remedial support for students who did not score in the proficient level in literacy and math. Each high school housed credit recovery programs via computerized instructional programs, and ESL programs were housed at Hall High School. There were also summer programs at the Adult Education Center.

The board took a brief recess from 7:22 p.m. to 7:40 p.m.

D. Budget Update

Mr. Bailey provided an overview of the annual budget process. A complete copy of the presentation was attached to the board's agenda.

He noted the issues regarding completion of the budget included a review of the school ACSIP plans to identify critical programs and to allocate the appropriate resources. He reported that *Americas Choice* would no longer be funded by the state and that some schools using *Target Teach* showed improved student success. Therefore, building principals want to fund the programs which are most effective with their student populations. ACSIP plan reviews will be completed before final budget recommendations can be made to address the requirements under Smart Accountability.

Mr. Bailey reported that the district was trying to meet the preliminary ACSIP plan deadline of September 16, and he is trying to beat the state deadline for submission of the budget.

Mr. Kurrus commented on intervention programs in general, saying that they are highly unsuccessful in improving overall student achievement. He encouraged systemic change to make districtwide consistent improvements in instruction. He asked how the administrators can still be planning and budgeting additional programs for the current school year. "It is time to make fundamental reforms in the schools and stop depending on the implementation of programs."

Dr. Watson responded to questions and reported that she had been involved in the peer review of the school ACSIP plans which will be used to compile the districtwide ACSIP plan. The districtwide plan will then be submitted to the state. The instructional programs selected by the schools for implementation will provide professional development and support from the instructional coaches and district support staff.

Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Daugherty spoke in favor of allowing teachers to use instructional methods that best meet the needs of their students. Teachers are required to follow a rigorous program delegated by the state and they aren't allowed to be creative in teaching their students.

Leroy Harris was present to respond to questions regarding the budgeting and expenditures of ARRA Stimulus funds. There was some concern expressed by the board regarding the delay in installation of whiteboards.

E. Internal Auditors Report

Mr. Becker's report was provided as part of the board's agenda.

IV. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS

A. Minutes

Minutes from the regular board meeting held on July 22, 2010 were presented, for review and approval. The minutes from a special meeting held on August 12, 2010 were held for consideration at the next meeting. Mr. Carreiro moved to approve the July 22 minutes. Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

V. STUDENT SERVICES

A. Review and Approval of L.O.V.E. Contract

Reginald Merritt was present to review the contract with Let Our Violence End (L.O.V.E.) and requested board approval. Ms. Fox made a motion to approve the contract; Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

Mr. Merritt also reminded the board to attend the upcoming Title 1 Parent Involvement day on Saturday, August 28.

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

Dr. Freddie Fields thanked the board for providing feedback and input on the revisions to the policy on possession of electronic devices. He reported that he had met this week with secondary student body presidents to gain their input and recommendations. He also reported that he had consulted with attorneys to see if some of the handbook procedures on cell phone possession could be incorporated into board policy. Attorneys for the state of Arkansas will be consulted to see if some of the flexibility incorporated in the policy would be legal when the state laws are considered.

Ms. Curry spoke in support of the approval of a stronger policy and encouraged consistent implementation of the policy across the district. Dr. Daugherty echoed Ms. Curry's comments and supported the strengthening of the policy and consistent communication with parents.

Mr. Kurrus discussed the terminology contained in the state law, and asked that we consider identifying what "compelling reasons" would allow a student to have their phone during the school day. According to the law, the compelling reasons have to be specific and a written waiver requested by the parents.

Mr. Carreiro made a motion to approve the policy – with the inclusion of suggested revisions and edits. Mr. Kurrus seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VI. HUMAN RESOURCES

A. Personnel Changes

Routine general personnel changes were printed in the board's agenda. In addition, a recommendation to appoint Katina Ray as the principal of Dodd Elementary School was presented for approval. Dr. Daugherty moved to approve the personnel changes as presented; Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

Ms. Fox reported that she had heard from parents who were concerned that they weren't involved in the process to select their new principal. She asked the administration to ensure that we follow our policies and regulations on nominating and appointing principals and other administrators. Mr. Kurrus agreed and reported that he had also heard from community members who are concerned about the appointment of a building principal without community involvement.

Dr. Watson replied to concerns and stated that she would meet with parents and the school PTA to explain the reasons for making the appointment so quickly. Dr. Daugherty asked that she set a meeting with parents, teachers, and others in the community to introduce Ms. Ray and to ease their concerns about the appointment.

Dr. Watson introduced Clausey Myton who is serving as interim principal at J. A. Fair High School.

VII. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

A. Proposed Bond Refunding

Mr. Bailey presented a recommendation to authorize the refunding of the district's outstanding bond issues to produce debt service savings. In order to accomplish the refunding, an application would be filed with the State Board of Education. Upon approval, Stephens, Inc. would proceed to offer the bonds for sale by competitive bid.

The administration asked the LRSD Board of Directors to approve a resolution authorizing Stephens Inc. to file an application with the State Board of Education. Also, the resolution authorizes Stephens Inc., upon approval of the application, to submit a competitive bid in connection with the public sale of the bonds.

Mr. Carreiro made a motion to approve the resolution; Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**. Mr. Kurrus noted that if the bonds were paid off early, the LRSD would also realize another significant savings.

B. 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 9:22 p.m.

APPROVED: 09-23-10

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