



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

**MINUTES  
REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
December 16, 2010**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 16, 2010, in the boardroom of the administration building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Melanie Fox presided.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Melanie Fox  
Jody Carreiro  
Michael Nellums  
Greg Adams  
Charles Armstrong  
Dianne Curry  
Katherine Mitchell

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Linda Watson, Superintendent  
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

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

Prior to the call to order, the *Voices Without Borders* choir performed holiday tunes under the direction of I. J. Routen. Music teachers Boyce Pearson from Dodd Elementary and Sarah Vanlaan from Wakefield Elementary were also present.

Ms. Fox called the meeting to order at 5:42 p.m. Six members of the board were present at roll call; Ms. Curry arrived at 6:00 p.m. Also present were the ex officio representatives for the month of December, Jackson Edwards, student at Central High School and Holcomb Mosley, teacher at Gibbs.

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

**A. Superintendent's Remarks**

Dr. Watson displayed a copy of *School and University* magazine where Roberts Elementary was featured for innovative school design.

At the agenda meeting on December 9, graduates of the LRSD Aspiring Leaders Institute were introduced and recognized. Dr. Lloyd Sain coordinates the Institute which prepares emergent leaders to be principals and assistant principals in our schools. The program goes beyond traditional university coursework and provides in-depth, practical examination of key instructional skills, board policy, and the school budget process.

The Institute is an 18-month program that meets three times per month for 4 hours each night. Graduates of Cohort II were introduced: *Stephanie England, Darnell Bell, Emma Nowden, Keith McGee, Clausey Myton, Ricky Woole, Marie Boone, Brent Mitchell, Lori Brown, Jeremy Owoh, Earl Smith, Linda Davis, Dr. Sharon Cauley, Connie Green, Kelan Watson, Ellean Cleveland, and Connie Jackson*

Ex officio representatives for the month of December were given a certification of appreciation for their month of service: *Jackson Edwards*, student at **Central High School**; and *Holcomb Mosley*, teacher at **Gibbs Elementary School**.

## **B. Remarks from Citizens**

**Teresa Gordon**, Vice President of the L.R. Education Association, introduced herself as a parent of three students in the LRSD. She expressed concern about recent decisions made by the board, fearing that some were not in the best interest of the students. She stated belief that there was no evidence of wrongdoing by the superintendent, and she asked that the reasons for Dr. Watson's dismissal be made public. She stated that Dr. Watson would waive her right to privacy in order to make the reasons for her early release public. She asked the board to reverse their decision and to renew Dr. Watson's contract. She also asked to see the evaluation instrument used for the superintendent and for the board to visit with the people in the schools to see what they believe is in their best interest.

**Anika Whitfield**, a graduate of Hall High School, addressed the board on behalf of parents and children in the district and asked the board to "correct a problem." She stated disagreement with the decision to buy out the remainder of Dr. Watson's contract and asked the board to reverse their decision and correct the community's "revolving door" perception. She asked the board to discontinue their search for an interim superintendent and to allow Dr. Watson to complete the remainder of her contract.

**Will Dunn** introduced himself as a 16 year employee of the LRSD. He expressed concern about the early termination of the superintendent's contract and asked newly elected board members why they would support the buyout without having personal knowledge or evidence that it was in the best interest of the district. He asked the board to establish a climate where teachers and board members come to the table to make decisions based on mutual agreement.

**Robert Whitfield** yielded his time to Dr. Whitfield who continued her previous remarks by sharing a personal story about a conversation with one of her patients. She was asked to reflect on the differences between school now and school when she was a student. She expressed disappointment that many of the same problems and issues continue and stated concern that members of the community seem to be left out of the process. She expressed disappointment in the politics amongst the board and expressed hope that the infighting and personal agendas would be set aside to do what is best for the children in Little Rock.

## **C. Partners in Education**

Debbie Milam was present at the agenda meeting on December 9, to recommend one new school / business partnership within the LRSD.

**Cameron Valves & Measurement**, in partnership with **McClellan Magnet High School** represented by *Principal Marvin Burton*

Mr. Armstrong made a motion to approve the partnership. Mr. Carreiro seconded, and the motion **carried unanimously**.

#### **D. Update: Volunteers in Public Schools**

Dr. Mitchell reported her attendance at this week's ViPS board meeting. She stated that there were some new volunteer activities in the planning stages and that Ms. Milam would be making an announcement within a few weeks.

#### **E. Donations of Property**

The board was asked to approve the receipt of recent donations to the district. Student ex officio Jackson Edwards read the list of donations. Ms. Curry made a motion to approve the donations; Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

#### **DONATIONS**

<b>SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>DONOR</b>
Central High School	Upgrades to furniture for the first floor teacher's lounge valued at \$1,039.85	Dr. & Mrs. Conley
Western Hills Elementary	Vito Reso-tone clarinet, valued at \$120.00 to the music classroom	Mr. & Mrs. Henry Buehling

#### **F. Little Rock PTA Council**

**Henri Smothers**, PTA Council president, opened with a quote - - "Do the right thing even when no one is looking." She reported that the PTA was celebrating small victories in that school PTA membership numbers were up. The next PTA Council Meeting will be held at Forest Heights Middle School on Tuesday, January 11, 2011.

#### **G. Little Rock Education Association**

**Cathy Kohler** reported that union membership had increased to an all time record. She discussed recent information indicating projected state and local revenue increases for this year over the previous school year and provided written documentation for the board's review. She discussed the cost of providing salary and benefits increases across the board, noting that each 1% raise costs approximately \$1.7 million. She asked the board to operate with transparency and to negotiate in good faith to provide salary increases and fully funded insurance benefits to all employees and additional bonuses to the classroom teachers.

### **III. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

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

**Mr. Adams** reported that he had heard from the community that there was a sense of fatalism and hopelessness in the LRSD. He offered his viewpoint, that this is a new place in history and an opportunity to take huge steps forward within the city and within the LRSD.

He noted the approval of the Strategic Plan and the board's intent to take it very seriously. The Plan will allow the district to move ahead with energy and passion knowing the strengths and areas which need improvement. He expressed optimism and hope that 2011 would be a watershed year to build respectful cooperation at every level of the district.

**Dr. Mitchell** commended the merit scholars who were honored at a reception at Little Rock City Hall this week. She also praised the choir from Dunbar Middle School, which performed in the lobby of the Peabody during the ASBA conference. She also commended the J. A. Fair Choir which performed at the scholars reception at City Hall. She thanked the choir directors for making their students available for these public performances.

**Holcomb Mosley**, teacher ex officio from Gibbs Magnet school acknowledged comments from Mr. Adams and agreed there was a problem of perception in the public right now. She stated that she has faith that the perceptions will improve when the public has the information it needs to draw their own conclusions. The teachers in the school are seeing positives, but the general public doesn't always have access to all the positives.

**Mr. Armstrong** stated that the way to improve the district and the city is to have total community involvement. The children are our future and our only hope for tomorrow, and he asked for everyone to work together to improve the perceptions in the community. He closed by wishing the audience a happy holiday.

**Mr. Carreiro** noted that Friday would be the last day of final exams in the high schools. He complimented the employees who worked long hours to repair J. A. Fair, noting that the teachers would be moving back into their classrooms over the Christmas break so that classes can begin in the repaired wing after the holidays. He wished the audience a Merry Christmas and happy New Year!

**Ms. Fox** simply wished the listeners a happy holiday season.

## **B. Update: Strategic Plan**

**Dr. Carl Cohn** was present to provide an update on the progress of the strategic plan. He reported optimism for the Strategic Plan and optimism for the Little Rock School District. He reported that he travels to many urban districts across the country, and Little Rock has many resources and supporters that others don't have.

The Strategic Plan will place a laser-like focus on student performance and achievement, with six key components. The board and administration will set goals and put into action the appropriate steps to meet the goals. It was Dr. Cohn's opinion that the LRSD has great potential to move toward excellence in student performance. He noted the importance of keeping in mind that implementation will take three or four months, and that beginning the process now will allow the district to ramp up student performance in a systematic and measured way.

Dr. Cohn introduced **James Randle** who is part of the Harvard Superintendent's program. He has assisted school districts across the country to implement their strategic plans. Dr. Randle provided a brief update on the implementation of the strategic plan using a PowerPoint presentation. He complimented the community of Little Rock for being aggressively involved in improving student achievement.

Mr. Carreiro asked Dr. Cohn and Mr. Randle to meet with Mr. Bailey to determine if progress is being made on the implementation of the data dashboard. He also requested information on AP and pre-AP enrollment, whether there has been an increase in participation. Dr. Watson reported that the information wasn't available at this time but that she had requested the report.

### **C. Update: Middle School Task Force**

Mr. Babbs provided a brief report of the results of the committee's recent meeting. He acknowledged that the scope of their review should be broader and principals will be involved during January in developing information that will be used to focus the Middle School Task Force in developing their goals and plans of action. They are also planning a districtwide middle school survey to gain additional insight to perceptions and views of a wider range of parents and community members.

The task force has met seven or eight times, beginning in 2007. They have set priorities based on concerns and issues expressed by parents and community members. It was noted that Forest Heights has the newest middle school facility in the LRSD. Reconstitution of the staff was considered last school year, but it was decided that was not an option at the time.

Mr. Carreiro, who serves as the board's representative on the Middle School Task Force, spoke to the fact that the LRSD loses many students at the middle school level. His hope is that the committee will be able to develop strategies to break that cycle and focus on the middle schools to address the physical needs as well as perceptions about LRSD. He reported that a group of volunteers, parents, and PTA members are working within two or three west and northwest elementary schools to encourage them to come together to Forest Heights for middle school. He encouraged them and asked the public to help keep the lines of communication open and to consider the LRSD before they make their decisions in January.

Mr. Adams reported that his son attends Forest Heights Middle School and he encouraged parents to seriously consider Forest Heights when making their middle school decision. He reported that improvements had been made every year they have been there, and it is his belief that his son will be very well-prepared for high school because of the education he is receiving now at Forest Heights.

Mr. Adams encouraged more aggressive publicity so that the public will be aware that efforts being made to improve the middle level program across the district. Ms. Curry requested a copy of the membership of the Middle School Task Force.

### **D. Internal Auditors Report**

Mr. Becker's report was provided as part of the board's agenda. There were no additional questions or requests.

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

##### **A. Minutes**

Minutes from the regular board meeting held on November 18 and from special meetings held on December 1 and December 9 were presented for review and approval. Mr. Armstrong made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

#### **V. HUMAN RESOURCES**

##### **A. Personnel Changes**

Routine general personnel changes were printed in the board's agenda. Dr. Mitchell made a motion to approve the recommendations. Ms. Curry seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

#### **VI. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES**

##### **A. Breakfast in the Classroom / Universal Breakfast Program**

The board of directors was asked to approve implementation of the Breakfast in the Classroom / Universal Breakfast program at fifteen LRSD schools. Lilly Bouie provided information at the December agenda meeting and responded to questions from the board.

Implementation will provide a nutritional breakfast, free of charge, to every student in the schools selected for the pilot program. The LRSD will incur some cost, including labor, equipment and supplies. A grant from collaboration between the National Association of Elementary School Principals Foundation, the National Education Association Health Information Network, the Food Research and Action Center, and the School Nutrition Foundation will fund initial expenses.

Dr. Mitchell moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding as presented. Mr. Adams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

##### **C. Monthly Financial Reports**

The monthly reports were provided as part of the board's agenda.

##### **D. Budget Update**

Mr. Bailey's comments were directed toward dispelling some of the comments earlier in the meeting suggesting that there is an unlimited amount of money in the LRSD budget. He cautioned the board to keep in mind that much of the district's funding is allocated for a specific purpose. These designated funds are earmarked and must be spent as intended by the funding source or governmental entity.

Regarding the potential for additional federal dollars, these funds would only be available for bonuses for classroom teachers and school-based classroom personnel and would have to be spent by September 30, 2012. Under Arkansas law, if bonuses are provided to one group of certified personnel, all certified staff would receive a bonus. The additional bonuses would have to come from the operating budget. Negotiations are continuing with the LREA on health care and other benefits.

Dr. Watson suggested the possibility that some of the coaches and instructional staff who were hired with stimulus funds on a limited contract might have their contracts extended for another year using these additional federal dollars.

Mr. Bailey reported that strategies had been implemented to keep the LRSD within the constraints of the budget. Included in these efforts were increased documentation for new requests for budgetary expenditures, a reduction in out-of-state travel, and the requirement of direct deposit for payroll. There is also increased "bargain shopping" for items that can be purchased for less than through the state contract. From a human resources aspect, positions are monitored and are not being filled if they aren't critical and justified. Overtime is being monitored closely to ensure that there aren't overpayments for work that should be done during the regular work day.

He also reported that the annual audit was coming along well, with no major findings reported. The audit should be ready for reporting to the board in January.

Additional notes included:

- White boards are being installed in some of the non-core classrooms.
- The RFP is open for data report and assessment systems to assist with program evaluation.
- The RFP has been prepared for the data warehouse / dashboard.
- Computer Services staff is working with tagging student data for implementing the data warehouse.
- Upgrades to SIMS AS400 systems are being installed.
- The employee portal is expected to open for staff use in January, hopefully before the W-2's are issued.

Mr. Carreiro questioned the status of whiteboard installation, and Mr. Bailey reported that Hall would be the last school due to the continued work on the roof and waterproofing. Parkview and Fulbright should be completed during the winter holiday.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS & REMINDERS**

Dr. Watson reminded the audience that tomorrow would be the last school day of the year. Teachers return on January 3, teacher workday. Students return on January 4. Happy holidays!

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Carreiro made a motion to convene an executive session to discuss the appointment of an interim superintendent. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. The board returned at 8:35 p.m. and reported no action was taken.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

APPROVED: 01-27-11

Originals Signed by:  
Melanie Fox, President  
Michael Nellums, Secretary