

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

**MINUTES  
REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
April 26, 2007**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 26, 2007, in the Boardroom of the Administration Building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Katherine Mitchell presided.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Katherine Mitchell  
Charles Armstrong  
Melanie Fox  
Larry Berkley  
Dianne Curry  
Robert M. Daugherty  
Baker Kurrus

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Roy G. Brooks, Superintendent of Schools  
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

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

Dr. Mitchell called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. Six members of the Board were present at roll call; Dr. Daugherty arrived at 5:35 p.m. Ex officio representatives for the month of April were also present: **Cayla Gerton**, student from Hall High School; and **Donna Corrothers**, teacher from Otter Creek Elementary School.

Dr. Mitchell welcomed members of the audience and asked Dr. Brooks to proceed with the citations and recognitions.

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

**A. Superintendent's Citations & Commendations**

Dr. Brooks opened by expressing appreciation to Debbie Milam and other members of the ViPS staff for the successful "*Evening for the Stars*" celebration on Tuesday, April 24, 2007. All district partners and volunteers were recognized and honored at this annual ceremony.

**Central Arkansas Regional Science Fair** winners were announced and recognized for their achievements. Dr. Brooks introduced *Katie Parsons*, Central High Science teacher, who assisted in announcing the winners. The winners in the Senior Division are listed here by category:

Team Projects (all from Central High School)

- 2<sup>nd</sup> place - Farhan Syed, Russel Viegas and Melody Chang
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Charlie Meyers and Miles McCullough
- 4<sup>th</sup> place - Danielle Napolitano and Elaine Zhou

Biochemistry (all from Central High School)

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Mehak Gupta
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place - Hamza Arshad
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Theresa Edattukaren
- Honorable Mention - Emily Woodell

Botany

- 2<sup>nd</sup> place - Emily Wheeler (Central High School)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Lyndsey Elliott (Hall High School)

Behavioral Science (all from Central High School)

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Sarah Stanger
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place went to Tara Sheffer
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place went to Aleena Shakir
- Honorable Mention - David Robles

Chemistry (all from Central High School)

- 2<sup>nd</sup> place - Safia Nawaz ; also 2<sup>nd</sup> place overall winner
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Siteng Ma
- Honorable Mention - Megan Dozier

Computer Science

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Eric Stewart (Parkview)

Engineering (both from Central High)

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Hannah Lintag; also 4<sup>th</sup> place overall winner
- Honorable Mention - Rachel Borne

Earth Science (all from Central High)

- 2<sup>nd</sup> place - Thamoda Rodrigo
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Christina Cole
- Honorable Mention - Alyssa Evans

Environmental Science (all from Central High)

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Andrew Collins' also 3<sup>rd</sup> place overall winner
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place - Ben Williamson
- Honorable Mention - Andrew Finne and Robin Miller

Mathematics (both from Central High)

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Clara Bailin; also overall science fair winner
- Honorable Mention - Myriah Downs

Medicine & Health (all from Central)

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Lauren Holt
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Malan Kern
- Honorable Mention - Quinton Cohen

Microbiology (both from Central)

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Sai Desikan
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Amanda Weir

Physics

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Yeqian Xu (Central)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Brad Birge (Parkview)
- Honorable Mention - Mackie O'Hara (Central)

Zoology (both from Central)

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Rachel Fowler
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Markie Newman

Science Fair winners in the Junior Division included:

Biochemistry

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Intisar Islam (Central)
- Honorable Mention - Sarah Bailin (Mann)

Botany

- Honorable Mention - John Gann (Dunbar)

Behavioral Science

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Sean Alexander (Dunbar)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place - Adil Khan (Mann)

Chemistry

- Honorable Mention - Walter Bass (Forest Park)

Computer Science

- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Megan Barker (Dunbar)

Engineering

- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Timothy Drennan (Central)

Earth Science

- 2<sup>nd</sup> place - Alex Howell (Dunbar)

Environmental Science

- 2<sup>nd</sup> place - Chris Kelly (Mann)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Thomas Spradley (Dunbar)

Medicine & Health

- 2<sup>nd</sup> place - Grace Waddell (Central)

Microbiology

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - Sana Khan (Mann)
- Honorable Mention - Imran Mumtaz (Mann)
- Ashton Pickell (Forest Park)

Physics (both from Dunbar)

- 2<sup>nd</sup> place - Chris Westfall
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Joseph Dobson

The teacher volunteers for the Central Arkansas Regional Science Fair were also recognized:

- Jane Meadows and Beverly Smiley (Hall High School)
- Margaret Wang and Wendy Welch (Forest Heights Middle School)
- Stephanie Jones and Jamie McKinney (Mann Magnet Middle School)
- Kristy Kidd (Dunbar Magnet Middle School)
- Melissa Donham, Katie Parson, Joy Thompson, Kim Burleson and Annice Steadman (Central High School)

The superintendent recognized thirty-five LRSD students who were recently selected to participate in the Duke University Talent Identification Program. Students are selected based on the results of taking the ACT or SAT college entrance test.

- **Jesse Mellor** from Dunbar Magnet Middle School was recognized at a special Grand Ceremony at Duke University for scoring in the top 2 to 3 percent of all students across the nation. Others who will be recognized at the State Recognition Ceremony to be held at UALR include:
  - Taylor Bolls, Autumn Brown, Charles Budney, Kathleen Conley, Daniel Breen, Daniel Halford, Rebekah Hall, Felicia Headley, Emily Hill, Mary Catherine Martin, Michael McMurray, Peyton Phelps, Andrew San Juan, Savannah Slape, Rhett Smith, Jonathan Spradley, Samuel Thoma, Christopher Westfall and Brittany Wood (all from Dunbar Magnet Middle School)
  - Darius Griffith (Forest Heights Middle School)
  - Jens Perez (Mabelvale Magnet Middle School)
  - Erin Davis (Henderson Magnet Middle School)
  - Sarah Bailin, Kaylee Harper, Deepa Manjanatha, Kerry Richmond and Bryan Seel (Mann Magnet Middle School)
  - Liston Barber, Mary Barker, Rebecca Berry, William Finkelstein, Shanshan Hu, Anne Martin and Emily Miller (Pulaski Heights Middle School)

**Dr. Linda Watson** recognized members of the Superintendent's Student Cabinet who were unable to attend the March board meeting. Certificates of appreciation were provided to these students.

Central High School drama students, **Lauren McClendon, Michael Scott, Ross Weems** and **Hannah Wood** were congratulated for being selected to attend the All-State Drama competitions. Central students took 1<sup>st</sup> place for Troupe Commercial and a Superior Rating for its play "Juvie." In addition, other Central High students who received awards at the Arkansas Chapter of Educational Theatre Association's 2007 Thespian Festival included:

- Brooke Culbertson, 1<sup>st</sup> place, Solo Acting
- Jessica Young and Alexandria Smith, 3<sup>rd</sup> place, Duet Acting
- Jeremiah Smith and Brooke Culbertson, 1<sup>st</sup> place, Duet Pantomime
- Lauren McClendon, 2<sup>nd</sup> place, Solo Musical Theatre, and
- Ross Weems, 1<sup>st</sup> place, Duet Improvisation.

The drama teachers from Central High were also recognized: **Melinda Beith, Kimberly Dade** and **Kathleen Holladay**.

**Vicki Gonterman**, International Studies Specialist at Gibbs Magnet Elementary, was recently named the 2007 Phyllis Layton Perry Teacher of the Year by the National Council for International Visitors. She received recognition at the annual conference of the National Council for International Visitors in Washington, DC, in February.

Dr. Brooks recognized Principal **Ann Blaylock**, Assistant Principal **Connie Green**, teachers **Jeff Smith**, **Lenny Bryan**, **Fran Moseley**, and **Randy Gullett**, and students **Monique Harris** and **Yasmine Smith**, all from Mabelvale Magnet Middle School. This group was selected to present at the "Breaking Ranks 2007 Urban Secondary School Showcase." It was noted that Mabelvale was the only school from the South to participate.

The Superintendent's Quality Service Award was presented to **Jim Holloway**, Construction Manager in the Maintenance & Operations Department. Jim was nominated by Mary Menking, principal at Williams Magnet Elementary for his enthusiasm and professionalism in working with school principals, faculty and staff.

The Superintendent announced that **Freddie Fields** was recently selected as the Administrator of the Year by the Arkansas PTA. Mr. Fields was present and received a citation in recognition of his dedication to the LRSD and to the students of Cloverdale Magnet Middle School.

The final citations were presented to the ex officio representatives for the month of April, student **Cayla Gerton** from Hall High School and teacher **Donna Corrothers** from Otter Creek Elementary School.

## **B. Partners in Education**

**Debbie Milam** presented two new partnerships for the board's review and approval:

**Mabelvale Elementary**, represented by *Darian Smith* and *Debbie Porterfield*, partnering with **Southwest Regional Medical Center**, represented by *Adam Siegler*

**Fulbright Elementary**, represented by *Deborah Mitchell* and *Cheryl Pride*, partnering with **Wild Oats**, represented by *Charlotte Hall*

In addition to these partnerships, **Charles Stewart** and **Sara Solida**, representing **Regions Bank**, made a presentation of copies of civil rights literature books to all elementary schools in the district in recognition of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the integration of Central High School. The books were *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges; *Rosa* by Nikki Giovanni, and Toni Morrison's *Remember: the Journey to School Integration*. **Barbara Williams**, the district's coordinator of Library Services, accepted the books on behalf of the district. Each board member also received a copy of the books.

Mr. Berkley moved to accept the new partnerships; Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

### **C. Remarks from Citizens**

**Robin Armstrong**, past board member and former president of the board addressed the district's current public controversies, stating that she could relate to the current board's problems, calling it "history repeating itself." She expressed hope that previous mistakes would not be repeated and she reminded the board that "split votes" don't do anything good for the community. She expressed regret that she had served at a time when the board "should have listened better to the community." She challenged John Walker and CTA representatives to come to the table and to work with the district to bring the public back into the public schools.

**Joy Springer** addressed the board, offering a reminder that their purpose was to ensure the education of all children in the LRSD. She challenged the board to focus on the provision of the *Covenant for the Future* that states the LRSD shall assess academic programs to determine the effectiveness on improving the success of African American students. By that Covenant, the district is to modify or replace programs that do not improve academic achievement of African American students. Ms. Springer asked the superintendent and district administrators to work with the PRE department. She challenged the board to ask questions of PRE to determine if the data warehouse has the information needed by the evaluators to effectively monitor student achievement.

**Debbie Goss**, first grade teacher, addressed the board regarding the early childhood program at Rockefeller Elementary School. She expressed concern that the student assignment process would no longer allow students who attend the early childhood program to be "grandfathered" into the Pre-K through fifth grade program at Rockefeller. She noted that Rockefeller had been able to maintain racial balance by allowing students from the infant through three year old program to remain through fifth grade if they so desired. The program served to attract families who would remain after the pre-school program; however the district's return to neighborhood schools no longer allowed those families to remain at Rockefeller. She asked the board to make an exception at Rockefeller to allow the early childhood students to remain through the fifth grade.

**Bob Powers** introduced himself as the developer of *LRSDparents.org*. He reported that the website was started as a way to provide parents and others in the community an opportunity to access facts about the district in order to dispel rumors, perceptions, and other information not based on fact. Mr. Powers noted that the website isn't a blog and that the information provided at the site is based on factual documents. He asked board members to consider why they ran for the school board and reminded them that service on the board should be considered an honor. He acknowledged the statement of one board member that board service is "an unpaid thankless job." He closed by reminding the board that there had been a lack of factual knowledge and he asked the board to deal with facts instead of with perceptions when making their decisions.

**Teresa Gray** addressed the board, stating that she had made a commitment to the public schools after moving to Little Rock from Sherwood. She organized the group LR Mothers for Progress in order to provide a voice for parents who wanted to know about decisions made by the board after there was an attempt to call a special board meeting during spring break when some board members were out of town and when many parents were on vacation. She reminded the board that parents and children are the customers of the district, and she urged the board to consider Dr. Brooks' offer to continue working with the board and the community by scheduling time to listen to the citizen concerns.

**Robert Rolling** addressed the concerns expressed earlier in the meeting by Ms. Goss. He reported that he had two sons, ages two and five, at Rockefeller. He expressed a desire to have his sons remain at Rockefeller for the remainder of their elementary years. He reported that there were other parents who would like for their children to remain at Rockefeller through the fifth grade and that these parents had worked hard to become actively involved in the school by developing relationships with the faculty members and staff. He asked the board to make an exception to the neighborhood school rule at Rockefeller and to allow the children who attend the early childhood center to remain through their fifth grade year.

**Bob Riley** introduced himself as a west Little Rock parent and presented a petition of signatures urging the board to remain committed to the site selected for construction of the west Little Rock school. He asked the board to act now in order to attract west Little Rock families back to the LRSD from the private schools in west Little Rock. He commended the operations at Terry and Fulbright, stating that even though they are overcrowded they are still not "getting everything they want or need."

**J. P. Francoeur** addressed the board regarding the decision to eliminate the "grandfathering assignment system" at Rockefeller. He reported that he had two children at Rockefeller and that he was attracted to the school for its diversity and its quality educational programs. He noted that the school is located in a socio-economically depressed area, but that parents had supported the school because of the fact that they could stay through the fifth grade. The school attracts families that don't live in the area because of the high quality education and committed staff.

**Leigh Scanlon**, first grade teacher at Forest Park, spoke in support of her school where she stated the focus is "on children, on best practices, and on customer service." She stated belief in the effectiveness of the curriculum maps to assist the teachers with lesson plans which focus on student achievement, especially when working with students who come to Forest Park mid-year from other schools across the district. She discussed planning sessions with the instructional coach, professional development in faculty meetings, and utilization of the resources available. Ms. Scanlon stated that everyone works together to ensure student success and she encouraged the board to focus on the children and to assess themselves and their actions. She asked: "Are you effective?"

**Traci Hogue** expressed excitement about the west Little Rock school property proposal on the board's agenda, and she encouraged the board to vote in favor of the recommendation. She addressed the conditions at Fulbright and Terry where they add portable buildings every year to accommodate student growth. She reminded the board that restrooms, water fountains and cafeteria space are still insufficient for the number of students who are enrolled at these schools. She asked the board to continue to consider the kindergarten through eighth grade configuration for the new school and she encouraged board members to strive together to make decisions in the best interest of the students.

**Andre Guerrero** addressed the issue of using publicly accessible data to determine student achievement. He referred to the comments made earlier by speaker Robin Armstrong, saying that she was perceptive in noting that there are "no winners and too many losers in the current situation." He stated that he is convinced that the district is losing kids because of poor academic performance and that consistent achievement is not evident across the district.

**Keith Broach** expressed confidence in the ability to improve student achievement and test scores, and he warned that it was “risky” to make decisions based on emotions when there isn’t evidence to support the decisions. He expressed support for the new west Little Rock school and support for Superintendent Brooks. He commented on the available resources of public information which provides that there is a specific formula used to allocate funding for schools, noting that it was not true that west Little Rock schools get more money and get everything they need while other schools are left out. He asked the board to address issues of leadership by following policy and to keep their emotions in check in order to make decisions based on fact.

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

**Katherine Wright Knight** congratulated students, teachers and parents on the citations, commendations and recognitions presented earlier in the meeting. She stated pleasure in that there is a showing of public support for student achievement in academics, drama, and the arts. She also stated that it was important to recognize that teachers make a difference and that teachers impact the changes made in the schools. She assured the board that teachers would continue to work with the administration and the board to ensure that all students have a chance to be successful in their educational career.

Ms. Knight continued by stating that the CTA had been consistent in their efforts to form partnerships and build collaboration and support for the district. She stated that the union wants to work with the school district but that the administration and the board must take them up on the offer of assistance. In addition, she reported that the CTA had taken the lead in efforts to increase the numbers of nationally board certified teachers in the district, going from 2 to 60 over the past five years.

She closed by reporting that she had met with Watson teachers and would be meeting with Chicot teachers to address issues regarding their reassignments for the 2007-08 school year. She asked the district to postpone the selection of staff until more openings were known and available. She reported that there were only seventeen openings available at the present time outside of Chicot and Watson and she was concerned that teachers would be forced to make decisions now that would be subject to change prior to the start of school next year.

#### **E. PTA Council**

**Bernadette Turner** thanked the PTA and staff at Parkview for hosting the monthly PTA Council meeting, reporting that representatives of the Little Rock police department had attended to provide safety tips and information. She invited the board to attend the spring luncheon at St. John Baptist Church on May 8<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Turner reported that Ginny Kurrus had been elected as the State PTA president and that Priscilla Alexander had been elected to serve as vice president of the central region.

Ms. Turner challenged parents to become involved with their children and to become connected with other children who might not have an actively involved adult. She offered encouragement and support regarding the current controversial issues between the board and the superintendent, noting that although the PTA Council could not take a public stand on the issues, they would remain focused on the mission of the PTA - - to support and speak on behalf of the students and the schools.

Ms. Turner closed by asking that all parties act in an orderly and polite manner, reminding the board that “our children watch us, and they do as we do. . . . We are the role models for our children.” Ms. Turner announced that the PTA Council would sponsor a public forum to listen to parents and members of the community on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. The location for the forum has not been determined, but board members will receive notice prior to that time.

### III. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

#### A. Remarks from Board Members

**Mr. Kurrus** reported that he had been turning down interviews regarding the current controversies. He had spoken to a reporter from the New York Times, who was acting on the belief that the issue was about race. Mr. Kurrus expressed concern and noted that the issue is “deeper than that.” He stated that we all are passionate about these issues but that “we are all in this together.” He thanked the citizens who spoke earlier in the agenda and expressed appreciation for their demonstration that they care about what goes on in the LRSD. He urged them not to give up, not to give in, but to pitch in. He congratulated the students who were recognized earlier and reminded the board that “every child needs us.” “God created one world because he wanted to see if we can all live together in this world.”

**Ms. Curry** thanked the citizens who spoke and other supporters who were in attendance at the meeting. She congratulated Debbie Milam and the ViPS staff for the celebration earlier in the week, and congratulated Ginny Kurrus for being elected president of the state PTA. Ms. Curry asked that all parties “put our children first in the effort to bring the district together,” and she made an appeal to everyone involved to try and work together. Regarding the citizens to be appointed to work with the district on the west Little Rock school committee, she submitted the names of Lloyd Black, retired principal, and Claudius Johnson from the southwest Little Rock neighborhood association.

**Mr. Armstrong** expressed hope that there would be a process to bridge the gaps in the community where we can all accomplish the single goal of educating the children of the city. He expressed confidence that starting children in early childhood programs would be of benefit and he expressed hope that the district could build upon the programs offered at Rockefeller. He asked for prayer “for all of us to work together.”

**Ms. Fox** expressed excitement about the recognitions and achievements acknowledged earlier in the meeting. She stated emphasis on the “good things that are happening in our schools.” As an example, she reported that she had attended Parkview’s presentation of the *High School Musical*, and she congratulated the students on a very professional and entertaining performance.

**Mr. Berkley** thanked the audience for attending the meeting and especially those who had made comments for the board’s consideration. He expressed appreciation for the comments made by former board member Robin Armstrong, and stated hope that the entire board had listened to her carefully and thoughtfully. He thanked Katherine Wright Knight for her comments, noting that the board was and had been supportive of national board certification from the beginning.

**Dr. Daugherty** reported that he and other board members had attended the National School Boards Association conference in San Francisco where board members from across the nation are challenged to do a better job as school board members. He noted that the LRSD is facing the same issues as other school districts across the nation, but that in the south we are a community. "Regardless of the situation, we are here to support each other in the decisions that must be made." He stated that the board would "look past our differences and try to rise above the rhetoric. . ."

**Dr. Mitchell** reported that she had enjoyed the National School Board meetings and workshops. She briefly discussed the benefits provided by the opportunity to communicate with other board members from across the nation, to share challenges and compare problems. She stated that she had learned a lot from listening to those with similar issues. She continued by saying "we need to learn how to respect others' opinions . . . we don't have to agree, but we do have to respect each other." She stated that she serves on the board because she is interested in making the schools better for our children and that she wants to become focused on the mission and goals of the district.

## **B. Discussion and Acceptance of Offer for Mediation: Ron Lanoue**

**Ron Lanoue** introduced himself as the former Executive Director of the NCCJ and as a current representative of Central Arkansas Legal Services. He addressed the board concerning the recent bad publicity and difficulties with interpersonal, inter-communicational relations. He expressed belief that the issues were most directly attributable to differences of point of view, with each side "self-congratulatory and self-destructive." He said that board members had been "talking past each other," reflecting their various differences in class and culture. He stated that his intent was to assist board members in learning how to interact and work together to establish and accomplish common goals.

Mr. Lanoue related that he had conducted a similar process with the city board of directors in January 2000. Six evening sessions were held to build collaboration and clear a path to better understanding. He asked that the board members become good public leaders by being custodians of values as well as resources and he asked that they become advocates for public action and agents of reconciliation.

Ms. Fox and Mr. Berkley spoke in support of accepting the offer from Mr. Lanoue to conduct workshops to build better board relationships. Mr. Berkley and Mr. Kurrus expressed concerns, however, that the sessions would come at a time where it would be too late to salvage the relationships between the board and the superintendent if the board members didn't take the time to "stop right now, slow down, and begin a process of reconciliation."

Ms. Curry suggested that the issue be tabled and that other offers for assistance and mediation be considered prior to making a decision on Mr. Lanoue's offer. Ms. Fox made a motion to accept the offer of Mr. Ron Lanoue to conduct workshops with the board. Mr. Berkley seconded the motion and it **carried 5-0-2**, with Dr. Mitchell and Mr. Armstrong abstaining.

*The board recessed briefly at 7:55 p.m. and returned at 8:05 p.m*

### **C. Arkansas Code Annotated: 6-13-631**

Mr. Kurrus discussed Arkansas law 6-13-631 which deals with the creation of single-member districts for school board election zones. He explained that there is a provision in the law that might require rezoning of election districts now that the LRSD has been released from federal court supervision. Mr. Kurrus suggested that the board direct Mr. Heller to perform a legal analysis to determine what obligations the district has under this law, noting that the Arkansas Department of Education would be authorized to withhold 20 percent of the funds allocated to the LRSD for failure to comply with this law.

Mr. Kurrus made a motion to request that legal counsel assess the impact of this law on the LRSD and provide legal guidance. Dr. Mitchell stated that the board could direct legal counsel to conduct the review without formal action. Mr. Kurrus' motion died for lack of second.

Mr. Heller was present and suggested that the district seek an attorney general's opinion, noting that the Arkansas Department of Education would most likely abide by the opinion of the state's attorney general. Ms. Curry made a motion to seek an opinion from the state Attorney General. Mr. Kurrus seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

### **D. Update: Student Achievement**

Mr. Hattabaugh presented comparative test data reports in the form of a PowerPoint presentation of state benchmark exam results. The complete presentation was submitted electronically to board members following the meeting. At the conclusion, board members requested comment from Karen DeJarnette and Ms. Curry requested additional information and reporting from PRE staff at the next board meeting.

### **E. Construction Report on Bond Projects**

Mr. Goodman's monthly update was provided as part of the board's agenda. Wayne Adams was present to respond to questions.

### **F. Budget Update**

Mark Milhollen presented a brief update on the district's anticipated foundation funding allocations for the 2007-2008 school year. He reported that increases were expected for:

- alternative educational programs (ALE funding) in the amount of 25% over the previous year;
- English language learners (students who are not considered to be proficient in English based on a state approved English proficiency assessment);
- professional development based on an increase in ADM; and
- allocations for students who are on free and reduced lunch.

Mr. Milhollen closed by reviewing the legislative actions and allocations provided by the Governor that will provide additional funds for the next school year. Additional information will be provided as the district builds the budget for the 2007-2008 school year.

### **G. Student Assignment Report**

There was no report, however Dr. Watson was present and was asked to provide additional information and follow up regarding the comments earlier in the meeting from parents and staff from Rockefeller Elementary School.

### **F. Internal Auditors Report**

Mr. Becker's monthly report was included in the board's agenda.

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

### **A. Minutes**

Minutes from the regular meeting of March 22, 2007 and from special meetings held on April 5, April 6, and April 11, 2007 were presented for review and approval. Dr. Daugherty moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Berkley seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

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

### **A. Board Policy Revision: Regular Board Meetings – BEA**

A routine review of the district's policy manual identified *Policy BEA* as being out of date with regard to the time for meetings established at 6:00 p.m. instead of 5:30 p.m., as has been the board's preference for several years. The board was asked to review and approve a revision to *BEA* on first reading. The policy will be returned to the board for second reading and final approval at the May board meeting. Mr. Kurrus moved to approve the revision to policy *BEA* on first reading; Mr. Berkley seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

### **B. Regulation: Credit Recovery through Integrated Learning Systems**

The board was provided an opportunity to review and comment on a regulation that would provide procedures and eligibility criteria for students to recover credits through the use of computerized learning systems. The district currently utilizes NovaNet and PLATO systems. Carol Green was present to provide a response to questions. No action was required.

## **VI. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

### **A. Grant Proposals: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers**

The board was asked to authorize the administration to apply for Arkansas Department of Education 21<sup>st</sup> Century community learning centers grant funding. The district currently has programs at Hall and at Henderson; the grant would provide a continuation of services at those two sites and would establish a center at Dunbar Magnet Middle School. The grant funding provides before and after school services as well as summer programs in violence prevention and economic education programs. Dr. Olivine Roberts was available to respond to questions. Ms. Fox moved to approve submission of the grant application; Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

## **VII. SCHOOL SERVICES**

### **A. Renaming of Southwest Learning Academy to the W. D. "Bill" Hamilton Learning Academy**

Dr. Brooks presented a recommendation to rename the Southwest Learning Academy the *W. D. "Bill" Hamilton Learning Academy* in recognition of Mr. Hamilton's years of dedicated and responsible service to the Little Rock School District. District administrators worked with Mrs. Wanda Hamilton to compile a brief history on Mr. Hamilton's life of public service. A public rededication ceremony at the *W. D. Bill Hamilton Learning Academy* will be held prior to the start of the 2007-2008 school year. The board was asked to authorize the rededication and renaming of the facility. Mr. Kurrus made a motion to approve the superintendent's recommendation; Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

### **B. Request to Increase Athletic Event Gate Prices**

The superintendent presented a proposal prepared by the district's athletic director, Johnny Johnson, asking the board to consider raising athletic events admissions at the high school level to \$5.00 for students and \$4.00 per person at the middle level. This reflects an increase of \$2.00 for students at both middle and high schools and \$1.00 for adults at the middle school level. Coach Johnson responded to questions from the board.

Dr. Daugherty spoke in opposition to the request, stating that it would present a hardship on families who might want to attend the district's athletic events. He suggested that the district seek other ways of reducing the costs, including utilizing Pulaski County sheriffs for athletic security instead of off duty Little Rock police officers. Coach Johnson agreed to research this possibility.

Mr. Kurrus suggested that the board consider an increase in the Athletic Department budget from general revenues in order to allow admission fees to remain at the current level. He followed with a motion to table the recommendation for further review and discussion. Ms. Curry seconded the motion to table, and it **carried unanimously**. No date was set for returning the item for additional consideration or discussion.

## **VIII. HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **A. Personnel Changes**

Routine personnel matters were provided in the board's agenda and the superintendent requested approval. Dr. Daugherty moved to approve the personnel items; Ms. Fox seconded the motion. It carried unanimously.

## **X. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **A. Donations of Property**

Donations of property were listed in the agenda, and Dr. Brooks expressed appreciation to those in the community who continue to support the schools by their generosity. Cayla Gerton, student ex-officio, read the donations as listed in the following chart. Dr. Daugherty moved to accept the donations; Ms. Fox seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Bale Elementary	\$100 cash in honor of Mathletes Champions to be used for a recognition luncheon	Karin Steube-Vollrath
Brady Elementary	\$500 cash to be used to create a butterfly garden and to provide one year of maintenance on the garden  \$175 Wal-Mart gift card to be used to purchase clothing for students as needed	Brady PTA  ViPS Board of Directors
Chicot Elementary School	Library books, valued at approximately \$1,300 to the media center; and a check in the amount of \$250 for Accelerated Reading materials	West Little Rock Rotary Club
Forest Heights Middle School	A Selmer trombone, valued at \$1,500  \$500 cash for CBI materials	Mr. Paul Halbrook  Cathie and Gregg Mueller
Metropolitan Career and Technical Center	\$200 cash to the Law Enforcement Program for lab coats	Arkansas State Police
Terry Elementary School	\$50 cash to be applied to purchase of basketball uniforms  \$1,000 cash to be used for Accelerated Reading program incentives	Cheryl D. Caldwell  Chris Hanner, President, Optimist Club of Greater Little Rock
Woodruff Elementary School	\$200 cash to provide incentives and materials for faculty and staff members  \$321.50 cash to provide student incentives and materials	Day Springs Behavioral Health Services of Arkansas  Wal-Mart Store #126
LRSD	\$500 contribution to the Teacher of the Year Crystal Awards banquet  39 sets of civil rights history books to be distributed to all elementary and middle schools in the LRSD. Estimated value, \$1,200	Entergy Corporation  Regions Bank in conjunction with the 50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the integration of Central High School

## B. Monthly Financial Statements

The regular monthly reports were included in the board's agenda. Mr. Milhollen was present to respond to questions.

## **IX. ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. West Little Rock School Feasibility Study: Rahling Road Site and the Authorization to Secure Site at Taylor Loop Road**

The administration recommended that the district discontinue pursuing the Rahling Road site as a proposed location for the west Little Rock School and requested authorization to undertake a feasibility study on a new site located at the intersection of Taylor Loop West and Highway 10. Like the Rahling Road site, the board was asked for authorization to make a tentative offer on the Taylor Loop property pending completion of a feasibility study.

Dr. Brooks reported that the feasibility study on the Rahling site revealed that site preparation and development would be exorbitant. The Taylor Loop West site, although smaller and more expensive per acre than the Rahling site, would involve significantly less site development and construction. It was noted that the Taylor Loop West site is located within the Little Rock School District, while the Rahling site was located outside the district's boundaries.

Mr. Kurrus moved to approve the administration's recommend and to proceed with placing a contract for the completion of a feasibility study on the Taylor Loop site. Ms. Curry seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**. The formation of a committee to assist the district with the logistics of building a new school was agreed by consensus.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Dr. Mitchell requested a motion to convene an executive session at 9:40 p.m. Ms. Curry made the motion, Mr. Armstrong seconded. The closed session was called for the purpose of conducting an employee hearing.

## **X. EMPLOYEE HEARING**

Dr. Brooks reported that employee <name withheld> was recommended for termination based on receipt of a urinalysis which tested positive for THC, or use of marijuana. Results of drug screenings were presented for the board's review and reports indicated that <the employee> was randomly tested on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006 at the laboratory at Baptist Medical Center.

<The employee> was a district safety and security officer, assigned to <school name>. She had asked for and was granted an administrative hearing of the facts before hearing officer Dr. Victor Anderson. Dr. Anderson's report was included in the board's agenda. The findings of fact indicated that <the employee> had given conflicting testimony to the hearing officer and she was found in violation of district policy for drug use. The superintendent requested that the board uphold the administration's recommendation for termination as a clear violation of that policy.

Grainger Ledbetter, Executive Director of the Classroom Teachers Association, represented <the employee> and asked the board to deny Dr. Brooks' recommendation for termination. Director of Safety & Security, Mr. Bobby Jones, responded to questions from Mr. Ledbetter and from the board. He reported that the drug test was done randomly as is allowed by the

contract with security officers, but that there was no evidence that <the employee> was under the influence of drugs while at work.

<the employee> stated that she had been employed as a security officer in the LRSD for 5 years. She denied using marijuana and asked the board to consider her family and to allow her to remain employed by the LRSD. She testified that the high level of THC in her system was caused by passive exposure to smoke, with the drug being used by a family member at her home.

Mr. Ledbetter called Dr. Sam Mathews, a chemist at Baptist Hospital toxicology laboratory, where the drug test was administered to <the employee>. Dr. Mathews reported that the lab tests could not determine how much of a specific drug was consumed or identify a specific time frame a drug was used. However, he reported that results vary based on the individual user's metabolism. He reported that only small amounts would be present in blood or urine for passive exposure and that the levels found in <the employee's> results far exceeded what would be expected in passive inhalation.

Mr. Ledbetter closed by stating that <the employee> was not impaired in her ability to do her job, and that although she was aware of the district's random drug testing policy she should be allowed to remain employed. He stated that the policy holds covered employees to a higher standard of off duty conduct.

Mr. Hattabaugh made closing remarks for the administration, stating that district employees, especially those in safety and security, are held to a high standard of behavior to ensure a safe and drug free learning environment for students. He asked the board to uphold the recommendation for termination.

The board went into closed session for discussion at 10:37 p.m. and returned at 10:45 p.m. to report that no action was taken. Mr. Kurrus moved to uphold the superintendent's recommendation for termination; Mr. Berkley seconded the motion and it **carried 5-0-2** with Dr. Mitchell and Ms. Curry abstaining.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Ms. Curry moved for an executive session; Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion. The motion **carried 5-2**, with Mr. Kurrus and Ms. Fox voting no.

The board returned from closed session at 11:07 p.m. and reported no action was taken. Dr. Daugherty made a motion to authorize the attorney to present a letter outlining complaints against Superintendent Brooks. Ms. Curry seconded the motion.

Mr. Berkley and Mr. Kurrus spoke in opposition to the motion. Mr. Berkley stated that he did not agree with the motion to present a letter and didn't agree with the process used to get to this point. Mr. Kurrus stated that the letter reviewed in executive session contained allegations that had not been reviewed or studied and that board members had not previously seen the letter or the information contained. He emphasized that to "vote under the circumstances without inquiry would be reckless," stating that the action exposes the district and board members to liability. He stated that he would vote "no" and would not support any of the actions which are in violation of due process.

Ms. Fox agreed with comments made by Mr. Berkley and Mr. Kurrus and stated that the process had not been appropriate and that "we are subjecting ourselves to actions that are not going to be favorable."

Ms. Curry spoke in favor of the motion stating that information was presented and an opportunity was given for her to review the letter. She stated that she "believes the process will move the district forward."

The board voted **4-3 in favor of the motion**, with Mr. Berkley, Ms. Fox and Mr. Kurrus voting "no."

Dr. Mitchell passed the gavel to Mr. Armstrong and made a motion to suspend Dr. Brooks and place him on leave immediately upon receipt of the letter. Ms. Curry seconded the motion.

Mr. Kurrus and Mr. Berkley spoke in opposition to the motion. Mr. Kurrus referred board members to the superintendent's contract, stating again that the actions taken were precipitous and baseless. He asked other board members to review the contract provisions regarding suspension and he noted for the record that he and some of the other members of the board were not made aware of any move to suspend the superintendent until the return from executive session. He stated again that suspension was not on the agenda or part of any action that was to be taken at this meeting.

Mr. Berkley stated that there were no grounds for the motion to suspend Dr. Brooks and no reason for the actions taken. He stated that Dr. Brooks posed no immediate harm to the district and there were no grounds for suspension.

Ms. Curry stated that the action was taken with direction from the board's attorney, and she asked Khyaam Eddings to respond to questions. Mr. Eddings responded that by the contract the superintendent must be given notice of a hearing to determine if there is to be a suspension.

He noted that under the terms of the contract, the board did not have the authority to immediately suspend the superintendent without notice. Dr. Mitchell withdrew her motion; Ms. Curry withdrew the second.

Dr. Mitchell made another motion to suspend Dr. Brooks in accordance with the language of the contract. Ms. Curry seconded the motion. Mr. Eddings again noted that the superintendent is entitled to a hearing before a hearing officer to determine if he should be suspended. Mr. Armstrong called for the vote, and the motion **carried 4-3**, with Mr. Berkley, Ms. Fox and Mr. Kurrus casting "no" votes.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the board, Ms. Curry moved for adjournment at 11:21 p.m. Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

APPROVED: 05-24-07

Originals Signed by:  
Katherine P. Mitchell, President  
Melanie Fox, Secretary