

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

**MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
September 27, 2007**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 27, 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:

Linda Watson, Interim Superintendent
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Dr. Mitchell called the meeting to order at 5:37 p.m. Six members of the board were present at roll call; Mr. Armstrong arrived at 5:50 p.m. Dr. Mitchell introduced student ex officio representative Cayla Gerton from Hall High School and teacher ex officio representative, Sarah Stone VanLaan, from Terry Elementary School.

II. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

A. Superintendent's Citations & Commendations

Superintendent Watson introduced **Virgil Miller** and **Nancy Rousseau**, co-chairs of the Little Rock Central High School 50th Anniversary Commission. They worked for the past few years on the committee that culminated with the ceremony Tuesday, September 25, 2007. Dr. Watson also commended **Tiffany Hoffman**, the LRSD Director of Communications, for her service on the committee.

Virgil Miller introduced **John Nazzaro**, president of the Heart of Arkansas United Way, and **Reginald Merritt**, the LRSD's United Way campaign coordinator. Mr. Miller commended Mr. Merritt on his efforts to coordinate successful United Way campaigns in the district for the past few years. The annual kick-off breakfast for building coordinators was scheduled on the morning after this meeting, and Mr. Merritt announced that the district's annual campaign would run from October 8 – 12, 2007. He reminded the board and the audience that United Way contributions directly benefit the students in our district through the School Welfare Fund, as well as through other agencies funded by the United Way.

Anne Ye, a student at Central High School, was recognized and presented with a Superintendent's Citation for earning perfect scores on the ACT, SAT and PSAT exams.

Sophie Yan, a student at Central High School, was recognized for having her artwork featured on the cover of the June 2007 issue of Arts & Activities Magazine. It was noted that the Central High Art Department Chair, **Lynn Smith**, wrote a feature article about Sophie that appeared in the same issue.

A superintendent's citation was awarded to **Gina Devore**, 5th grade teacher at Martin Luther King Magnet Elementary School. Ms. Devore was recently named the Arkansas History Teacher of the Year by *Preserve America* and the *Gelder Lehrman Institute of American History*.

Dr. Watson announced receipt of a grant in the amount of \$2.9 million from the U.S. Department of Education's Early Reading First Program. This money will transform two Head Start centers and one school-based early childhood center into early literacy model sites in southwest Little Rock. These sites will serve approximately 440 three- and four-year-old children per year. **Glenda Nugent** and **Linda Young** were recognized for their efforts in securing this grant.

Citations were presented to the ex officio representatives for the month of September, **Cayla Gerton**, student from Hall High School, and **Sarah Stone-VanLaan**, teacher from Terry Elementary School.

B. Partners in Education

Debbie Milam presented one new partnership for the board's review and approval:

Central High School, represented by *Nancy Rousseau*, partnering with **Corky's BBQ** represented by *Carla Hilburn*

Ms. Fox moved to accept the new partnership; Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. Remarks from Citizens

Joy Springer congratulated Dr. Watson on her recent appointment as interim superintendent. She reminded Dr. Watson and board members of the commitment made to improve academic achievement of all students and to continue to assess academic programs to determine effectiveness.

D. Little Rock PTA Council

Bernadette Turner addressed the board regarding upcoming PTA Council activities. She expressed appreciation to those who worked to ensure a successful celebration to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the integration of Central High School. She quoted Terrence Roberts' remarks regarding being positive and active agents of change. She thanked Dr. Watson for her presentation at the first PTA Council meeting, Mr. Hartz for explaining how the calendar is developed, and Mr. Fields and Cloverdale students who served lunch to the Council. She encouraged Zone 2 residents to vote on Oct 9th.

Upcoming events were announced: the Central Region state meeting on October 13th at St. John Baptist Church, and the Race for the Cure registration through September 30th.

E. Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association

Grainger Ledbetter addressed the board and reported that Cathy Koehler was attending the NEA board meeting in Washington. He reported that the union was pleased with the board's approval of the contract for teachers and that they were nearing completion of the negotiations with support groups. He stated that the union would renew their call for the PRE department to evaluate merit pay and pay for performance plans, and stated that they had spoken with Dr. Watson regarding establishing a joint committee to review the district's inservice and professional development programs.

Mr. Ledbetter closed by commending the administration for their prompt response at Wilson Elementary after the recent roof leak and classroom damage.

IV. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

A. Remarks from Board Members

Ms. Fox thanked Virgil Miller and Nancy Rousseau for their efforts in coordinating the CHS 50th anniversary celebration.

Dr. Daugherty commented on remarks from the Little Rock Nine during the ceremony earlier in the week. He agreed that there are still problems in our community with "facing our diversity," but he encouraged listeners to continue to celebrate the bridges we have crossed. He closed by thanking Drew Pritt for his endorsement after the election last week.

Mr. Berkley thanked the committee that worked on the CHS 50th anniversary celebration. He thanked the members of the Little Rock Nine for their words of encouragement for Little Rock. Mr. Berkley agreed that there are still divisions in our community, but he noted that progress had been made since 1957 even though there was still much work to be done.

Ms. Curry thanked Dr. Watson for a smooth transition. She also thanked Ms. Rousseau, Virgil Miller and other members of the CHS 50th anniversary celebration committee.

Mr. Kurrus expressed appreciation to everyone at Central, including the staff and students, who went above and beyond to make the anniversary celebration a success. He reported that he had attended the law school forum and had participated in some of the other community events. He asked that this be used as a time for reflection to make our city a better place for everyone. "Try to do what you can to make this a better place."

Mr. Armstrong commented on the activities surrounding the anniversary of the Central High crisis and stated that it was an opportunity to teach our children about history; to teach values and self-respect.

Dr. Mitchell commended Phyllis Dickerson, the coordinator of the city's commission on the 50th anniversary. She reported that she had attended the education forum, the law forum and the ecumenical service on Sunday in addition to the gala and other events held in conjunction with the celebration. She thanked Governor Beebe for hosting a Political Animals breakfast, the choirs from Parkview & Central for their performances, and the religious leaders who coordinated the ecumenical service. She encouraged the audience to learn to work together, to respect differences of opinion, and carry through with things that are in the best interest of our children.

Dr. Mitchell commended Kay Rainey for coordinating the district's Parent Institute and thanked Fitz Hill for his presentation to the parents. She encouraged parents to become partners at their children's' schools and to become involved in the activities across the district.

B. Report: IB Diploma Programme at Hall High School

A written summary report was included in the board's agenda, prepared by Dennis Glasgow. John Bacon, principal of Hall High School, and members of the Hall faculty were present to provide a brief overview of the IB program. Kitty Sanders, Michelle Jackson, Marie Boone and Danielle Burnside reported on the activities surrounding the final planning stages for implementing the IB Diploma Program at Hall, including their preparations for a site team visit October 11-12.

C. Discussion: Guidelines for Developing Settlement Agreements

Mr. Kurrus had requested a board discussion regarding the development of standardized procedures for the district's attorneys to use when negotiating settlement agreements. Mr. Kurrus made a motion to table discussion until a later date. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

D. Student Assignment Report

An enrollment comparison was attached to the board's agenda. Dr. Watson noted that the report reflected preliminarily that the district was up 106 students from the first of September 2007 and up 219 from the October 1, 2006 official count. The final report will be provided after October 1 official counts are made.

E. Budget Update

Mr. Milhollen reported that the Cycle 1 report to the ADE was transmitted by the deadline date, September 15. His staff is now compiling the Cycle 2 report which is due by October 15. October 1 official enrollment counts will be used to calculate funding for the district and will include free and reduced lunch / socio-economic status, Title 1 allocations, and revenue for child nutrition. In addition, information submitted provides employee salary & benefits information, teacher certification requirements, class coding and attendance registers, and teaching credentials for determining HQT, or "highly qualified" status. He reminded the board that the district is required to report seven times a year to complete the cycle.

F. Internal Auditors Report

Mr. Becker's monthly summary report was attached to the board's agenda.

V. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS

A. Minutes

Minutes from the regular board meeting of August 23, and from special meetings held on August 21, September 4, and September 13, were presented for the board's review and approval. Ms. Fox moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VI. ADMINISTRATION

A. Open Enrollment Charter School Applications

Dr. Watson provided information for the board's review regarding six open enrollment charter school applications for the 2007-2008 school year. These applications had been submitted to the Arkansas Department of Education; that Board was scheduled to meet to consider the applications sometime in early October.

The superintendent recommended that the board approve a recommendation to file a statement of opposition to each of these applications with the Arkansas Department of Education stating that approval of these charters would have a negative fiscal impact on the LRSD. She asked that the votes on these statements of opposition be approved individually, by six separate motions and votes.

- on the e-STEM, Elementary K-4 Charter School, Mr. Armstrong moved to approve the submission of a letter of opposition to the Arkansas Board of Education. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried 6-1**, with Mr. Berkley casting the "no" vote.
- on the e-STEM Middle Charter School, Ms. Curry moved to approve the submission of a letter of opposition to the Arkansas Board of Education. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried 6-1**, with Mr. Berkley casting the "no" vote.
- on the e-STEM High Charter School, Ms. Curry moved to approve the submission of a letter of opposition to the Arkansas Board of Education. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried 6-1**, with Mr. Berkley casting the "no" vote.
- on the LISA Academy – North Little Rock site, Mr. Armstrong moved to support the administration's recommendation to submit a letter of opposition to the Arkansas Board of Education. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.
- on the Learning for Life Academy, Ms. Curry moved to support the administration's recommendation to submit a letter of opposition to the Arkansas Board of Education. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion, and it **carried 6-1**, with Dr. Daugherty casting the "no" vote.
- on the Covenant Keepers Academy, Ms. Curry moved to support the administration's recommendation to submit a letter of opposition to the Arkansas Board of Education. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

Mr. Kurrus made a statement regarding the potential impact on the LRSD if all six of these charter schools were approved by the State Board of Education. He noted that if 1,000 students exit the LRSD, nearly \$5.5 million in funding each year will follow them. The LRSD board would then be faced with the difficult decision to close low enrollment schools and reduce the services available to our students. He cautioned that the LRSD can't provide equity and an equitable education without the enrollment to provide the financial basis. He promised to attend the State Board meeting when these applications are considered and to continue to oppose additional charter schools.

VII. HUMAN RESOURCES

A. Personnel Changes

Routine personnel matters were listed in the board's agenda. The administration recommended approval. Ms. Fox moved to approve the recommended personal changes. Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VII. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

A. West Little Rock School Land Purchase

The board had previously approved the purchase of land located on West Taylor Loop and Highway 10 for the construction of a new school. After that action was taken, an additional ¼ acre of land adjacent to the property became available for purchase.

The board was asked to approve a resolution granting authorization for the purchase of this property in the amount of \$67,953.00. Mr. Milhollen and Mr. Mackey were present and responded to questions from the board.

Mr. Kurrus and Mr. Berkley spoke in favor of the purchase, saying that the additional frontage would provide more options for the future, and that although it is currently very expensive to buy in that area, the value of the property is increasing and will continue to do so. Mr. Kurrus moved to approve the adoption of a resolution in support of the purchase; Ms. Fox seconded the motion, and it **carried 6-1** with Dr. Mitchell casting the "no" vote.

B. Donations of Property

The Board was asked to approve the acceptance of recent donations to schools and departments within the District. The donations are listed in the following chart. The student ex officio, Cayla Gerton, read the items listed in the Board's agenda. Ms. Fox made a motion to accept the donated items, Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

DONATIONS		
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Forest Heights Middle	\$500 cash for CBI student materials / portfolio development for the 2007-08 school year	Gregg and Cathie Mueller
J. A. Fair High	\$250 for J. A. Fair cheerleaders \$540 for the J. A. Fair drill team	Wal-Mart Foundation in support of volunteer hours of Dianne Morris, parent of LeAndrea Harris Mr. & Mrs. Robert Janes, III

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Mabelvale Elementary	400 books, valued at \$4,600 for K – 2 nd grade students	A T & T Pioneers
	Limousine Services valued at \$250 for the first day of school	Derrick Gunn / Gunn Funeral Home
	Tuxedo, valued at \$125 for the first day of school	Jacob Taber / Tuxedo Junction
	School uniforms, valued at \$850.00	Monica Bone
Woodruff Elementary	Round-Up chemical spray, valued at \$15 for use on school grounds	Priority 1 Janitorial Services, Inc.
	\$200 cash to purchase incentives and materials for faculty and staff members	Day Springs Behavioral Health Services of Arkansas
	Professional Development Day sponsorship valued at \$3,659.00	Arkansas A+ Schools Network
	\$300 cash to purchase school supplies for students	EDS – AR Title XIX

C. Monthly Financial Statements

The July and August financial reports were provided to the board as an attachment to their agenda.

EMPLOYEE HEARING:

The board convened an employee hearing at 7:37 p.m. The employee, Lois Kelley, was represented by Grainger Ledbetter, CTA Executive Director.

David Hartz presented the district’s information regarding the recommendation to non-renew Ms. Kelley. Robert Robinson was present as witnesses for the district.

Mr. Ledbetter reported that Ms. Kelley had been employed for 18 years in the LRSD. She was assigned to Metropolitan for nine of those years teaching reading to secondary students. Her current certification is in elementary education with a Masters in Gifted / Talented education.

She was notified in August 2004, prior to the start of the school year, that she couldn’t continue to teach reading at Metropolitan without the secondary certification. She completed the coursework for the Alternative Learning Program (ALP), but didn’t successfully complete the Praxis examination requirements.

Ms. Kelley reported that she had requested a hearing after receiving notification in July 2007 that her insurance benefits would be cancelled. She was told to continue to apply for positions for which she was certified; she applied for eleven positions and had interviewed for four of those. She maintained contact with the human resources staff and remained aware of vacancies as they were posted, but stated that she had not been encouraged by anyone in human resources and had not been successful in her efforts to obtain an elementary level position.

Robert Robinson, the district's EEOC coordinator, responded to questions regarding Ms. Kelley's personnel records and past evaluations. Dr. Watson recommended that the board uphold the recommendation for non-renewal.

Ms. Curry moved to convene a closed session for deliberation; Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. The board deliberated from 8:40 p.m. to 8:55 p.m. They returned to report that no action had been taken.

The superintendent recommended that Ms. Kelley not be automatically assigned to a position in the district, but that she be considered eligible to apply for positions for which she holds certification. She could then be hired upon the recommendation of a building administrator. Mr. Berkley moved to approve the recommendation. Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried 6-1**, with Ms. Curry casting the "no" vote.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m. on a motion by Ms. Fox, seconded by Mr. Kurrus.

APPROVED: 10-25-07

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

