

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

**MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
October 25, 2001**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held its regularly scheduled meeting at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 25, 2001, in the Boardroom of the Administration Building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Baker Kurrus presided.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Baker Kurrus
Judy Magness
Tony Rose
Larry Berkley
Micheal Daugherty
Katherine Mitchell
Sue Strickland

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

ALSO PRESENT:

T. Kenneth James, Superintendent of Schools
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

President Baker Kurrus called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. All members of the Board were present at roll call. Jean Rouse, counselor at Bale Elementary School and ex-officio representative to the Board for the month of October, was also present. The student representative did not attend.

II. PROCEDURAL MATTERS / WELCOMING COMMENTS

Prior to the board meeting, a reception was held honoring students who were named National Merit Semi-finalists, National Achievement Semifinalists, and Commended Merit Students. A total of nineteen (19) students were presented with certificates of achievement.

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III. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

A. Superintendent's Citations

Dr. James presented citations to Dunbar parents and supporters **Dr. Jay Marks** and his wife, **Becky**. **Dr. & Mrs. Marks** provided physical exams to approximately forty (40) students who were unable to get a pre-school physical. Dunbar assistant principal, **Karen Greenlee**, was present and, on behalf of the faculty and students of Dunbar, thanked the Marks' for their continuing support.

The Superintendent introduced **Connie Green**, teacher at Mabelvale Middle School. Ms. Green recently was surprised to learn that she had been selected to receive national recognition as a Milken Educator. She will attend the national ceremony in Los Angeles next spring and will receive a check in the amount of \$25,000.

The United Way sponsored a "**Day of Caring**" on September 15. Many volunteer groups came into our schools to provide a variety of service projects including painting, building reading lofts, cleaning playgrounds, weeding flower beds, and many more improvements to our buildings and grounds. Dr. James introduced representatives from the following organizations and presented certificates of appreciation: *J. C. Penney / Bale Elementary School; Central Arkansas Veterans Health Care System / Dunbar Magnet Middle School; Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority / Gibbs Magnet Elementary School; UALR – Share America / Jefferson Elementary School; H & H Custom Millwork / Otter Creek Elementary School; Greater Second Baptist Church / Southwest Middle School; Federal Express / Western Hills Elementary School; Small Business Administration / Wilson Elementary School; Centers for Youth & Families / Woodruff Elementary School.*

Dr. James asked **Jo Evelyn Elston** to introduce representatives of the District's Peer Helpers' Teams, who had taken as a community service project to raise funds for the September 11 disaster victims in Washington D. C., Pennsylvania and New York City. **Sheila Palmer Harrod**, a representative from the Arkansas Chapter of the American Red Cross, was present to accept a check in the amount of \$6,739.00, which was the total amount raised by twenty-five elementary and secondary schools participating in the project. The students were applauded for their caring and compassionate spirit.

The final Superintendent's Citation was presented to **Jean Rouse**, counselor at Bale Elementary, who served as the teacher representative to the Board for the month of October.

Dr. Katherine Mitchell was presented with a gavel in recognition of her service as President of the Board during the 2000-01 school year. Mr. Kurrus stated that her dedication to the children in our school district had been unmatched and her professionalism has had a direct impact on the successful operation of this District over the past ten years.

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Dr. James briefly reviewed Dr. Mitchell's history with the District: she was appointed mid-term 1988, previously served as president in 1990-91, and has been on the Board through eight superintendents.

Dr. Mitchell accepted the gavel and expressed appreciation to her fellow Board members for their cooperation during her term. She noted as the highlight of her year as President the Board's successful endeavor to fill the Superintendent's position with Dr. Ken James. She received a standing ovation.

B. Partners in Education: New Partnerships

Debbie Milam announced the Districtwide Parent Institute to be held on Saturday, October 27, from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at J. A. Fair High School. Dr. James will make the opening remarks, and Board members were invited to attend and participate. In addition, the annual VIPS Reading Day is scheduled for Tuesday, November 13. Ms. Milam asked for interested readers to contact the VIPS office for an assignment to an elementary classroom.

Ms. Milam then presented certificates to businesses and individuals that recently established working partnerships with District schools. Dr. Mitchell made a motion to accept the new partnerships, Ms. Magness seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

Newly established partnerships were:

Carver Magnet Elementary School, represented by *Teata Pace*, in partnership with the **U. S. Bankruptcy Court** (No representative present.)

Fulbright Elementary School, represented by *Deborah Mitchell, Nicola Morgan, Amy Thompson & Thelma Watson*, in partnership with: **Barnes & Noble Booksellers**, represented by *Carolyn McNutt*; and **Orbit Valve**, represented by *Duane Morgan*

Mabelvale Magnet Middle School, represented by *Ann Blaylock, Stella Cameron, Connie Green & Cathy Farley*, in partnership with: **Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission**, represented by *Karen Smith & Jane Jones-Schultz*; and **ITT Technical Institute**, represented by *Thomas Crawford*

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C. Remarks from Citizens

Denise Stephens, parent from Southwest Middle School, addressed the Board regarding concerns and issues with the administration at that school. She noted problems with algebra classes, general curriculum problems and a lack of textbooks. She also stated concerns with transportation safety issues, problems at specific bus stops, and student suspensions from riding the bus.

Donna Stone addressed the Board as a representative of the Midway Neighborhood Association. Her concerns were similar to those of the previous speaker, relating problems with bus stop safety for students who attend Southwest Middle School and Hall High School. She reported that 47 students were currently assigned to one bus stop in her area and that, when contacted regarding this, the transportation department suggested that these students could actually walk to school instead of having a bus. She asked the Board and administration to review the current routes for students in this area.

B. Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association

Clementine Kelley addressed the Board briefly regarding upcoming AEA workshops. She stated that all CTA members would be encouraged to attend either LRSD Staff Development activities or the workshops provided by the AEA.

C. Joshua Intervenors

No report.

IV. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Remarks from Board Members

Mr. Berkley reported that the District's Foundation Committee had met with Foundation Development Consultants to review options for establishing a foundation for the LRSD. Dr. James had invited the consultants to the LRSD to provide training for our committee members, as well as others from across the state who were interested in setting up a foundation. The consultants are available to provide expertise and guidance in marketing, legal fees, and additional aspects of forming a foundation. The cost would be approximately \$25,000. Mr. Berkley felt that the District's committee would recommend hiring the consultants to get the foundation established.

Mr. Berkley requested that his notes be included as a part of the official Board minutes and are, therefore, included here in italics:

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Presentation by Foundation Development Consultants

- *Dr. James and LRSD hosted several school districts this last Tuesday*
- *Dr. James has experience with FDC in Van Buren*
- *3 of 5 Committee members, who attended presentation, recommend that the district use the consultants. One member has abstained because he was unable to hear the presentation. The 5th member has been unavailable to ask his views.*
- *\$25k - \$17.5k for consultants – rest for legal fees and development of marketing material*

Mr. Berkley also spoke to the issues surrounding the desegregation hearings and compliance submissions. He noted that District administrators and our attorneys have consistently advised the Board that we are in compliance with the Revised Desegregation and Education Plan. The public is being informed through media reports that we may not have kept our commitments and that we may not be in a position to be released from court supervision. He noted that these comments are his individual opinion, and not necessarily the opinion of the Board as a whole, but that he felt it was important to say something.

Mr. Berkley continued by stating that Mr. Walker had been paid \$48,000 per year for the past three years to monitor compliance with the Plan and that Mr. Walker has been “absent or invisible” to the Board during that time. He noted that the District filed an interim compliance report over a year ago and since that time no objections regarding the content or format of that report have been filed by Mr. Walker or by the Court. The critical points for the Court’s review at this time seem to be the achievement disparity and assessment and monitoring of current programs. He asked for the Court’s guidance in determining if remaining under the supervision of the federal court system can solve these problems.

Foundation Committee

Mr. Berkley’s notes:

Court Case

- *Information available to the public has been limited to reports in the media concerning the court testimony and comments by Judge Wright concerning the case.*
- *Individual board members, just as we have no power individually, are not likely to damage the legal case by making public comments, according to the Chris Heller.*
- *The School Board has been advised consistently by LRSD administration and by consultants hired specifically to monitor compliance, that the district has been in compliance with the revised deseg plan.*

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- *Mr. Walker has been paid \$48k per year for the last 3 years to monitor compliance and he has been virtually invisible to the board during that time frame, although we have public meetings twice each month.*
- *The district filed an interim report a year before the final report. There were no objections by Mr. Walker about the content or by the court regarding content or format of the report.*
- *The issue has been framed by Mr. Walker and, recently, by Judge Wright in terms of the district's efforts at reducing the disparity in academic performance between black and white children. This is based primarily on disparity in performance on standardized tests. Other concerns relate to the evaluation of the programs designed to reduce the disparity. Given that this district, along with many other districts in the U.S., has been unable to reduce the disparity while under federal court order for many years, what magic bullet do Mr. Walker and the Federal court have to offer to assist us in that effort at this time? How does the Federal court, as a public institution, justify the further expense to this community involved in keeping the LRSD under federal court supervision, knowing that we have met the constitutional requirements, that they have no magic bullet to solve the problem of disparity, and that we can't afford many things that our children need and will need in the future to get an excellent education.*
- *Individual teachers in this district consistently strive to improve the performance of all children. This board and this district would love to be able to say that we've been able to do what no one else has been able to do – that is to dramatically improve the performance of poor children who are academically achieving below the level of more affluent children. Unfortunately we have not been able to do that. But that is not due to lack of effort.*

Mr. Rose stated his agreement with and support for Mr. Berkley's comments and quoted John F. Kennedy: "Educate yourself – free yourself." He added, "Freedom is based on education. Ignorance is slavery."

Dr. Mitchell commended employees of Comcast Cable for work they performed last Saturday at Meadowcliff Elementary School. The group worked on the interior and exterior of the building, painting, landscaping, and doing minor carpentry work and general repairs. She asked the Superintendent to provide recognition for these employees at the November Board Meeting.

Ms. Magness reminded the Board and viewers that we are scheduled to appear in federal court on November 19-20. She invited the public to attend these hearings if they are interested in first-hand knowledge of our progress in court.

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Dr. Daugherty restated his withdrawal of support for our efforts to gain unitary status. He first announced his opposition at the September meeting of the Board, and he noted that his opposition is based on the disparity in achievement test scores. He said that we must “gain his confidence” before he would support the District’s efforts to be released from court supervision.

Ms. Strickland reported on her visit to Mabelvale Middle School and applauded the Great Expectations program that has been implemented there. She thanked the principal for inviting her to visit the school.

Mr. Kurrus had also visited Mabelvale Middle School for the presentation of the Milken Award to Connie Green. He said that he is gratified that so many of our teachers work so hard to exemplify dedication to their profession.

Mr. Kurrus also noted the financial challenges that we will face over the next few months due to state funding shortfalls. He closed by reminding us that we must focus on the things that we can control.

B. Desegregation Update

Mr. Babbs provided enrollment information for the Board’s review. The official enrollment count stands at 25,442, with 907 of those enrolled in four-year-old (Pre-K) programs.

In addition, Mr. Babbs briefly reviewed on-going desegregation compliance efforts and equity activities. He invited *Dr. Terrance Roberts* to make comments to the Board.

Dr. Roberts made brief remarks regarding on-going efforts to educate the children of the LRSD. He stated that it is essential that we do not lose sight of this goal as we face the scrutiny of the courts and the public. He is continuing to provide group inservice sessions on “*Coping With Differences*,” and he is conducting a series of training sessions with the District’s counselors. He noted that he continues to provide input on the revision and updating of the District’s policies and procedures.

C. Budget Update

Dr. Stewart provided a budget summary report for the Board’s review and indicated that the financial picture is unclear at this time. As reported in the news over the past few weeks, state funds may be cut by as much as \$2 million dollars. He announced that Dr. James has issued a hiring freeze, and has instituted measures to raise the level of monitoring on all district expenditures, such as travel and overtime. Some positions that are vacant at this time will remain vacant, and positions that have been posted will be evaluated before being filled.

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D. Construction Report: Proposed Bond Projects

Mr. Goodman's construction report was printed as a part of the Board's agenda. He was present to review the information and respond to questions.

C. Internal Auditors Report

Mr. Becker's report was printed as a part of the Board's agenda; no other information was provided.

V. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS

A. Minutes

Minutes from the regular meeting of the Board of Directors held on September 27 and from a special meeting held on October 11, 2001, were presented for review and approval.

Mr. Rose made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Magness seconded the motion and it **passed unanimously**.

VI. INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES DIVISION

A. Report: Pre-K – 2 Literacy Program Evaluation

Dr. Lesley provided a summary of the evaluation for Pre-K – 2nd grade literacy programs across the District. The key findings and recommendations were printed as a part of the Board's agenda; the complete evaluation document is available for review by contacting Dr. Lesley. Staff members from the Division of Instruction and from the Planning, Research and Evaluation office collaborated on the preparation of the report. Dr. Steve Ross, desegregation consultant, made recommendations and remarks which were incorporated into the final report.

B. Sliver Grant Application

The Board was asked to approve a grant submission to the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Division, for a Sliver Grant. The Grant would provide up to \$92,000 to address systemic change for students with disabilities by providing staff development activities, training in use of technology with students with disabilities, and increased parent-staff problem solving techniques. Ms. Magness made a motion to approve the grant submission as presented. Mr. Berkley seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

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C. Consolidated Application for Special Education and Related Services

The annual Consolidated Application for Special Education and Related Services was presented for the Board’s review and approval. The application would provide \$16,042,324, in State Equalization funding, and \$2,844,031 in Title VI-B funds. Dr. Mitchell moved to approve the application for submission, Ms. Magness seconded the motion, and it **carried 7-0.**

VII. ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

A. Personnel Changes

Personnel items were presented as a part of the Board’s agenda and the administration recommended Board approval. Dr. Mitchell made a motion to approve the personnel changes as presented. Mr. Rose seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously.**

B. Ratification of Revisions to the Student Handbook

Linda Watson presented information to the Board during the October agenda session regarding the possession of electronic communication devices on school campus during the regular school day. Prior to printing, but after being approved by the Board, the student handbook was revised to allow pagers or cell phones on campus “*after normal school hours at extracurricular activities.*” The Board asked for this item to be presented for ratification of the revisions so that there will not be any question as to the Board’s intent on this issue. Mr. Berkley made a motion to approve the revisions as presented. Ms. Strickland seconded the motion and it **carried 7-0.**

VIII. BUSINESS SERVICES DIVISION

A. Donations of Property

The Board was asked to approve acceptance of recent donations to the District. Mr. Rose made a motion to graciously accept the donations. Mr. Berkley seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously.** Mr. Rose read the list of items as noted in the following chart:

DONATIONS

| SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT | ITEM | DONOR |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Little Rock School District | 26 Compaq Desk Pro PC’s with mmx intel, internal Pentium processor and Dell Quietkey keyboards valued at approximately \$300 each (no monitors) | Acxiom Corporation |
| Brady Elementary School | \$813.50 cash for use as reading incentives for students | Markham Street Baptist Church |

Donations (continued)

| SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT | ITEM | DONOR |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Forest Heights Middle School | Classroom supplies valued at \$70.00 for use by teachers and students in the 500 Building | Dorothy Carr Bonner |
| Pulaski Heights Elementary School | Services of two (2) art teachers for the 2001-02 school year, valued at \$20,235. | Pulaski Heights Elementary PTA |
| Pulaski Heights Middle School | \$100 cash to be used in the Music Program | The Estate of Chip Allums, PHMS alumnus |
| Romine Elementary School | \$1,500 cash toward the purchase of a school sign | Romine Elementary PTA |

B. Financials

Mark Milhollen was present to review the financial reports printed in the Board's agenda and to respond to any questions. Dr. Mitchell moved to approve the reports as printed. Ms. Magness seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

IX. SCHOOL SERVICES DIVISION

Sadie Mitchell provided copies of the Priority Intervention Procedures (PIP) Status Report for the Board's review. District administrators have met with building leaders to review the school's intervention needs and to establish the annual school improvement plans. Technical assistance and professional development for the 2001-02 school year will be provided for those schools in need of improvement.

X. DISTRICT OPERATIONS

No items for Board action.

XI. CLOSING REMARKS

A. Superintendent's Report:

Dr. James briefly reminded the Board of the date and time of the Parent Summit - - Saturday, October 27, from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

He also announced that we would be hosting a workshop on November 6 for school districts across the state that are interested in the TAP Model. Representatives from the Milken Foundation will be here, as well as representatives from the Arkansas Department of Education.

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Board members who are travelling to Phoenix, Arizona on October 28 will need to be at the airport at 6:30 a.m. for an early morning flight. Eleven people from the District are going to attend the meeting on TAP, which is being sponsored by the Milken Foundation.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Berkley moved to adjourn at 8:40 p.m. Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

APPROVED: 11-15-01

Original documents signed by:

H. Baker Kurrus, President

Tony Rose, Secretary