

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

**MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
December 13, 2001**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held its regularly scheduled meeting at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 13, 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. Susan Mahnken, teacher at Booker Magnet Elementary School, served as ex-officio representative to the Board for the month of December. The student ex-officio representative from McClellan High School, Antonio Jones, was not present.

II. PROCEDURAL MATTERS / WELCOMING COMMENTS

Mr. Kurrus introduced Ann Mangan, principal of Rockefeller Magnet Elementary School. She, in turn, introduced I. J. Routen, Director of the Rockefeller Show Choir who led the student performance of several holiday songs.

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III. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

A. Superintendent's Citations

Dr. James introduced ***Karen Carter***, principal of Meadowcliff Elementary School. She invited representatives of Comcast Cable to step forward to receive recognition for their participation in a recent Saturday workday at Meadowcliff. Comcast employees painted, landscaped, did carpentry work, and completed general repairs in and around the school building. Representatives attending the meeting were ***Ronnie Colvin, Mike Wilson, and Evangeline Parker***. Several Meadowcliff students were also present and delivered personal "thank-you's" to the Comcast employees.

The superintendent recognized members of the J. A. Fair Men's Cross-Country Track Team for winning the AAAA Cross-Country Championship this year. Fair's principal, ***Cassandra Norman***, along with ***Coaches James Armstrong and Kimmie Cleveland*** were present and they introduced student members of the team: ***Quincy Googe, Jesse Evans, Thomas Bishop, Brandon Gilmore, Markita Smith, Kenneth Cooney, and Brett Brown***. ***Linda Brown***, parent of one of the students, received a special note of appreciation for her volunteer efforts on behalf of the team.

Laurie Wilson, student at Parkview Magnet High School, created the artwork that was selected for the District's 2001 holiday card. Laurie and her parents were present and received a signed and framed copy of the card. The original artwork will hang in the District's administration building.

Katherine Wright Knight and ***Lou Ethel Nauden*** were recognized for achieving National Board Certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. This certification program involves a rigorous process and indicates that they have achieved the pinnacle of their profession. Ms. Knight and Ms. Nauden are the first in the Central Arkansas area to achieve this goal and they were applauded for their dedication and exemplary classroom performance.

The Arkansas Council on Economic Education named ***Marie McNeal***, Director of the LRSD Social Studies Department, Economics America Coordinator of the Year. She was selected from a pool of 114 coordinators across the state.

Paulette Martin, Director of Adult Education, was asked to stand and be recognized as the newly elected President of the Arkansas Association of Administrators of Adult Education. She will serve a two-year term in this post, and as president she will serve on the State Advisory Council for Adult Education.

The final citation was presented to ***Susan Mahnken***, teacher ex officio representative to the Board for the month of December.

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B. Partners in Education: New Partnerships

Debbie Milam presented certificates in recognition of a new business / school partnership. Dr. Mitchell made a motion to accept the new partnership, Mr. Rose seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

The newly established partnership was:

Hall High School, represented by *Principal Vernon Smith*, in partnership with
City of Little Rock Department of Parks & Recreation

C. Remarks from Citizens

Jacquelyn Bearden, president of the Dodd Elementary School PTA, appealed to the Board for reconsideration of closing that school. She pointed out that closing the school would jeopardize several school improvement grants and she stressed the satisfaction of Dodd parents with the small classroom structure. She noted that the enrollment is racially balanced by students within the attendance zone.

Diane Krippendorf, also a representative of the Dodd area, stated that the Board may not realize that their neighborhood is not “stagnant” and that the area’s population will grow over the next few years with the completion of a housing development currently under construction. She complimented the teachers at Dodd on their commitment to and nurturing of Dodd students.

Jerry Peters addressed the Board on behalf of Badgett Elementary School. He is the Director of Webster University, which is Partner-in-Education with Badgett. He asked the Board to consider options other than closing small schools to salvage the District’s budget.

Kim Dunahay, president of the Badgett Elementary School PTA, echoed Dr. Peters’ comments and stated that in a small school, the teachers take a more personal approach to the students because they know older siblings, parents, and even grandparents. At Badgett, generations within a family have attended and school activities are like big family reunions.

Cheryl Carroll-Stewart attended school at Dodd, and has a student attending there now. She has two younger children who will attend Dodd in a few years and she stressed the importance of the security available in a small school environment. Her daughter, Kirsten Carroll, wrote a letter to the Board, which was read by Ms. Carroll-Stewart.

Twanna Nooner, Dodd Elementary parent, repeated the comments expressed by previous speakers. She stated that the teachers at Dodd take the extra time to find individual ways to reach the students and that this type of learning cannot take place in a large school environment.

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C. Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association

Frank Martin spoke to the Board regarding the grievance hearings held after the last Board meeting. He noted that the Board upheld the recommendation to terminate two teachers even though he felt that their contract rights were clearly violated. He urged the Board to take a hard look at the business of school fundraisers and ensure that proper training and procedures are in place and that the contract agreement is enforced.

D. Joshua Intervenors

No report.

IV. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Remarks from Board Members

Mr. Berkley expressed appreciation to Katherine Knight and Lou Ethel Nauden for their dedication to teaching as evidenced by achievement of National Board Certification.

Mr. Rose repeated this recognition and noted that our teachers are the key to what we are trying to accomplish daily in our schools.

Ms. Magness thanked parents and community members for attending the Board meeting to speak in support of their schools. She stated that she hoped they would try to understand that the Board has some very difficult decisions to make and that they would be looking at a range of options for reducing the District's overall budget. She also noted that the LRSD is a non-profit and that donations are accepted and tax-deductible.

Dr. Mitchell expressed appreciation to everyone who works hard every day to provide educational experiences to our students. She wished the audience a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Dr. Daugherty noted appreciation for the people who do the "little things" to make a positive difference in the daily lives of our students.

Mr. Kurrus thanked everyone who came to speak before the Board. He stated that the Board has a very difficult job and a serious responsibility to do the best they can for all the kids who attend our schools. He said that he knows each member of the Board shares his concern when they are faced with these tough decisions.

B. Internal Auditors Report

Mr. Becker was present to review the report provided in the Board's agenda. He also presented a detailed report and review of Sharefest 2001 activities. The Board expressed gratitude and appreciation to the volunteers who coordinated Sharefest.

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C. Desegregation Update

Mr. Babbs briefly greeted the Board and introduced *Chris Heller* to review and discuss current activity and events surrounding the court hearings that were held the previous week. Mr. Heller reminded the Board that we presented evidence in the case to the Judge last November on student discipline and assessment. At the next scheduled hearing we are to present additional information on compliance in the areas of 1) student achievement; 2) advanced placement course assignments; 3) guidance and counseling programs; and 4) extracurricular activities. Mr. Heller predicted that once our documentation is presented for review, the Judge will schedule additional hearings before the end of February.

Mr. Babbs reminded the Board of upcoming activities within the Student Registration office: open houses are scheduled during January; open enrollment for new students, kindergarten, magnet applications and transfer requests begins the end of January and runs through the first week of February. He noted that the North Little Rock and Pulaski County School Districts have elected to change their process for application to the magnet schools to the same lottery system that the LRSD has been using. This should allow for a fairer means to access the magnet programs by students in those districts.

D. Budget Update

Dr. James provided a summary report of budgetary considerations related to the possibility of closing several schools. As a result of statewide reductions in school funding, he anticipates that the LRSD will lose approximately \$2.3 million in revenue this year, and the governor has indicated further shortages may result in loss of additional funding within the next year.

The proposal presented would close elementary schools with enrollment below 200 students - - Badgett Elementary, the Badgett Charter Program and Dodd Elementary. Student assignment options were provided for review and consideration and the Board members were asked to review the data and provide the Superintendent and administrative staff with direction and comments.

Dr. Stewart reviewed the spreadsheet and summary analysis of savings projections related to these closings and other budget reduction items. Dr. Lesley reviewed the academic profile section of the summary report provided.

The Board took a brief recess at 7:55 and reconvened at 8:07 p.m.

Dr. James commented on the importance of discussing all possible options between now and the January board meeting. He noted that we continually strive to be good stewards of our public funds, but that the current situation was escalated by the Governor's announcement of loss of state revenue that we had anticipated and projected into our current year operating budget. Enrollment data will be evaluated fully and other

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budgetary items will be reviewed in addition to the possibility of closing one or more schools.

Board members requested additional information including a report of other areas where reductions in funding could be accomplished if they choose not to close a school and calculations of salary and benefit increases that are already agreed and committed by contract negotiations. In addition, Ms. Magness asked that the administration provide data for Fair Park Elementary similar to that provided for Badgett and Dodd. She noted that Fair Park also has low enrollment and has been reviewed for closure in the past. Mr. Berkley asked for an impact statement to indicate the District's financial condition if the Board does not close any schools and Dr. Daugherty noted that he would be most interested in reviewing scenarios that do not include closing schools.

Dr. Mitchell reminded the audience that since we do not have any control over the state's decision to cut our funding, we must review all spending and see what we can do to operate efficiently with the amount of money we receive. She said the Board realized their responsibility to look at all areas where we can decrease spending, and that no one enjoys having to make the hard decisions to close schools, reduce staffing, or eliminate programs. She stated that they would try to do whatever is necessary and in the best interest of the total District.

Ms. Strickland echoed Dr. Mitchell's comments and said that she wished there were other alternatives to closing schools. She stated that the Board knows this is a sensitive issue for parents and that the Board will try to work together to save money wherever possible and make sure that we are spending our money wisely.

The Board discussed several options for further analysis including: the impact of reassessment and tax collections on revenue projections; recruitment efforts to increase enrollment and the possibility of building a school in west Little Rock; administrative reductions and reductions in staffing and programs at the IRC; reductions in legal fees and the cost associated with our portion of operating the Office of Desegregation Monitoring when we are released from federal court supervision.

Additional information will be provided for the Board's review prior to the January board agenda meeting. Dr. James reminded the board that it will be necessary to act quickly on any school closing decisions as letters will need to go out to parents of students who would be affected and reassigned.

E. Construction Report: Proposed Bond Projects

Mr. Goodman's construction report was printed in the Board's agenda and Doug Eaton was present to review progress at Mann Magnet School. Board members expressed appreciation for the format of the construction report and were especially pleased to see the list of completed projects is growing each month.

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Ms. Strickland left the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

F. Technology Update

Ms. Neal provided a report for the Board's review. She introduced John Ruffins, Director of Information Services, and Sharon Dowdy, the EDS consultant who has worked with the District on Technology projects. Construction on the technology room is nearing completion and equipment is being installed at this time. Ms. Neal noted that twenty-one sites have been connected to the Wide Area Network; all sites should be connected by September 2002. Programming for the new telephone system is underway; the administration building should be on the new phone system in February 2002, with all installations completed by October 2002. Once this project is complete, every classroom will have a telephone and voice mail will be provided for every employee. Each classroom will have at least one computer and staff development and training will be continued.

In addition, Ms. Neal reported that the year-five application for e-rate funding is due by January 17. This year's application will request funding for the Wide Area Network, phone system service and maintenance, network electronics, and engineering and installation of network systems.

V. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS

A. Minutes

Minutes from the regular meeting of the Board of Directors held on November 15 and from a special meeting held on December 6 were presented for review and approval.

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

VI. INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES DIVISION

A. Program Evaluation for Extended Year Schools

Frances Jones presented a summary evaluation report on the first year of operation for the three extended year schools: Mabelvale, Stephens, and Woodruff. Ms. Jones highlighted key aspects and expectations for extended year schools, and provided a comparison of achievement test scores, reading assessment results, disciplinary sanctions, cost of operations, perceptual surveys, and teacher expectations and behavior.

Ms. Jones also noted that five additional schools are considering the extended year calendar by surveying parents, talking with the students and staff, and gathering input for consideration. Additional information will be provided to the Board as soon as the administration has a recommendation for expanding the number of extended year schools. It was noted that one middle school, Henderson, has given serious consideration to the extended year calendar.

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. Ms. Magness seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously.**

VIII. BUSINESS SERVICES DIVISION

A. Donations of Property

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

DONATIONS

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Fair High School	\$565.00 to drill team for purchase of new uniforms	Baptist Hospital / 3-B night staff nurses
	\$100.00 for purchase of cross-country team championship rings	John Kelley
	\$150.00 for purchase of cross-country team championship rings	Glen Eskola
	\$150.00 for purchase of cross-country team championship rings	Charles Ripley / Court of Dreams, Inc.
	\$75.00 for purchase of cross-country team championship rings	Jessie Gatewood
	\$150.00 for purchase of cross-country team championship rings	Rosie Bryant
	\$200.00 for purchase of cross-country team championship rings	Deloris Armstrong
	\$400.00 for purchase of cross-country team championship rings	Golden Eagle of Arkansas
Geyer Spring Elementary	\$500.00 grant to be used for purchase of plants, shrubs, flowers and items to beautify school grounds.	Wal-Mart Store #124
McClellan High School	\$5,000.00 cash to the boys basketball program	Chris Akins
	\$1,000.00 cash to the boys basketball program	Wal-Mart Foundation

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DONATIONS (continued)

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Parkview Magnet High School	20 athletic bags, 20 warm-up suits, 20 pairs of shoes, total value \$3,500.00	Chris Rivers / Adidas America
Pulaski Heights Middle School	HP Laserjet 3D printer valued at \$250.00 \$1,000.00 for purchase of books for Accelerated Reader Program	Poe Travel / Pam Villines IBM Funds for Community Service Program / Jim Pacheco
Little Rock School District	Eight months of Internet Access Services valued at approximately \$49,440.00	Alltel Communications, Inc.

B. Financials

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

IX. SCHOOL SERVICES DIVISION

A. FOCUS Centre of Learning, Inc. - - Proposed Charter School

The District received a proposal from Mr. Leroy McClure, Jr., CEO of the FOCUS Centre of Learning, Inc., based in Dallas, Texas. This agency has submitted an application to the State of Arkansas for permission to operate an open-enrollment charter school in Conway, Arkansas. Their target enrollment is 7,750 students by the year 2004-05, drawing students in grades K – 6 from Conway, Mayflower, Vilonia, Guy-Perkins, Mt. Vernon-Enola, Little Rock, North Little Rock and Pulaski County.

It was noted that this organization did not file their application within the established time frame, nor did they hold any public hearings as required by Arkansas statute. The Superintendent expressed doubt as to whether the State would accept the proposal at this time, but he felt it was important for the Board to formally go on record as opposed to this charter school. Dr. Mitchell made a motion to accept the Superintendent’s recommendation to submit a letter of objection to the State. Mr. Rose seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

X. DISTRICT OPERATIONS

- A. Request for Easement: Wilson Elementary School**
- B. Dedication Right-of-Way: Watson Elementary School**

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Mr. Eaton submitted a request to authorize two separate agreements for renovations and improvements at Wilson Elementary School and Watson Elementary School. The easement at Wilson Elementary School is for a 10' X 10' easement on the west side of our property for Southwestern Bell to install a communication facility. The right-of-way request at Watson Elementary is with the City of Little Rock to ensure future expansion of roadway construction along Warren Drive. Ms. Magness made a motion to approve both requests as submitted by the administration. Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

XI. CLOSING REMARKS

A. Superintendent's Report:

Dr. James reported that we will complete the applications for two TAP sites in the District, and that these will be submitted by the deadline date. He commended Frances Jones and the principals of Rockefeller and Stephens for committing themselves to the process of completing these lengthy applications. The Board will receive copies of the applications for review and comment.

He announced that the last day for students to attend before the winter break is Wednesday, December 19th, and he wished everyone a safe and happy holiday.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION – EMPLOYEE HEARINGS

Mr. Berkley made a motion to convene an executive session for the purpose of conducting closed personnel hearings. Ms. Magness seconded the motion and it **carried 6-0**. The Board heard two employees' cases and support the administration's recommendation for termination in both cases.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Board, Ms. Magness moved to adjourn at 11:10 p.m. Mr. Berkley seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

APPROVED: 01-24-02

Original documents signed by:

H. Baker Kurrus, President

Tony Rose, Secretary

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