



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

**MINUTES
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
January 13, 2015**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held a Special Board meeting on Tuesday, January 13, 2015, in the boardroom of the Administration building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Greg Adams presided.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Greg Adams
Joy Springer
C. E. McAdoo
Dr. Jim Ross
Dianne Curry
Leslie Fisker
Tara Shephard

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

ALSO PRESENT:

Dexter Suggs, Superintendent of Schools
Lisa Muldrew, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Mr. Adams called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. All members of the board were present at roll call.

II. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The agenda for the special meeting included two items:

- A. Response to the State Board of Education Department's recommendation on the Academic Distress Report, due next Wednesday, January 21, 2014.
- B. Employee Hearing

III. ACTION AGENDA

A. Academic Distress

The first order of business was to discuss and provide an update on the report for the ADE and the State Board of Education Academic Distress Committee.

Mr. Glasgow addressed the board regarding the academic distress situation, stating that he had very little new to report. Dr. Wilde had phoned him over the holidays to give him heads-up on the findings contained in the report from his group to the ADE and the sub-committee for academic distress. Dr. Wilde didn't want anyone to be caught off guard.

These notes include questions from the Board and responses from Mr. Glasgow and Mr. Heller.

Q: Will the Board members receive a written report regarding the oral report that Dr. Glasgow was presenting?

A: There's really nothing to report. Mr. Glasgow wanted to share with the Board what Dr. Wilde shared with him.

- Attorney Heller stated that it was his understanding that our people are going to meet with Dr. Wilde. The written report will come once that meeting takes place. It should show any differences of what we are doing versus what Dr. Wilde and his team thought the district should be doing.
- The board made a request to receive a written report. There is a communication gap because they were expecting a written report.

Q: Is there a scheduled meeting with Dr. Wilde?

A: There's no scheduled meeting at this time.

- Mr. Glasgow stated Dr. Wilde reported to him that the principals were stressed with all of the obligations they are currently facing. Mr. Glasgow went on to read the list of items from his list of concerns from the teachers.
 - Core State Standards
 - PARCC training
 - Indi-Star... the electronic system where they have to assess indicators
 - They have to include agendas and minutes
 - They have PIF's, IMO's
 - Lessons plan training
 - Rituals and routines
 - Classroom observations
 - Evidence based feedback training
 - Leadership team training
 - Restructuring the teams
 - Instructional team
 - Unit planning with pre and post-test
 - Data analysis
 - ELL programming the trip to Springdale
 - Weekly reports from our local school improvement specialist

- They have barriers and concerns to address. They have the ADE people in their buildings as well as time to prepare for the Board work-sessions.
- There is so much on the principals' plates at this time; they are thinking about this constantly. Mr. Wilde wanted them to narrow it down to two or three things and they are working on developing those three things at this time.

Q: Since they are narrowing their focus, is that where we are approaching the conversation with Dr. Wilde? Are we trying to come up with an agreement per our attorney and if that is it, is it going to be an acceptable piece to work with?

A: Mr. Glasgow expressed belief that Dr. Wilde's intent was to narrow the focus. All of our strategies were researched based; however the method of implementing them wasn't narrowed down to achievable points. He was certain Dr. Wilde was in agreement that whatever the schools want to do, as long as it is done well. Dr. Wilde has his plans in writing.

- It was stated that everything needs to be in writing coming from the District. The Board has been given the plans to date. The State has asked for additional information from the District.
- Ms. Curry made recommendations to the Board that they have someone to transcribe all of their comments during the meetings regarding the academic distress. To make sure there is no doubt on what has been said, she wanted to put this on record.

Q: It was asked if Mr. Glasgow could tell for sure if all the schools have already addressed these concerns. Ms. Springer wanted to make sure we identified those two or three innovations they are using to address academic achievement and that they are fully developed. Is that your understanding that they have already done that?

A: They have already done it because the schools have turned in a list and identified those innovations.

- In the report from Dr. Wilde, he mentioned that the schools are trying to figure out what innovations they are going to use.

Q: When do you believe these will be fully developed?

A: Once the principals are able to go back to the teachers and staff. It should take several weeks.

Q: Do we believe the state will give us additional time for these items to take place?

- Once that takes place, what type of monitoring system will we have in place to determine the effectiveness? Mr. Glasgow agreed with Dr. Wilde that a lot of this is too district driven.

Q: Regarding a question of “changing the culture” at Henderson, was that one of the innovations?

A: Yes... that is one of the innovations.

- The issues that had been identified by the schools are too broad.
- A correction was made, not to work directly with Dr. Wilde but to get some feedback from the administration.

Q: Will you make the list that they are presenting to the state available to the Board?

A: The name of the innovations; the action plan, and the method of assessment or evaluating the effectiveness of the evaluationMost of them are not developed at this time.

Q: The SOAR test... Is the administration using SOAR to consider whether or not these comprehensive improvement plans are helping in these six schools and the other schools as well?

A: The one we are using for secondary. We had only one assessment this far.

Q: Will the SOAR test be applicable in this situation?

A: The teachers need to work together and assess every two or three weeks. This is how you will know if your innovation is working.

Q: Will we have that oversight in the process concerning the assessment? Are there various lists of things that the principals have to handle? If so, are there things on the list that we have a choice not to do?

A: No, sometimes we have no choice on some of the requirements. The principals still have to do those things because that's part of their jobs.

Mr. Heller commented regarding the discussion. The state board of education is considering whether to take over the school district. We have two opportunities, January 21st and January 28, 2015, to try and persuade the state board that it's a bad idea to take over.

Q: What are we going to give them on January 21st? What matters is if we can narrow this down into what the state wants.

Q: What's the plan going to be?

A: The second plan is the agreement to be presented to the State Board to assure them that that our plan can be implemented.

Mr. Heller stated that he, Mr. Glasgow, Dr. Perkins and Mr. Burton would need to work with Dr. Wilde. We all will meet on Tuesday, January 20, 2015.

Dr. Suggs was asked if the administrative was on track to address the State Board. Dr. Suggs wanted to ensure the board that a plan has been presented. He corrected previous statements that nothing had been in writing or presented.

After we meet, there will be a better picture of where we need to go. We are going to get with the people at ADE and find out where we are and what else needs to be done. We have requested a meeting, but we can't force someone to get in the room with us for this discussion.

Q: Will the Board be properly notified?

A: The Board can look at the plan and decide if we need to approve it on Tuesday. Dr. Suggs stated that after we meet on Wednesday to send out the information on Thursday; Friday would be too late.

Mr. McAdoo, Mr. Adams, Ms. Fiskin, and Ms. Curry made comments concerning the Board in support of Dr. Suggs, this plan, and moving forward. Also, appreciation went out to all the people who are working on this, acknowledging the time, effort, and hard work going on in the schools in academic distress. We on the Board are trying to address this issue in a very thoughtful manner.

The board took a brief recess at 6:18 p.m. and returned at 6:31 to convene an employee hearing.

EMPLOYEE HEARING

The hearing was held in response to a request for hearing by employee KT who was recommended for termination from her position as a paraprofessional at Hamilton Learning Academy. It was requested by LREA to be closed.

Mr. Adams asked that the parties adhere to a reasonable and focused time, with the intent to be finished hearing the arguments by 8:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Attorney Khayyam Eddings represented the District. The LREA, represented by Monica Norwood, was present for the employee.

As an opening statement, Mr. Eddings reviewed the administration's exhibits, including the termination letter from Superintendent Dr. Suggs dated November 21, 2014. On September 19, 2014, <KT>, employed as a paraprofessional, was serving as a substitute in a science class. <The employee> became involved in an altercation with some of the students in the classroom. After leaving the building, <the employee> returned to the school office where she continued with disruptive language and behavior.

Mr. Eddings specifically pointed out items in the termination letter, and expressed belief that the evidence contained there is undisputed. There were witnesses to <the employee's> use of profanity and the statement "I quit," which was reported by witnesses to the incidents which occurred on September 19th.

After leaving the school on the day of the incident, she reentered the front office where she got into a confrontation with the security officer then refused to leave the building. This

conduct was captured on video tape and is undisputed. It was reported that <the employee's> behavior was witnessed by several students, and this behavior caused these students to become excited.

The district's witnesses were to include the security officer, the teacher of the classroom where <the employee> was substituting, a student witness, and the school secretary.

Ms. Norwood's statement to the board included reference to board policies and the employee's right to appeal a recommendation for termination. She referred to exhibits including relative disciplinary policies including the Grievance Process, the Resolution Process, and District Policy GBK-R -The Appeals Process. Ms. Norwood expressed belief that <the employee> was suspended illegally without pay by Principal Mr. Vinson after the altercation.

Ms. Norwood presented copies of communications beginning with her contact on September 26, 2014, to Mr. Robinson in Human Resources regarding <the employee's> status during the pending investigation. Mr. Robinson had denied <the employee's> temporary reassignment and informed Ms. Norwood that <the employee> had voluntarily left her job.

Following that date, contact was made with Mr. Burton, Deputy Superintendent and with Dr. Fields regarding <the employee's> suspension. She raised questions then regarding the employee's rights under the Public School Employee Fair Hearing Act. These same concerns were raised with Dr. Suggs.

Ms. Norwood reported following up contacts with the administration resulted in a denial of <the employee's> due process rights. A level two grievance hearing was requested on October 3, and contacts to Human Resources through October 9 were ignored.

On October 20, 2014, Dr. Suggs sent a letter to <the employee> referring the matter back to Human Resources for a level two Hearing. In that letter, Dr. Suggs wrote that a Board hearing could be requested after the level two hearing.

Robert Robinson was called to respond to questions. He reported to the board, that his denial of the initial hearing was due to the fact that the investigation was incomplete. <The employee> was still receiving pay during the time of the investigation. The recommendation for termination was from Mr. Vinson to Human Resources and to the Superintendent. The investigative report from Safety & Security (Exhibit 7) was used to make the recommendation for termination.

Board members asked questions relative to the dates and times of events surrounding the incident and the requests for hearings. In an effort to determine if due process was followed, Mr. Eddings admitted and agreed with the board that procedural errors were made during the investigation and termination recommendations. <The employee> had been "made whole" with regard to the issue of her pay as of December 15, 2014.

The remaining issue is to determine whether <the employee> engaged in the behaviors reported. She had not denied the verbal or physical abuse indicated in the reports. Mr. Robinson responded to questions and expressed belief that since the November 21 letter, no violations of due process have occurred.

Ms. Norwood requested an end to the hearing, asking the Board to overturn the recommendation for termination based on due process violations. She asked that <the employee> be allowed to return to work.

A determination by Hearing Officer Victor Anderson, dated November 15 detailed the administration's position, the facts surrounding the altercation in the classroom, a report of the video evidence presented. In that hearing, Dr. Anderson reversed the termination and recommended <the employee> be reassigned to a position as a paraprofessional based on violations of due process.

Mr. Eddings disagreed with that finding and stated that since the November 21st letter none of the provisions of the Fair Hearing Act have been violated.

Ms. Curry made a motion to go into executive session, Ms. Springer seconded the motion. After brief discussion, they both withdrew the motion.

Mr. Adams asked the board to decide whether to continue the hearing. None of the witnesses had been called and no testimony had been given. Board members discussed the determination of due process, the findings from the hearing officer, and whether this employee's rights had been violated. It was also discussed as to whether <the employee's> declaration of "I quit" should have been the end of her employment with the LRSD.

Mr. McAdoo made a motion to discontinue further discussion and uphold the findings of the Level 2 hearing officer. Ms. Curry seconded the motion, and it **carried 4-3**, with Mr. Adams, Ms. Fisker and Dr. Ross voting no.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at **8:36p.m.**

APPROVED: 01-22-15

Originals Signed by:
Greg Adams, President
Jim Ross, Secretary