



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

**MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
August 22, 2013**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 22, 2013, in the boardroom of the administration building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Dianne Curry presided.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dianne Curry
Greg Adams
Norma Johnson
Tommy Branch
Jody Carreiro
Leslie Fisker
Michael Nellums

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

ALSO PRESENT:

Dexter Suggs, Superintendent of Schools
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Ms. Curry called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Six members of the board were present at roll call; Dr. Nellums arrived at 5:34 p.m. The teacher ex-officio, Michelle Jackson from Chicot Elementary, and student representative Jordan Royster from Hall High School were also present.

II. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

A. Superintendents Remarks

None

B. Remarks from Citizens

None

C. Little Rock PTA Council

Sarah Bernhardt, LRPTA Council President, greeted the board and invited them to participate in the monthly lunch meetings of the Council. Superintendent Suggs will host the first meeting in the board room of the LRSD administration building on Tuesday, September 10, 11:30 a.m. Dates of all council meetings are on the district's student calendar, and the audience was invited to attend.

D. Little Rock Education Association

Teresa Gordon addressed the board regarding upcoming contract negotiations, targeted to begin prior to September 15th. The LRSD and LREA teams will work through the process of reviewing district expenditures and will take into consideration the expected increases in teacher insurance premiums. They will negotiate for a raise for the district's employees.

IV. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Remarks from Board Members

Mr. Carreiro applauded the communications department staff for coordinating "Dads take your kids to school" on the first day. It was a huge success, and he thanked the fathers for participating. He reported on attending an event at Gibbs Magnet School where visiting students and teachers from Japan were introduced. He complimented the students at Gibbs for their exceptional behavior. He closed by thanking the district staff for a great first week.

Mr. Branch participated in the first day of school Dad's Day by taking his son to the first day of middle school. He thanked Dr. Suggs and the administrators who worked to ensure the school year was off to a positive start.

Ms. Fisken expressed excitement about the first day of school and said it was fun to spend the morning at Pulaski Heights Middle School. She thanked the teachers, staff, principals and parents who worked to prepare for opening on August 19th. She noted that a number of people in the community are becoming re-engaged in the District, and she thanked Dr. Suggs and the team for pulling it all together.

Dr. Nellums commended the administration, teachers and support staff for incident free days the first week of school, noting it is very good to have a solid start. He wished everyone success this school year, especially Dr. Suggs as he faces the challenges ahead.

Ms. Johnson addressed staff members who have contacted her regarding change, and being overwhelmed with the idea of change. She reminded them that change is good - - it helps you grow, discover new things, and get rid of old things that don't work anymore. She advised them to accept change and grow with it.

Mr. Adams made remarks regarding the facilities review and upcoming decisions regarding a facilities study. He highlighted progress to date, beginning with the purchase of land in west and southwest parts of the city, and the review by a committee of five proposals for consultants who want to conduct a district wide facilities study.

A date was been set for a public presentation of the top two proposals, with a decision on which consulting firm to hire to be made soon after. Hopefully the study can begin in October. It was estimated the facilities review would take approximately six months to complete, with part of the planning to include recommendations for funding the necessary facilities improvements. The public will be asked for input along the way, and a schedule of community meetings will be published.

Ms. Curry commended the administration, and especially the communications department, for promoting Dad's Day on the first day of school. She visited Terry early in the morning on the first day of school and was pleased with the parents participating in first day activities.

Dr. Suggs thanked board members for their comments and for their efforts in working with members of the community, teachers and the administration.

Mr. Carreiro congratulated Brady and Wilson Elementary Schools for meeting state standards and being released from the state's improvement list.

B. Update: Safety & Security

Bobby Jones provided a brief overview of the enhancements in the schools' security systems and procedures. He reminded the board that additional funds were approved in March to hire additional security officers and to make improvements in security measures in the schools. These improvements included upgrades to the power locks on outside doors, mainly at the elementary schools. Additional recommendations for safety precautions will be presented to the board for review as they are developed.

C. Internal Auditors Report

The monthly auditor's report was provided in the board's agenda. Mr. Becker responded to questions from the board. October 5th is the next computer day, with approximately 300 computers available at \$50 each for families that don't have a computer in the home. The forms for the computers are available at the schools, and prepayment is required.

III. CONSENT ITEMS

A. Minutes

Minutes from the regular board meeting held on July 25, 2013 and from a special meeting held on August 8, 2013 were presented for review and approval. Mr. Branch made a motion to approve the minutes; Ms. Johnson seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

IV. GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

A. Board Goals for 2013-2014

The board reviewed and revised their goals at a worksession held in July. The goals were provided in the board's agenda:

1. To remove identified schools from the list designating them as "needs improvement," "priority," and focus schools.
2. To implement with integrity the middle school initiative and to create environments that are more conducive to learning.
3. To establish and begin implementation of a multi-year facilities plan to address new construction along with enhancements and repairs to existing facilities.
4. To provide clear, open and timely communication to students, parents and families and establish the community as an essential partner.
5. To continue progress toward the strategic initiative for third grade reading to have all students reading on grade level and proficient in mathematics and writing by the end of their third grade year.

Mr. Carreiro moved to approve the updated board goals; Mr. Branch seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

Dr. Nellums commented regarding the costs associated with the middle school initiative and asked the board to look closely at how the funds are being allocated. Ms. Curry stated that would be a part of the discussion at the budget review scheduled for the following Monday.

B. LRSD Cultural Imperatives

District administrators worked collaboratively to develop ten "cultural imperatives" to enhance and drive efforts to make significant strides in improving the overall perceptions and work ethic of everyone involved in the LRSD. When implemented and embraced, these ten focus points will result in an overall improvement in the school and administration environment, resulting in improvements in student achievement and academic performance.

The ten imperatives are:

1. Children come first!
2. All employees are accountable for student achievement that meets or exceeds state standards.
3. All employees will demonstrate professionalism and integrity.
4. Student success is the only option.
5. Potential is discovered and nurtured.
6. An academically rigorous environment is evident in all classrooms.
7. Communication is clear, open, and timely.
8. Students, parents, families, and community members are essential partners.
9. Diversity is valued as demonstrated by culturally competent practices.
10. Facilities are safe, clean, secure, and inviting.

Mr. Adams made a motion to approve and support the cultural imperatives as presented. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

V. SCHOOL SERVICES

A. Memorandum of Understanding: Arkansas Department of Career Education

Mr. Burton provided an overview of the district's partnership with the Department of Career Education which provides career coaches in all of our high schools. Dr. Sonya Wright McMurray and others who will work with our students as career coaches were present at the meeting and responded to questions.

This partnership has been in effect since the fall of 2011, with coaches working at Hall, J. A. Fair and McClellan. These coaches assist students with the intent of improving graduation rates and making career choices. The partnership agreement expands the program to reach students at Central High and Parkview. The coaches will also work with students at Hamilton to encourage planning for after school careers.

Student Jordan Royster spoke in support of Career Coach Josh Hayes and his work with the students at Hall High School.

Mr. Carreiro made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VI. HUMAN RESOURCES

A. Revised Employee Handbook

The district's employee handbook had not been revised in over fifteen years. A committee of district employees worked with staff in Human Resources to develop the new handbook. The board was provided with copies of both old and new version of the employee handbook. Robert Robinson was present to respond to questions.

Board members commended the staff that worked on the handbook, and noted the first section deals with employee ethics. Ms. Johnson moved to approve the handbook as presented. Ms. Fisker seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

B. Personnel Changes

Routine personnel changes were printed in the board's agenda. In addition, Dr. Suggs introduced Principal Chambers from Chicot Elementary to introduce Amy Cooper and Esther Jones who were being recommended for promotion to Assistant Principal and Coordinator of Chicot Early Childhood Center.

Dr. Suggs also introduced Jordan Eason, being recommended for hire as the Employee Relations Specialist.

Mr. Carreiro made a motion to approve all personnel recommendations. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VII. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

A. Budget Update

Mr. Bailey was present and reviewed briefly the upcoming budget timeline. He asked the board to bring their questions to the Monday worksession so that questions can be addressed and aligned with the budget.

B. June 2013 Financial Statements

The final 2012 fiscal year budget close out was presented for the board's review. Mr. Bailey reported briefly, and responded to questions.

VIII. CLOSING REMARKS

A. Announcements and Reminders

Pam Smith, thanked the board for their comments on "Dads Take Your Kids to School Day." The fifty dads who received the most votes in the contest will have lunch with Dr. Suggs, catered by Chick-fil-A, and the top vote getter will win an iPad mini. Voting closes on Sunday.

Ms. Smith also made several announcements regarding events in schools:

- Tomorrow, free admission to the Museum of Discovery for Carver students and their families, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
- Students new to Jefferson will be treated to a pizza party on Friday evening. Families are also invited.
- Elementary open houses are on September 5th.
- Marching our Way to Freedom event at Clinton Library on August 28th. Information is available on the website, and students from Parkview are participating.
- The first Parent Academy is scheduled for this Saturday. More information is available through the website or by calling the Parent Involvement office. It's set for 8:30 a.m. to noon at J. A. Fair. Ten computers will be given away.
- The first town hall meeting is set for Monday, September 9th, at 6:45 p.m., Stephens Community Center.

Mr. Carreiro made comments regarding correspondence received from the City of Little Rock regarding a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement with Dassault Falcon Jet. He asked if the superintendent might send a note stating receipt of the notice and asking them to participate in the magnet program at Cloverdale.

Mr. Burton reminded listeners of the ACT deadline for testing in October. He recommended taking the text in October and in December, starting in the 9th grade.

Dr. Suggs complimented student ex officio Jordan Royster for his remarks earlier in the meeting. Jordan is a Hall High student, and an example of the exceptional students attending the LRSD.

EMPLOYEE HEARINGS:

The board recessed briefly at 6:49 p.m. and reconvened at 7:00 p.m. for an employee hearing. Five board members were present. Ms. Fisken recused herself from the hearing. Dr. Nellums was absent.

The state requires local school districts hear the appeals of employees whose criminal background checks are returned with incidents which would prevent them from working for the school district. The law requires the hearings to be open to the public, and after the hearing the board is required to adopt a resolution if the employee's waiver request is granted.

Attorney Khayyam Eddings represented the district. He presented Ms. Williams' background employment information for the board's review. He covered the state statute and the requirements of the board when granting a waiver. It was also noted that all deliberations and the vote must be done in public.

Miyen Williams was employed as a para-professional at Forest Park Elementary School starting in August 2012. Her background check was returned with a felony conviction which she did not disclose on a portion of her job application.

Ms. Williams addressed the board and provided a statement requesting consideration in her request for a waiver. The circumstances regarding the incident, which happened when she was twenty-one years of age and living in Nebraska, were reviewed. Ms. Williams stated she had fulfilled her probation time, and was working to be pardoned in Nebraska.

Ms. Williams appealed to the board to allow her to continue as a district employee. She expressed her love of children, and stated she is pursuing a career in teaching.

Board members questioned her regarding completion of the job application. Ms. Williams responded that she had always been honest about her conviction, and the misstatement on the job application had been unintentional. The first application was completed on-line, and she did not recollect responses given on that application.

Ms. Williams presented character references including Cassie and Jason LaFrance, parents of students at Forest Park; Marc Haynes, parent of a child who Ms. Williams babysits; and Preston Smith, Pastor of Good Shepherd COGIC in Wrightsville.

Dr. Suggs responded to questions from the board and stated the administration would recommend allowing Ms. Williams to apply and be eligible for rehire if the board chooses to grant the waiver. There is not a vacancy in the position Ms. Williams previously held, therefore she could not be automatically reassigned to that position.

Mr. Adams made a motion to grant a waiver allowing Ms. Williams to apply for a position in the district based on the evidence provided in her application packet and excellent character references. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. The vote was **5-0 in favor** of granting the waiver.

A resolution will be prepared for submission to the Arkansas Department of Education, as required by law.

The second hearing convened at 8:15 p.m.

MH, former Child Nutrition Manager at J. A. Fair High school, was represented by Attorney Greg Alagood. She was appealing a recommendation for termination.

<The employee> had been employed with the LRSD for ten years. She stated that on August 19th she was called out of town for a family emergency. She tried to contact her supervisor in the Child Nutrition office, but was unable to reach her. She did not try a second time to reach her supervisor, but did provide the keys to the cafeteria at Fair to her assistant manager.

The district's internal auditor, Mr. Becker, was called as a witness. In a routine audit of deposits of cafeteria funds for all schools, Mr. Becker discovered three missing deposits for the first week of school in August 2012. J. A. Fair was the only school where first week of school deposits were unaccounted for.

Lilly Bouie responded to questions concerning <the employee's> lack of contact with a Child Nutrition supervisor regarding her absences and reviewed the CN accounting system and entry of deposits.

<The employee> reviewed her background with the LRSD and discussed her certification and qualifications. She discussed the process of recording deposits and problems she encountered with the computer system. She reportedly often held cafeteria deposits in the cafeteria safe when the designated front office person was unavailable.

The counts included in the superintendent's letter recommending termination included:

1. Failure to notify your supervisor of your absences on August 20 and 21, 2012.
2. Withholding information related to your absences on August 20 and 21, 2012 from your supervisors and school administration.
3. Transferring the master keys to the cafeteria of J.A. Fair High School to a child nutrition food assistant during absences on August 20 and 21, 2012 without prior authorization from your supervisor.
4. Failure to log deposits for armored car pickup on August 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27 and 28, 2012. The logs for these deposits should have been made daily.
5. Failure to make daily deposits of funds received on the days of absent as well as funds received thereafter. Deposits were made on or about Thursday, August 30, 2012 for seven (7) school days at one time without notification to your supervisor or the school's principal.
6. Two deposits were made on Tuesday, September 4, 2012.
7. Unauthorized contact with the external service vendor (MCS) in an attempt to make corrections to the LRSD accountability system without prior approval from your supervisor. This action failed and the vendor contacted the LRSD.
8. Failure to record daily production for August 20, 2012 through September 7, 2012 of the food items used at J.A. Fair.
9. Failure to submit an end of the month inventory of food purchased for the period ending August 31, 2012.
10. Failure to record perpetual inventory of the United States Department of Agriculture ("USDA") commodities for an extended period of time leading up to September 10, 2012.
11. In September 2012, it was discovered that a total of \$1,460.85 was missing from the funds that should have been deposited through the armored car service into the Little Rock School District Child Nutrition Account. The individual deposits are for April 23, 2012 (\$529.60), April 30, 2012 (\$470.35), and May 10, 2012 (\$460.90). Records show the missing deposits as being written up on the bank deposit book, but no records

showing the funds being picked up by the armored car service has been provided. No record was found of these deposits in the LRSD bank accounts. The armored car service records show that these three deposits were not picked up.

The board convened for deliberations and returned at 10:49 p.m. to report no action had been taken. Mr. Carreiro made a motion that all items included in the recommendation for termination had been proven with the exception of #2. Mr. Adams seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

Ms. Johnson made a motion to uphold the recommendation for termination. Ms. Fisker seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 10:51 p.m.

APPROVED: 09-26-13

Originals Signed by:
Dianne Curry, President
Norma J. Johnson, Secretary