

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

MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
November 15, 2007

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 15, 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:

Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Dr. Mitchell called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. All members of the board were present at roll call. Teacher ex officio representative Beverly Thomas from Washington Elementary School was also present. The student ex officio, Ebony Cotton, from J. A. Fair High School did not attend.

Dr. Mitchell welcomed members of the audience, including Mayor Mark Stodola, and asked Dr. Watson to proceed with the citations and commendations.

II. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

A. Superintendent's Citations & Commendations

Dr. Watson introduced Mayor **Mark Stodola** and recognized **Carlette Henderson**, Executive Director of the Racial and Cultural Diversity Commission of the City of Little Rock. Artist Earl Jones was also in attendance to officially present the painting that was commissioned to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the integration of Central High School.

The painting was accepted by Principal Nancy Rousseau and Central PTA President Sheila Wright. The painting will be hung above the doors of the auditorium at Central High School.

Superintendent's citations were presented to **Hilary Ledwell** and **Robert Shuffield**, seniors from Central High School who won first place at the Wake Forest University High School Debate Tournament held September 21-23 at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Hilary also was named fourth best debate speaker at the tournament. They will participate in the National Tournament of Champions this spring.

Katherine Snyder, Assistant Principal at Washington Magnet Elementary, reported on the district's participation in the Susan B. Komen Race for the Cure. The LRSD registered 368 participants and was awarded a certificate for the largest team. Ms. Snyder also announced that the district had set a goal to raise \$5,000, and as of the day of the meeting another \$830 was needed in order to reach that goal.

Vicki Gonterman, International Studies Specialist at Gibbs Magnet Elementary, was recognized for her recent receipt of the K-8 Social Studies Teacher of the Year award by the Arkansas Council for the Social Studies. She received her award at the ACSS annual luncheon on November 1st.

Ruthie Walls, Ruth Eyres and **Mary Steele** were presented with superintendent's citations in recognition of their achievements in the annual Bessie B. Moore program for Excellence in Teaching Economics. The Arkansas Council on Economic Education will present awards to these teachers at their annual luncheon in December. Ms. Walls teaches social studies at Hall High School; Ruth Eyres teaches at J. A. Fair High School. Ms. Steele taught at J.A. Fair as well, but is now working for the state of Arkansas.

Lisa Black, Executive Director of the Public Education Foundation, addressed the board regarding the annual innovative grants award program. A total of \$57,542 was provided in amounts ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 per grant to district teachers and schools. Ms. Black reminded the board that a total of \$372,000 had been granted to the district's teachers over the past five years, and she encouraged district patrons to continue to contribute to projects that support student achievement. She noted that the Foundation contributes \$100,000 to Project SOAR and also hosts the annual Academic Signing Day event.

A superintendent's citation was presented to **Jessica Pickens**, teacher at Mabelvale Elementary School. Ms. Pickens spent two weeks with ten other teachers working in small schools in Africa through a group called Kenya Relief. They held workshops for teachers and provided classroom instruction.

Ex officio teacher representative, **Beverly Thomas**, was presented with a citation in appreciation for her service for the month of November.

B. Partners in Education

Debbie Milam thanked participating readers in the November 13th ViPS Reading Day. She reported that 695 elementary classrooms were staffed by a volunteer reader. Ms. Milam then presented new partnerships for the board's review and approval:

Central High School, represented by *Nancy Rousseau & Sheila Wright*, partnering with:

Cantrell Gallery and Moe's Southwest Grill, whose representatives could not attend; Cranford, Johnson, Robinson, Woods, represented by Stacy Sells Pittman; and the Peabody Hotel, represented by Karen Tucker

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

In addition to the partnerships, the Public Education Foundation requested official acceptance of their contribution of \$57,542 for innovative grants. Mr. Armstrong moved to accept the donation. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. Remarks from Citizens

J. J. Lacey addressed the board as a representative of and as Education Chair for the NAACP. Dr. Lacey also serves as a member of Community Advocates for Public Education and as Political Action Chair of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. He spoke in support of the district's position in opposition to proposed charter schools. He expressed a desire to continue to go before the Arkansas Department of Education to express the opinion that the charter proposals before the state board of education are not in the best interest of the Little Rock School District students. He stated that the NAACP, CAPE, and Alpha Phi Alpha support the LRSD in the opposition to the current charter applications.

Terrence Bolden introduced himself as a member of of Community Advocates for Public Education (CAPE) and as a former member of the PTA and campus leadership team at Mitchell Elementary School. He expressed concern regarding the district's continuing commitment to parents and children who formerly attended schools classified as "racially identifiable." He asked for information regarding the students who are eligible for these scholarships, a report of where they are currently attending school, and an explanation of the process for notifying parents of the availability of the scholarship funds.

D. Little Rock PTA Council

Bernadette Turner reported that the PTA Council had held their monthly meeting at Metropolitan Career and Technical Center in November. She thanked Mr. Peterson and the Culinary Arts students who prepared the meal for the luncheon. She encouraged listeners to visit the campus at Metropolitan and to consider the vocational and technical programs offered there. She also expressed appreciation to Beverly Thrasher, Cassandra Norman, and Carol Green. Ms. Turner announced that the December 11th council meeting would be held at Terry Elementary School.

Ms. Turner reported that Linda Young had provided information to the council regarding the supplemental educational services available to students through the district's various after school programs. She reported that the secondary school showcase at McClellan High School was a successful recruitment event and she thanked all district staff members who participated in the planning.

Open enrollment in the LRSD is January 28th through February 8th. Ms. Turner encouraged parents to contact the student registration office for information on applying for seats in magnet or other non-attendance zone schools. She announced that the American Education week contest entries were due on Friday, November 16th, and that they should be delivered to Western Hills Elementary School. Awards to students will be presented in January.

E. Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association

Grainger Ledbetter addressed the board regarding the national board certification process. He stated that twenty four additional national board certified teachers brought the district's total to eighty-four (84). He urged the board to support the agreement that would provide another year of funding for teachers who wish to participate in the national board certification process.

IV. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

A. Remarks from Board Members

Ms. Fox reported that she had read to second grade students at Williams Magnet School on ViPS reading day. **Ms. Curry** reported that she read at Chicot and Mabelvale Elementary Schools.

Mr. Kurrus reported that his church participated in Sharefest at Williams Magnet School. He also read to students in the fifth grade at Terry Elementary. He noted that the classroom where he read was located in one of the portable classrooms and that even though the school and classes are crowded, the students are doing well.

Mr. Berkley reported that he also read at Terry. He expressed appreciation to the ViPS staff for providing the opportunity for the community to get into the schools to see for themselves that there are positive things going on in the classrooms.

Mr. Armstrong stated that he read at Romine to Ms. Smith's kindergarten class. He noted that he enjoyed the eagerness and energy of the students. He asked why we are losing so many of our students at the middle school level and he asked the community to get involved in building enrollment between elementary and middle schools. He encouraged others to mentor and read in our schools.

Dr. Mitchell read in a first grade class at Otter Creek and stated that she planned to go into the schools at least once a week to read and interact with children. She expressed concern about the increase in the number of charter schools in our community and noted that charter school laws were enacted with the intent of addressing the needs of children that public schools weren't reaching. She questioned the process being used by the Arkansas Board of Education for approving the charter proposals, stating that they don't include the mandated "innovative techniques" that the laws specify. She asked that the community support the public schools and asked the State Board of Education to look carefully at the proposals that are before them.

Dr. Mitchell stated that she had assisted a student who was enrolling at Philander Smith College in receiving the scholarship funds available through the district's program for students who attended "racially identifiable" schools. She asked Dr. Watson to review our procedures to make sure we are keeping our promises.

B. Student Assignment Report

No report.

C. Request for Information: Legal Expenses

Dr. Daugherty requested a report and information regarding the possibility of securing in-house legal representation. He asked specifically about the amounts paid to the Friday firm, and whether the district was being charged for reviewing the responses to the frequent Freedom on Information Act requests.

Mr. Heller was present and responded to questions. He reported that the unitary status brief is due Monday, and that he expected the court to schedule oral arguments in January or February, with a decision within two or three months.

Mr. Heller responded to questions from the board regarding the legal charges over the past year. He noted that this was an extraordinarily expensive year in legal fees because of the Unitary Status hearings, the final desegregation hearings, and the other high-profile lawsuits filed against the district by Karen DeJarnette and Roy Brooks. He stated that the average over the past ten years was approximately \$350,000, with the current amount at approximately \$572,000.

On pending cases against the district, Mr. Heller reported that there were currently twenty-nine open cases. Mr. Heller agreed to provide additional information as requested regarding the possibility and feasibility of having an in-house attorney to handle the routine legal matters once the desegregation hearings are complete.

The board briefly discussed the upcoming dates for a retreat, tentatively set for December 7th and 8th. The feasibility of securing in-house legal counsel was to be a topic for discussion. Dr. Mitchell stated that she would contact board members and request additional agenda items for the retreat.

Mr. Kurrus questioned the report of legal fees and settlements. He asked that the employee settlements be separated out, with legal fees reported separately. He suggested this as another topic for discussion at the retreat.

Dr. Mitchell stated that Mr. Heller and Attorney Walker had been trading correspondence on the cases proposed for mediation. She requested settlement proposals on any of the cases pending so that these could be resolved as soon as possible.

Dr. Mitchell also briefly discussed the scheduled Desegregation Oversight Committee meetings and the impact these discussions will have on the future funding of magnet schools in Pulaski County.

D. Budget Update

No report.

E. Internal Auditors Report

Mr. Becker's report was attached to the agenda. In addition, Dr. Daugherty asked for a status report on the request for a procurement audit. He stated that there were outstanding questions regarding the district's bidding processes and procedures and the awarding of contracts. Dr. Watson reported that the issue of the procurement audit had been tabled at a previous board meeting, but that an RFP could be developed if the board could provide a clear definition of what was intended by the audit. Mr. Armstrong was to meet with Mr. Paradis, Mr. Milhollen and Mr. Becker to develop the specifications for the RFP.

Dr. Mitchell indicated that the board would need to vote to remove the issue from the table and place it back on the agenda for discussion and review of the RFP once it was drafted.

V. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS

A. Election of Officers

Dr. Mitchell opened the floor for nominations for the office of President. Dr. Daugherty nominated Dr. Mitchell. Mr. Kurrus nominated Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Berkley nominated Mr. Kurrus. Mr. Armstrong declined the nomination. Dr. Daugherty moved that the nominations be closed, and Ms. Curry seconded the motion.

A roll call vote resulted in a **4-2-1** vote in favor of Dr. Katherine Mitchell as president of the 2007-2008 board. Mr. Berkley and Ms. Fox voted no, and Mr. Kurrus abstained.

The floor was opened for nominations for the office of Vice President: Dr. Daugherty nominated Ms. Curry. After no additional nominations, Dr. Daugherty moved the nominations be closed and moved that Ms. Curry be elected by acclamation. Ms. Fox seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

The floor was opened for nominations for the office of Secretary. Dr. Daugherty nominated Ms. Fox. After no additional nominations, Mr. Armstrong moved the nominations be closed and that Ms. Fox be elected secretary by acclamation. Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

B. Board Disbursing Officers

The board was asked to adopt a resolution, as required by Arkansas law, designating the president as primary disbursing officer and the vice president as alternate disbursing officer of the district. Ms. Fox moved to approve the resolution as presented. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

C. Guidelines for Developing Settlement Agreements

Draft settlement guidelines were attached to the board's agenda, and Dr. Watson responded to questions. It was recommended that the board approve the guidelines as presented, and Ms. Curry so moved. Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion.

After discussion and additional questions, the board asked for the attorneys to conduct an additional review of other districts and whether they had established dollar limits for superintendents to authorize settlements. Mr. Berkley expressed concern about leaving the amount unstated and open-ended, stating that some dollar figure should be stated over which the board would have to approve the settlements. In addition, Mr. Berkley suggested that instead of "guidelines" this information be incorporated into a board policy, with a spending limit set at \$10,000.

Ms. Curry and Dr. Daugherty withdrew their motion and second. Mr. Kurrus made a motion to table until a policy is developed with a set settlement limit. Mr. Berkley seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

D. Minutes

Minutes from the October 25, 2007, meeting of the board of directors were presented for review and approval. Ms. Fox made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VI. BOARD POLICY & REGULATIONS REVIEW

A. Second Reading: Revision of Board Policy GBA – Equal Employment Opportunity

Policy GBA, Equal Employment Opportunity, was presented for first reading approval at the October board meeting. It was presented to the board with a recommendation for approval on second reading. Ms. Fox made a motion to approve policy GBA on second reading; Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VII. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

A. Target Teach

A presentation was made at the October meeting of the board, prior to implementation of Target Teach in LRSD Schools. As requested by the board, additional information was gathered for the board's review and an official request for board endorsement and approval was made. A three-year budget projection was presented as well as information on using the current professional development opportunities for district teachers to be trained in Target Teach strategies.

Dr. Daugherty moved to approve the implementation of Target Teach; Ms. Curry seconded the motion. Mr. Berkley expressed concern regarding the costs associated with the implementation, and Ms. Fox requested a system for tracking progress in Target Teach schools as compared to schools that are not implementing this program. Ms. Fox also requested information regarding the contract and whether it was for one year or multiple years.

Dr. Watson reported that the contract was for one year at this time, with the assumption that it would take more than one year to show any significant gains in achievement. The contract is to be renewed on a year-to-year basis. In addition, Dr. Watson asked that other factors be taken into consideration, including staff input, teacher feedback, and parental perceptions.

Mr. Berkley suggested an amendment to the motion that Target Teach be approved for first year implementation according to the proposal presented to the board through the end of the current school year. Ms. Curry seconded the amendment to the motion.

Dr. Mitchell spoke in opposition to the amendment, stating that one school year was not enough to thoroughly implement and measure success. She asked Dr. Huddle to respond to questions. The motion on the amendment **failed 2-5** with Mr. Berkley and Mr. Kurrus voting in favor of the motion. The original motion **carried 5-2** with Mr. Berkley and Mr. Kurrus voting no.

VIII. HUMAN RESOURCES

A. Personnel Changes

Routine personnel matters were listed in the agenda. Ms. Fox made a motion to approve the personal changes as presented. Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

IX. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

A. National Board Certification Program Partnership

The board was asked to approve an agreement with the LR Classroom Teachers Association which will provide financial support for teachers going through the National Board Certification process. Only teachers assigned to schools designated in School Improvement are eligible to apply for the funding, and the district's total obligation was capped at \$100,000.00.

Board members made suggestions for improving the language of the agreement. In addition, it was specified that teachers be required to pay a portion of their tuition, and in future years the funding for NBCT would be included in the district's overall staff development budget. It was also requested that the provisions for this funding be included in the collective bargaining between the union and the district. Ms. Curry made a motion to approve the agreement; Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried 6-1** with Ms. Fox voting no.

B. Purchase of Property at 16th & Jones Streets

A lot across the street from Child Nutrition, behind Quigley stadium at 16th & Jones Streets, was offered to the district in the amount of \$120,000. This property will allow a secure parking facility for district-owned delivery vehicles, as well as parking for employees and visitors. Ms. Fox moved to approve the recommended purchase and adoption of the resolution in support of this purchase. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. Sale of Surplus Property – Rightsell Elementary

The 34th Street Baptist Church offered \$425,000 to purchase the property at Rightsell Elementary School on 19th & Chester Streets. The board was asked to approve the purchase and adopt the resolution supporting this sale. Dr. Daugherty moved to approve the purchase as recommended by the administration; Mr. Kurrus seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

D. West Little Rock School Design Configuration

Ms. Fox made a motion to table discussion and a decision on the west Little Rock school issues until the December meeting; Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

E. 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. Board member Kurrus read the items listed in the Board's agenda. Dr. Daugherty made a motion to accept the donated items, Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
J. A. Fair High School	\$50.00 check to the Poetry Club	Elston Strong, State Farm Insurance Agent
Forest Heights Middle School	\$20.00 cash for the Diploma Prep Ropes Course (IB)	Thad Everson & Angela Brooks
	\$300.00 cash for the SPIRIT Team to enable students to attend the "Walking with Dinosaurs" field trip	Whetstone & Spears, PLLC Attorneys at Law
	\$500.00 cash for the CBI class	Gregg & Cathie Mueller
	\$100.00 cash for the Diploma Prep Ropes Course (IB)	William H. Marks, Jr.

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Jefferson Elementary School	\$100.00 cash to the Media Center	Family of Juanita Carter, in memory of Ms. Carter who established the first school library in the district at Jefferson
	\$1,000.00 cash to the Media Center	John Carter
	\$800.00 cash to establish "Book Bucket" program. Funds to be used to purchase materials for students to take home	KATV Channel 7 News
	Seven large umbrellas, valued at \$175.00 for use in the carpool & bus dismissal area	KATV Channel 7 News
Romine Elementary	\$205.00 cash and \$75.00 in school supplies	Hunter Women's Group / Hunter United Methodist Church
	Bicycle, valued at \$79.00 to be used as a student incentive	William T. Vaughn

F. Monthly Financial Statements

The monthly financial reports were included in the agenda. Mr. Milhollen was present to respond to questions. Ms. Curry made a motion to accept the report as presented. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously.**

Adjournment

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m. on a motion by Mr. Armstrong, seconded by Ms. Curry.

APPROVED: 12-13-07


 Katherine P. Mitchell, President


 Melanie Fox, Secretary

