

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

**MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
February 23, 2006**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held its regularly scheduled meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 23, 2006, in the Boardroom of the Administration Building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Robert M. Daugherty presided.

Prior to the call to order, Judge Mary McGowan administered the oath of office to Mr. Tom Brock, newly appointed representative from Zone 7.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Robert M. Daugherty
Baker Kurrus
Bryan Day
Larry Berkley
Tom Brock
Katherine Mitchell
Tony Rose

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

ALSO PRESENT:

Roy G. Brooks, Superintendent of Schools
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Dr. Daugherty called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. All members of the Board were present at roll call. In addition, Lisa Poteet, ex officio teacher representative from Chicot Elementary School was also present; the student ex officio did not attend.

II. PROCEDURAL MATTERS / WELCOMING COMMENTS

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Dr. Daugherty welcomed the audience and asked Dr. Brooks to proceed with the citations.

III. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

A. Superintendent's Citations & Commendations

Dr. Brooks recognized **Krista Underwood**, Director, and **Judy Milam**, Coordinator, of the Fair Park Early Childhood Center. An open house and ribbon cutting ceremony was recently held at Fair Park, and Dr. Brooks commended Ms. Underwood and Ms. Milam for their hard work in getting the center open and ready for students.

Mary Kay McKinney, Director of UAMS Head Start and Early Head Start Programs, was introduced to the Board. Later in the meeting the Board was asked to approve a collaborative project between the LRSD and UAMS which would provide physical, dental, and mental health services for students enrolled in the LRSD early childhood program

Four students from Central High School were selected for this year's Presidential Scholar awards: **Don Ding, Zackary R. Eubanks, June Fang** and **Laura Soderberg**. Dr. Brooks presented citations in recognition of their achievement.

The ex officio teacher representative to the Board for the month of February, **Lisa Poteet** from Chicot Elementary School, was presented with a certificate of appreciation for her service to the Board. The student representative did not attend.

B. Partners in Education

Debbie Milam presented several new school and business partnerships for the Board's review and approval. Mr. Rose moved to accept the new partnerships, Mr. Berkley seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**. The new school / business partnerships are noted:

Booker Arts Magnet, represented by *Cheryl Carson* and *Joyce Willingham*, in partnership with **CiCi's Pizza**

Metropolitan Career & Technical Center, represented by *Mike Peterson* and *Ali Freeman*, in partnership with **United Parcel Service**

C. Remarks from Citizens

Lola Perritt, LRSD Elementary Science Specialist, spoke in favor of the pay for performance pilot project. Ms. Perritt reported that she was a former Milken Award recipient, Arkansas Teacher of the Year, and that she currently serves on the Governors Teacher Advisory Committee. She noted that the current pay for performance proposal would provide research that would be compiled by the University of Arkansas. She closed by stating, "There is a need to modernize the way that we pay teachers. We are still paying teachers the way we paid teachers in the 18th century. . . .starting small with 50 people spread across the district would provide the data that we need to determine if this is a quality program."

Sharon Faulkenberry, teacher at Stephens Elementary School, spoke in favor of the proposed merit pay proposal. Stephens has participated in the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) which provides monetary rewards for classroom teachers based on student achievement. She admitted that the money is nice, but that money isn't the most important part about the rewards program. The TAP model allows teachers to improve their teaching strategies and become better classroom managers. In addition, new teachers are given an opportunity to receive additional compensation that would come only through longevity under the current pay system.

Donna Morey reported that she had coached and taught at J. A. Fair High School for 23 years. She announced that eight LRSD students would be competing in the first national Special Olympic games this summer in Iowa, and she encouraged board members to attend the local Special Olympics track meet. Ms. Morey opposed the current pay for performance proposal because teachers who work with special needs students would not be eligible to participate; she expressed opinion that merit pay should be offered to all teachers in the district, not just a few.

Ann Inman, kindergarten teacher at Romine Elementary, spoke in opposition to the merit pay proposal, stating that it was not a fair and equitable way to reward teachers. She stated that classroom teachers don't have control over the students they are assigned to teach and that students come to school with varying abilities and social circumstances that would make it impossible to validate results. She closed by saying that "merit pay would lead to an atmosphere of competition."

Chonetta Case, media specialist at Romine, introduced herself as a National Board Certified teacher who receives a form of merit pay for certification based on National Board Standards. She encouraged the board to vote against the proposed merit pay plan, stating that it has no benefits that would draw successful teachers to the district and that it would have no significant impact on student achievement because it would only effect a handful of students.

Phillip Wilson, teacher at Parkview, urged the board to abandon the proposed merit pay plan. He suggested that research based strategies to improve academic achievement are important, but that public schools are made up of human "products." When public school experiments fail, there is no way to discard the product and start over. He suggested that incentives be offered to students and parents to ensure success.

Kara Patton, a special education teacher at Parkview, spoke in favor of developing some form of merit pay that would reward highly qualified teachers. She noted that teachers with only five or ten years of experience are leaving the teaching profession and returning to the public sector for financial reasons.

Keisha Fells, a third year teacher at Gibbs Elementary, expressed the possibility that the proposed teacher reward system might be an effective way to impact teaching and learning. She stated that a "paradigm shift" is worth the time and effort to see if the research proves effectiveness.

Erin Wage, a kindergarten teacher at Meadowcliff, spoke in favor of the proposed merit pay plan. She referenced the Meadowcliff merit pay project where pre- and post-testing was a tool that teachers utilized to measure students needs. She also noted that the attendance bonus is a good reward, and that merit pay plans are a good way to hold teachers accountable for student learning.

Jennifer Monley, literacy coach at Wakefield, spoke in favor of the proposal for a merit pay plan. She stated that she had taught for 14 years, but when working in the business world she was paid for success and rewarded for personal achievement. Within the proposed plan, a child's progress would be measured based on their own abilities and achievement, and that every child has the ability to show growth. She stated that merit pay is beneficial to all educators and that all teachers deserve to be paid for the hard work they do in the classroom.

Will Dunn introduced himself as a third grade teacher at Baseline Elementary School. He stated that selecting 50 from a pool of over 1,200 teachers was not a fair way to proceed with merit pay. He asked how the LRSD would become the highest achieving urban school district if all teachers were not offered the same rewards.

John Binyon, teacher at Parkview, expressed frustration with all aspects of the proposed pay for performance plan. He stated that he was not opposed to merit pay, and that he would support a school-based plan that would reward every employee in a school. He then challenged the CTA to develop a plan that would be better than the one proposed by the administration.

Stacy Pitman spoke in favor of the proposed pay for student performance initiative. She has two children in the LRSD and has supported the LRSD on many projects over the years. She reported spending a lot of her time reading research studies on ways to improve student achievement. She was complimentary of Project SOAR, which provides relevant information to parents and students on a consistent basis. She stated that pay for student performance is a way to change the current compensation system in order to improve academic achievement. It is and should be all about student achievement.

Karen Stein addressed the board as a member of the faculty at Terry Elementary School. She stated her belief that the intent of the Walton Foundation proposal was well-intentioned, but she expressed concerns about the information that has been disseminated to date. She questioned the application process and eligibility requirements and asked why the information was not printed and distributed prior to the board's consideration. She questioned the validity of the research and warned that divisions might occur with hasty implementation.

D. Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association

Grainger Ledbetter, Executive Director of the CTA, asked two questions:

1) Will the plan really show a correlation between student performance and teacher incentives? 2) How can a school that is considered to be a success end up on the school improvement list? He stated that no performance plan could be effective without teacher input from the onset and that no plan should be designed somewhere else and be expected to fit within the LRSD.

Mr. Ledbetter stated that other merit pay programs should be considered apart from the current proposal, stating that TAP includes teacher training, lesson plans, staff development, teacher input, and proven research. Student test scores alone are not enough to measure classroom success and support for the current pay for performance proposal should not be a show of loyalty to the administration or the CTA. He closed by saying that the vote should be about what is best for children and instruction.

E. Joshua Intervenors

Attorney John Walker requested placement on the agenda for the Joshua representatives; however, they were not present.

IV. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Remarks from Board Members

Mr. Kurrus thanked the speakers, but stated that merit pay is not as big an issue as it is being made by the comments. He noted that some version of merit or incentive pay is going to be enacted in the future and state legislative mandates will take precedence no matter how the board votes on this particular proposal. He asked community and patrons to look at our schools and get the word out that our middle schools are exceptional. We shouldn't be losing so many students at the middle school level.

Mr. Brock thanked the board members for selecting him to serve on the board. He reported visiting Meadowcliff, Otter Creek, Dodd, Mabelvale Elementary, Mabelvale Middle, and Cloverdale Middle Schools during his first week in office.

Mr. Rose reflected on remarks he made in March 2003 which resulted in a lot of mail from teachers and patrons. That week, the U.S. had invaded Iraq and Mr. Rose stated that he was ashamed of our country. "We torture, we have secret prisons, and we lie to the world about why we go to war." He noted that there are a lot of issues more important than merit pay and he described an article that was in the newspaper earlier in the week regarding a UAMS / UALR dental health clinic. He suggested that collaborative effort could be used as a model to establish additional mental health services for the community.

Dr. Mitchell reported that she had enjoyed reading to children at Booker Arts Magnet School. The librarian had selected books written by African Americans in celebration of the contributions made by African Americans. She encouraged children and parents to visit the library, check out books, and study African American history.

Dr. Mitchell also congratulated Judy Milam and Krista Underwood for the outstanding work done at Fair Park Early Childhood Education Center. She encouraged teachers to do the very best they can to meet the needs of the children. Dr. Mitchell suggested that the board include an evaluation of personnel in their next retreat to ensure that the schools have sufficient staff to meet the needs of the children. She stated that students come to school with problems that are not being met by a classroom teacher and instructional aide; they need assistance with mental health and physical problems that are not being met in the home.

Mr. Berkley thanked the speakers who presented earlier in the meeting and stated that "what is lacking in our country is a willingness to speak out on the topics in which we believe."

Ms. Poteet, the teacher ex officio representative, read from several pages of research notes regarding performance and merit pay and high-stakes testing. She quoted from reports published by the Center for Public Education, the American Psychological Association, and the National Research Council. She offered to follow up by providing copies to board members, if requested.

Dr. Daugherty closed the comments portion of the meeting by stating that merit and incentive pay are important issues, but that the board members will make their vote based on their own beliefs. He stated regret that some of the most dedicated and honest people on the Board have come under attack for voting their consciences and making decisions based on what they felt was the best course of action. He reminded the audience that the board members give their time and energy freely and should not be attacked in a vindictive way. Everyone has the students' best interest at heart. "When you make disparaging comments about board members, make sure you have your facts straight."

B. Student Assignment Report

No report.

C. Budget Update

Mr. Milhollen was present, but made no formal report.

D. Construction Report: Proposed Bond Projects

The monthly Construction Report was printed in the Board's agenda.

Mr. Goodman responded to questions from the board regarding construction at Forest Heights Middle School, which is scheduled to begin spring 2006.

Dr. Daugherty commended district staff for the improvements made to the building and grounds at Henderson Middle School.

E. Internal Auditors Report

Mr. Becker's report was printed in the agenda. He responded to questions from the board regarding problems with individual school activity funds.

F. Technology Update

No report.

V. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS

A. Minutes

Minutes from the regular meeting of the Board of Directors held on January 26, and from a special meeting held on February 16, 2006, were presented for review and approval. Mr. Berkley moved to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Rose seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously.**

VI. ADMINISTRATION

A. Pay for Performance Pilot Project

The administration presented a proposal for implementation of a pay for performance pilot project to be funded for one year by the Walton Family Foundation. In addition, an evaluation study would be commissioned by the Walton Family Foundation to be completed by the University of Arkansas. The pilot project would include 50 teachers, grades kindergarten through five, who apply to participate. Teachers who apply but are not selected for the first year of the pilot would be included in the control group.

The superintendent recommended approval, Mr. Berkley moved for approval and Mr. Brock seconded the motion.

There was a great deal of discussion regarding the proposal with questions regarding implementation. Dr. Mitchell expressed concerns regarding the amount of testing already required of students and suggested that under this particular proposal emphasis would be placed on teaching to the test. She suggested that having a certified teacher, an instructional aide in every pre-K classroom, and fewer than 15 students per class in primary grades would have a greater impact on student achievement.

Mr. Rose also spoke in opposition to the motion, stating that although he would vote against the proposal, he agreed that some form of merit pay would be implemented within a few years. He stated that this particular plan leaves too many questions to be answered and that a more comprehensive vision for a merit pay plan was needed, one that was written specifically for the LRSD, designed by the board, parents, teachers, and students.

Mr. Berkley spoke in favor of the motion, stating that accepting private dollars to implement programs focused on improving student achievement and providing incentives to teachers are the only way our district will move from the status quo. Mr. Day also spoke in favor of the motion, noting that 30 of the 50 states in the U. S. are considering pay for performance initiatives. This pilot would provide research data needed in order for our children to achieve success.

Mr. Kurrus and Mr. Brock spoke to the benefits of the proposal stating that increasing compensation is a positive way to recognize teachers for a job well done. The proposed two-year pilot project would provide research to drive future decisions about teaching and learning and would be an opportunity to secure private funds to help us make those decisions.

Dr. Daugherty called for the vote, stating that it should be left up to the affected teachers to make the decision whether to accept this particular plan. The motion **carried 5-2**, with Dr. Mitchell and Mr. Rose casting the no votes.

VII. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

A. Collaborative Project: LRSD / UAMS Early Childhood & Head Start Project

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Head Start program invited the LRSD to participate in a project which would provide services to four-year-old students in the LRSD pre-K programs. Students would receive physical, dental and mental health services through the services of four Family Enrichment Specialists. The funding for these services would be provided by UAMS Head Start and no district funding would be required. Dr. Mitchell made a motion to approve the project as presented. Mr. Berkley seconded the motion and it **carried 6-1**, with Mr. Kurrus abstaining.

The board took a brief recess and returned at 8:10 p.m.

B. Pre-K Student Progress Report

Krista Underwood submitted a recommendation for adoption of a pre-K student progress report which would be piloted during the 2006-07 school year. The project would be funded by Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABCSS). Mr. Rose moved for approval, Mr. Brock seconded the motion and it **carried 6-0-1**. (*Dr. Mitchell was not present for the vote.*)

C. Elementary Mathematics Textbook Adoption

The Elementary Mathematics Textbook Committee submitted their recommendations for adoption of textbooks for kindergarten through fifth grade classroom use. Suzi Davis, Director of K-12 Curriculum and members of the textbook committee were present. Mr. Berkley moved to approve the recommendation; Mr. Brock seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

D. Grant Proposal: Arkansas Reading First Grant Program

The administration requested board approval for submission of a grant to the Arkansas Department of Education for federal Reading First funds. The grant would provide up to \$5 million over a three-year period for improvements in the delivery of literacy instruction. Nine schools would continue Reading First projects; three additional schools would be included in the 2006-09 application and beginning in 2007-08, an additional six LRSD schools would become eligible for funding. Mr. Berkley moved to approve the submission as submitted. Mr. Day seconded the motion and it **carried 5-2** with Mr. Rose and Mr. Kurrus voting “no.”

E. Policy Revision: First Reading Policy BBBE – Unexpired Term Fulfillment / Vacancies

The recent vacancy of the zone 7 position on the board called attention to a discrepancy in LRSD policy regarding filling vacant positions. The recommended revision eliminated reference to the Pulaski County Board of Education and replaced it with the Pulaski County Quorum Court. Language from Arkansas Law was also incorporated regarding temporary vacancies in the case of military commitments of board members. Mr. Rose moved to approve the revision on first reading. Mr. Kurrus seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

F. Quarterly Update

The required quarterly report to the Courts was submitted to the Board for review and approval. The report was compiled by the Planning, Research and Evaluation Department staff, in conjunction with the district’s attorneys and evaluation consultants. Upon board approval, the reports will be submitted to the Courts in compliance with the deadline date of March 1, 2006. Mr. Berkley moved to approve the reports as submitted. Mr. Day seconded the motion and it **carried 5-0-2**, with Mr. Rose and Mr. Brock abstaining.

G. External Evaluations

The administration presented completed external evaluations from the 2004-05 school year for the board’s review and approval. Included were: Compass Learning, Reading Recovery, SMART/THRIVE, and Extended Year Education. Once approved by the board, district staff will begin meeting to develop recommended modifications to the programs and a timeline for implementing the changes. Mr. Berkley moved to approve the evaluations as submitted; Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion. The motion **carried 6-0-1**, with Mr. Rose abstaining.

Bryan Day left the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

VIII. HUMAN RESOURCES

A. Personnel Changes

Routine personnel items were printed in the Board’s agenda. Mr. Berkley moved to approve the personnel actions as presented, Mr. Kurrus seconded the motion and it **carried 6-0**.

IX. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

A. Donations of Property

The Board was asked to approve the acceptance of recent donations to schools and departments within the District. Mr. Rose moved to accept the donations; Mr. Brock seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**. Mr. Rose read the donations as follows:

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Central High School	\$250 cash to the guidance office to purchase frames, posters and pennants	Sharon Moore, Paula Aultz and Peggy Jones
	\$750 cash for repair of a musical instrument for the LRCH Orchestra & Jazz Band	Mr. & Mrs. Sam Baxter
	\$1,000 cash to offset expenses for students attending Harvard Debate Tournament	Mr. & Mrs. James Shuffield, Jr.
	\$1,500 cash to offset expenses for students attending Harvard Debate Tournament	Mr. & Mrs. Frank Block, Jr.
	\$300 cash to the LRCH Debate Club	Miriam Hundley
	\$1,000 cash to the LRCH Debate Club	Mr. Randal F. Hundley
Dodd Elementary School	Uniforms, clothing and school supplies for students, valued at \$2,000; books for students at Christmas, valued at \$800; telescopes valued at \$800.	Transamerica Worksite Marketing
Felder Alternative Learning Academy	\$1,000 to be deposited into the school's activity fund for student clothing and incentives	Dr. Cheryl Felder Stuart and Mr. R. Littrelle Felder
Forest Heights Middle School	\$100 cash to the FHMS Explorer Team incentive party	Ms. Margaret Clark
	\$100 cash for improvements to the school courtyard	Dr. T. Tyler Thompson
Geyer Springs Elementary	\$300 cash to provide incentives for students achieving Accelerated Reader goals	Wal-Mart / Baseline
Woodruff Elementary	\$8,000 cash to the Great Expectations / A+ Program at Woodruff	Great Expectations of Arkansas / Arkansas A+ Schools Network

B. Financial Report

Mr. Milhollen presented the monthly review of the financial reports which were printed in the board's agenda. He responded to questions from the board regarding the payout of perfect attendance bonuses. No action to approve the reports was taken.

X. STUDENT HEARING

Dr. Linda Watson presented a recommendation for a student to be assigned to Felder Academy for the remainder of the 2005-06 school year and for a full school year, 2006-07. The student was found in possession of a handgun on the campus of J. A. Fair High School. No administrative placement hearing was held because the student has been in the Pulaski County Juvenile Detention Center since the incident occurred. If the student is released from the detention center, the Felder placement will be imposed. Once he returns to school, the staff will implement an accelerated learning plan so that the student is able to maintain appropriate academic progress.

Dr. Daugherty passed the gavel to Mr. Kurrus. He moved to uphold the administration's recommendation for placement at Felder. Mr. Rose seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m. on a motion by Mr. Rose and seconded by Mr. Brock.

APPROVED: 03-23-06

Originals Signed by: _
R. Micheal Daugherty, President
Bryan Day, Secretary