



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

MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
March 17, 2011

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 17, 2011, in the boardroom of the administration building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Melanie Fox presided.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Melanie Fox
Jody Carreiro
Michael Nellums
Greg Adams
Charles Armstrong
Dianne Curry
Katherine Mitchell

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

ALSO PRESENT:

Morris Holmes, Interim Superintendent
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Ms. Fox called the meeting to order at 5:37 p.m. All members of the board were present at roll call; the teacher ex-officio, Whitney Reagan from Pulaski Heights Elementary School and student ex officio, Jakyra Stewart from McClellan High School also attended.

REORDER OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was reordered to allow the report and presentation of *Artistry in the Rock* at this point in the agenda. Dr. Sadie Mitchell and Fine Arts Director Danny Fletcher presented the information regarding *Artistry in the Rock* and introduced student performers. Sheldon Joshua, music teacher at M. L. King Elementary school, introduced 4th and 5th grade student performers.

Artistry in the Rock will be held on Sunday, May 1, from noon until 6:00 p.m. at the Statehouse Convention Center. Mr. Fletcher expressed hope that this would become an annual event to highlight the district's musical, visual and performing arts programs. In addition to student performances, other local artists will perform in support of the district's efforts to provide a quality program. He thanked Mr. Carreiro for his interest in the district's musical program, and for attending many student performances. He also acknowledged Mr. Nellums for his support of the arts through the city's Jazzlights in the Park.

Visual art submitted by elementary students was on display in the board room and will be showcased at the *Artistry in the rock* event. Dr. Holmes introduced the J. A. Fair High School Male Ensemble and their director, Mr. Keith Hearnberger. The choral group performed two selections.

II. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

A. Citations and Commendations

At the agenda meeting on March 10, students from the **Central High School Gospel Choir** performed and were recognized for their participation in Black History Month activities at the Second Baptist Church of England, Arkansas. The church's pastor, **Rev. Darrell Montgomery**, asked that the choir be recognized by the superintendent and, as a result, each student was presented with a Superintendent's citation. Choir director **Rhonda Forte** and sponsors **Rosetta Dirden**, **Cynthia Furbee** and **Angela Jackson** were also presented with citations in recognition of their participation in the success of the CHS gospel choir.

Second grade students from Don R. Roberts Elementary recently held a writing contest with the topic "*If I Were a Board Member for a Day.*" The top three writers were present and received a citation from the superintendent. In his essay, eight-year-old **Nathan Adams** said he would get a new school built, with a cafeteria where students could choose what they wanted to eat. Students would also be allowed to choose their own teacher. The second place winner was seven year old **Hanna Lynn**, who wrote that she would replace all the trailers with new buildings. She believes that trailers are dangerous. She would also add more time for PE, "because it's fun!" Seven year old **Alyssa Farris was the third place winner.** She would put seat belts on buses because since it is a rule in cars, it should also be a rule on school buses. She also wants to make more new schools in Little Rock like her school, Roberts Elementary. Their teacher, **Michelle Rhodes**, and Principal **Barbara Anderson** were also present.

The student ex officio of the month was **Jakyra Stewart** from **McClellan High School**, and the teacher representative was **Whitney Ragan**, from **Pulaski Heights Elementary**. They received citations in recognition of their term on the board.

B. Partners in Education

Debbie Milam introduced one new partnership:

Parkview Magnet High School, represented by **Dexter Booth** and **Judy Zink**, in partnership with **Purple Cow Restaurant**, represented by **Nicki Smith**

Dr. Mitchell moved to accept the new partnership; Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. Remarks from Citizens

Robert Brown addressed the board regarding a complaint he previously filed with the superintendent's office. He reported visiting with district administration and with staff members in the office of Central High School. He referred to the student handbook and suggested that there were different rules enforced at Central regarding parents visiting students in the classroom. He asked for the board to intervene.

Kristy Mosby introduced herself as a teacher in the LRSD. She announced that she felt compelled to speak on the topic of employee bonuses from the federal jobs fund. She had been informed the board had agreed to pay teachers \$1,000 and non-certified staff \$500, and she believed the board was going back on a previous commitment to pay these amounts to employees.

Linda Umerah also addressed the board regarding the bonus payment which was on the agenda for a vote later in the meeting. She asked the board to consider the long and continued history of cooperation and mutual respect between the teachers and the board and administration when making their decision on how to vote.

Teresa Gorden, vice president of the LREA, also discussed the payment of bonuses from the jobs bill funds. Although she stated belief in fairness, she also stated that the decision on the amounts to be paid should have been made at the bargaining table where the original amounts were discussed and negotiated in good faith.

Carrie Stewart read from notes written by Peggy Nabors. In part, she stated "Negotiations are best when there is trust between the parties. That sense of trust is honored where administration and the labor union have collaboration." The comments were based on the same concerns expressed by other speakers.

Anika Whitfield reported that she had attended two of the superintendent search forums held last week. She expressed concern that the consultants were limiting the input and not including community concerns specific to the needs of the children in the LRSD. She stated that the new superintendent should have clear and specific goals, and that enough time should be allowed in which to achieve those goals. Some of the concerns she noted were with the history of the brief terms for superintendents in the LRSD, student assignment issues, the difficulty getting children reassigned from low achieving schools, and the quality of education provided in all schools in the district.

D. Donations of Property

The board was asked to approve the receipt of recent donations to the district. Student ex officio Jakyra Stewart read the list of donations. Mr. Armstrong made a motion to approve the donations; Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

DONATIONS

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Hall High School	Two computers with monitors valued at \$400.00	UALR / Dr. Kristin Mann
Mabelvale Elementary School	Eight winter coats valued at \$400.00 Two \$100.00 gift cards for teachers to purchase classroom supplies	Baseline Church of Christ Walmart – Baseline
Mabelvale Middle School	\$50.00 cash for student lunches	Correna Hampton
Western Hills Elementary School	Selmer CL300 clarinet, valued at \$220.00 to the music classroom	Mr. & Mrs. Michael Stewart

E. Little Rock PTA Council

No report.

F. Little Rock Education Association

Cathy Koehler reported that she was pleased and hopeful regarding the Middle School Task force meetings. She then expressed concern regarding the relationship between the board and the union and stated that she was “upset” that the board voted to spend money on a strategic plan but then financially penalized district employees.

She read information from school districts across the state regarding how they were spending the jobs fund monies. She distributed a copy of the tentative agreement which included the 1.5% salary increases, the increases for payments of medical insurance premiums, and the tentative amounts for distribution of \$1,000 bonuses to certified employees. It was her belief that that the statement referencing the jobs bill money was part of the negotiated salary agreement and that for the board to vote otherwise was a breach of trust. She promised to call an all member general meeting to address this topic so that employees will understand this is a lack of communication between the union and the school board.

III. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Remarks from Board Members

Dr. Mitchell commended Kay Rainey and the parent institute planning team for the successful programs held on the previous Saturday. Dr. Mitchell reported that she had attended and encouraged others to take advantage of information available to help their children prepare for the upcoming tests. She noted there were instructional workshops on how to access Edline, and on the prevention of bullying.

Dr. Mitchell also introduced Judy Hall from Promise Neighborhoods and commended her for the work they are doing in our district.

Mr. Nellums thanked Ms. Whittaker for inviting him to visit her classroom at Henderson Middle School. He congratulated the Parkview boys basketball team for winning the state basketball tournament in Hot Springs, and noted the Parkview girls team placed second in the competition.

Mr. Nellums addressed issues regarding fairness and being respectful to each other, and expressed concerns about whether all students have the opportunities they deserve. He encouraged development of solutions that are workable for all when addressing achievement and instruction of the students we serve. He noted that students, Black students in particular, are failing at all levels, but especially at the middle school level.

Ms. Curry commended the reading recovery program and reported that she had visited a classroom where a professional development activity was taking place. She stated belief that preparing students to reach proficiency before third grade required critical professional development strategies for teachers. She reported that she had visited with Otter Creek Elementary parents regarding the enrollment at Otter Creek, specifically the over capacity numbers for Pre-kindergarten classes.

Ms. Curry also responded to negative comments and emails regarding payment of the salary bonus. She promised to consider all the comments, but wanted the audience to know that the board would vote in favor of what each individual believed to be in the best interest of all groups of employees. Although there had been some misunderstanding and disagreement, she promised to do what the board was required to do to be fiscally sound.

Mr. Adams reported that he had visited Felder and Hamilton campuses, and had also been to J. A. Fair, Central, and M. L. King Elementary Schools. He congratulated the EAST lab students who participated in the statewide EAST competition from Dunbar and Forest Heights Middle Schools and Roberts Elementary.

Mr. Adams also stated he was eager to see the results of the community forums conducted by the search consultants. He believed there was quality communication, and positive discussion surrounding the various topics which are important to our community. He specifically touched on the controversial communications and comments directed to the board regarding the jobs fund payment, stating he didn't believe this to be an issue worthy of such great acrimony. He stated the intent for the funds was to benefit the employees who had been most negatively impacted by the current economic difficulties.

Mr. Carreiro also congratulated the Parkview and Hall boys basketball teams for their showings in the statewide tournaments. He applauded the teamwork exhibited by our school athletic teams. He also commended the drama students from Central High for their spring performance of **44 Plays for 44 Presidents**. He attended, met the author, and expressed appreciation for the meshing of drama and history through this play. He also commended Parkview and Fair students for their participation with college students in musical performances at the Robinson Center. He closed by thanking community members who participated in the superintendent search forums.

Mr. Armstrong congratulated Parkview and Hall for winning the state championships. He also commended the Parkview women's basketball players for making it to the finals and finishing in second place.

Mr. Armstrong also commented on the discussion and comments regarding salaries, negotiations and bonuses. He specifically spoke to the “trust factor,” noting that the biggest factor to consider in the LRSD is the love of students. “We, as a district, need to roll up our sleeves, wake up and get the job done whether you have children in school or not.” He encouraged involvement in the schools to help mold the future, and he encouraged those who spoke to go above and beyond to educate our students.

B. Report: McPherson & Jacobson on the Superintendent Search

Ms. Fox introduced Tom Jacobsen and Loe Dunn from the McPherson & Jacobson Executive Search Firm. They reported on the information collected from the stakeholder input sessions and provided a brief overview of all comments made during the 27 forums. A copy of the written summary report was provided for each of the board members and a copy will be posted on the LRSD website.

The board took a brief recess to provide input to the consultants regarding the development of interview questions. Ms. Dunn provided a list of suggested questions, and board members were given an opportunity to review those or to provide additional questions for inclusion in the interview.

The consultants will continue to review the applications, check references and backgrounds and will review the applicants with the board on April 25. Interviews were tentatively scheduled for the week of May 8th. Each candidate will participate in a forum with representatives of the various stakeholder groups, and will also hold a separate session with the student representatives.

C. Legal Update

No report.

D. AdvanceED District Accreditation

At the agenda meeting on March 10, 2011, Mr. Glasgow explained briefly the process to be expected with the AdvancEd accreditation review. As part of that review, one-on-one meetings with individual board members are required by the team on Monday, April 18th. On Wednesday, April 20th, they have asked for a special board meeting to report the findings from the visit. Mr. Glasgow noted this will be the first time the LRSD has gone through the district accreditation process. Preparations are underway for the accreditation team members to review information and visit with individuals and groups of district employees.

At this meeting, Mr. Glasgow reviewed the information presented previously and responded to questions from the board.

E. Update: Community Truancy Board

Dr. Dennis Burrows reported to the board on the truancy committee’s work to develop a job description for a new districtwide truancy coordinator. He reported that Sandy Becker was assisting with creation of the job description, and would assist the truancy board on an interim basis to determine what responsibilities will be required of a truancy coordinator.

Mr. Becker will submit a proposal for the board to consider as an amendment to his current job responsibilities for the period of time he will work as the truancy coordinator.

Dr. Burrows also briefly reported on technical issues with the district's computer system when attempting to interface with the city of Little Rock's computer systems. A trial run has been done with the system at Central High School. In addition to city and district staff, caseworkers from the juvenile courts system have encountered difficulty tracking information from the district as relates to the coordination of information among all the agencies that deal with truancy. Additional reports will be made to the board as necessary.

F. Middle School Task Force

Mr. Babbs briefly reported on the recent meeting of the Middle School Task Force. The PRE department provided an initial survey document to be used to gather parent input from current 5th, 6th, and 7th grade parents. The committee members reviewed the survey and provided comments and suggestions. *Parent Link* and the LRSD website will be utilized to gain responses to open ended questions. It was noted that the middle school principals are actively involved in the committee meetings and provide their perspective on the middle school experience. Mr. Adams asked that 8th grade parents be included in the survey to provide their input on experiences with LRSD middle level education. The survey is targeted to go home the end of April.

G. Artistry in the Rock

Artistry in the Rock will be held on Sunday, May 1, 2011 at the Statehouse Convention Center. A more detailed presentation was made earlier in the meeting.

H. Update: Student Registration / Enrollment Report

Dr. Holmes reviewed information provided by the student registration office regarding the current student enrollment. As of the date of this meeting, 25,560 students were enrolled. It was noted that the count is fluid and changes day by day as students enroll or register in other districts. The report provided in the agenda did not have a full accounting of the pre-K enrollment or a full listing of magnet and transfer students.

Ms. Fox noted that 120 students had returned to the district from the closed Urban Collegiate Preparatory Charter School. That number represented about half of those who had been enrolled at UCPC. The student registration office will be open during the week of spring break for parents who want to wait until after spring break to re-enroll their children.

Mr. Glasgow responded to a question from Ms. Curry regarding the testing for students who enroll during this time in the school year. He reported that they are required to test, but that their scores are not reflected in the final reports for the LRSD. For students who are mobile, the scores go back to the school where they were previously enrolled.

I. Internal Auditors Report

Mr. Becker's report was provided as part of the board's agenda.

IV. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS

A. Minutes

Minutes from the regular board meeting held on February 24, 2011 were presented for review and approval. Mr. Armstrong made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Adams seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

V. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

A. Elementary Literacy Textbook Adoption K – 5

The board received a recommendation from Karen James for the Elementary Literacy Textbook Adoption for K – 5. Seven different classroom based series were considered and thoroughly evaluated under the terms of the district's textbook adoption process. The Houghton Mifflin series was recommended and was on display in the superintendent's office. Dr. Mitchell moved to approve the recommendation; Mr. Nellums seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

B. U. S. Department of Education Grant Submission: Improving Literacy Through School Libraries

The administration presented a recommendation from Linda Young to submit an application to the U. S. Department of Education for an Improving Literacy Through School Libraries grant. Ms. Young reported that this would be the fourth submission for the LRSD and would provide funds to purchase new library books and resources at Chicot, Brady, and McDermott Elementary Schools and at Cloverdale, Forest Heights, and Mabelvale Middle Schools. This proposal offers 5 competitive points for low achieving schools and the selection process is highly competitive. Funding will also include technology and after school resources in the range from \$250,000 to \$350,000.

Dr. Mitchell commended Ms. Young for the writing of this and other grants and offered a motion to approve the submission. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VI. SCHOOL SERVICES

A. Felder Alternative Learning Academy

At the agenda meeting on March 10, 2011, Mr. Babbs reviewed options being considered for the continued operation of Felder Academy and the provision of services to students who attend school at the Felder and Hamilton sites.

He offered a recommendation to submit a request to the Arkansas Department of Education requesting they rescind the charter for Felder for the 2011-12 school year. If the request is approved, the administration will return with a more detailed request for modifications in the operations of these two campuses.

Mr. Carreiro made a motion to approve the submission of the request to the ADE and to proceed with implementing Option 2 if the ADE approves rescinding of the charter. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion.

Under Option 2, students in grade 6 - 8 would attend the Felder Campus; students in grades 9 – 12 and residential treatment students would attend Hamilton. After additional discussion, the motion **carried unanimously**.

VII. HUMAN RESOURCES

A. LRSD Proposal for Disbursement of the Education Jobs Fund Allocation

The administration made a recommendation to disburse a non-recurring \$750 per employee bonus to all certified and classified staff, with the exception of CARE employees who work part-time in before and after school programs. These funds are made available through the Federal education Jobs Fund Program. Once the bonuses are paid, if funds remain from the jobs bill there will be a recommendation to extend some of the positions that have been funded with NSLA funds.

At the agenda meeting, options for distribution of the funds available were discussed at length. As required under state statute, any non-recurring salary payments made to school-based certified staff must be made also to other certified personnel. There was a great deal of discussion at the agenda meeting and over the week between meetings whether the amounts would be different for certified and non-certified personnel, possibly \$1,000 to certified staff and \$500 to non-certified.

Mr. Bailey was present to respond to questions from the board, especially related to the contention from union leaders that the administration had agreed to the \$1,000 and \$500 payouts as part of the negotiated agreement. Mr. Carreiro asked specifically if this was a different proposal from one previously recommended by the administration.

Dr. Holmes responded that the board had not had a recommendation from the administration on this issue prior to the one on the table at this time. At the previous meeting there was discussion about \$1,000 and \$500, but Dr. Holmes reiterated this was his first recommendation to the board regarding the bonus.

After additional discussion and questions from the board, Dr. Holmes responded regarding the negotiated agreement. The agreement was to pay a 1.5% salary increase to all employees and an increase to the medical insurance for some employees. The issue of the jobs fund bonus was not part of the negotiated agreement, and it was not part of the board's vote to approve the salary increase. The team had a mutual agreement regarding the disposition of bonus funds, which was that the issue would be brought before the board as a proposal for review and discussion, and a vote for the board to decide.

Ms. Curry made a motion to approve the administration's recommendation to pay \$750 to all employees. Mr. Adams seconded the motion.

Prior to the vote, Mr. Carreiro suggested amending the motion and changing the amount of the bonus to \$1,000 for school level certified, and \$500 to classified staff.

He expressed displeasure in having to decide between upholding the collective bargaining process and supporting the administration in their recommendation. He then moved to amend the motion to pay \$1,000 to school level certified staff and \$500 to classified staff. Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion to amend.

Ms. Fox stated that she didn't like the general idea of the jobs fund money and payment of a "gift" of taxpayer dollars. The fund's intent was to support schools and districts where cuts had been made to the staffing or salary, neither of which applied to the LRSD. The idea that this "gift" is causing such disagreement among the staff is unpleasant.

Mr. Adams spoke in support of the original motion stating that the money should be granted to those employees who make the least in salary and who had been most affected by the recession. He felt the current availability of funds was a one time opportunity to assist the employees who need the funds most. Some of the emails he received were very negative, and he wanted to object publicly to the comments suggesting the board was insulting the teachers by splitting the bonus evenly across all employee groups. He said dividing the funds evenly makes the most sense for this one time, and it will make a bigger difference to the people on the lower end of the salary scale.

On Mr. Carreiro's motion to amend the motion, the **motion failed 3-4**. Ms. Fox, Mr. Carreiro and Dr. Mitchell voted in favor. Mr. Adams, Mr. Armstrong, Ms. Curry, and Mr. Nellums, voted no.

The motion on the original motion to pay \$750 per employee **carried 5-2** with Mr. Nellums and Dr. Mitchell voting no.

B. Personnel Changes

Routine general personnel changes were printed in the board's agenda. Dr. Mitchell made a motion to approve; Mr. Adams seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. School Calendar, 2011-2012

The proposed calendar for student attendance days was presented for the board's review and approval. Mr. Hartz reported that this year's legislature approved an Act which will allow Arkansas school districts to start school before August 19th. This year, the administration recommended beginning school on August 15th. The calendar will also reflect four inclement weather days at the end of the school year, which will not be attendance days if there are no school days lost to severe weather conditions.

Mr. Hartz also noted that the fall semester will be complete before the winter break and spring break will be the same week across the state. Ms. Curry moved to approve the proposed calendar. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VIII. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

A. Budget Update

Mr. Bailey referenced the proposed budget calendar which was included with the agenda in February. He asked the board to review it and call him to discuss any concerns. He reported that the usual revenues and expenditures were tracking as expected with no major changes over previous years.

Mr. Carreiro asked Mr. Bailey to provide a summary of salaries included in the "people book." He would like an indication of the numbers of employees within each budget category.

B. Monthly Financial Reports – February 2011

Financial reports were provided in the board's agenda.

CLOSING REMARKS

Dr. Holmes reminded the board of spring break the week following this meeting. students will be out of school, but most administration employees will be at work unless they are using vacation time.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

APPROVED: 04-28-11

Originals Signed by:
Melanie Fox, President
Michael Nellums, Secretary