



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

**MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
November 18, 2010**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 18, 2010, 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:

Linda Watson, Superintendent
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Ms. Fox called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. Five members of the board were present at roll call; Ms. Curry arrived at 5:47 p.m. Mr. Carreiro arrived at 5:55 p.m. Also present were the ex officio representatives for the month of November Andrea Pennington, teacher at Geyer Springs Elementary, and Seth Martin, student at Parkview Magnet High School.

II. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

A. Superintendent's Remarks

At the agenda meeting on November 11, the ex officio representatives for the month of November were given a certification of appreciation for their service: *Seth Martin*, student at **Parkview Magnet High School**; and *Andrea Pennington*, teacher at **Geyer Springs Elementary School**.

Parkview student art work was displayed in the lobby, and an opportunity to bid on the paintings was provided through a silent auction. Proceeds will go to the American Cancer Society.

B. Remarks from Citizens

Richard Stephens, President, and **Shelly Ehinger**, Executive Director, of the Little Rock Housing Authority were present to deliver their annual PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) check to the school district. Housing Authority properties are exempt from paying property taxes; therefore, they annually remit a payment in lieu of taxes in support of the city and local school districts. The payment to the district was over \$50,000.

Ms. Ehinger reported that the Housing Authority continues to provide assistance to Little Rock families by being involved in projects to provide homes for area residents. They are currently building new homes in the Central High and Stephens elementary area. \$800,000 has been allocated to this project in the Stephens area and \$1 million in the Central High School area. In addition, over \$20 million has been spent on a subdivision near Washington Elementary which includes single family homes and duplexes. The Housing Authority is also purchasing homes in these neighborhoods which will be renovated and sold or rented to low income families.

Neddie Nichols reported that she had previously had a problem with lighting at the LRSD transportation department, but that through a team effort the problem was resolved. She noted that some of the district's employees work full time, but that wages are so low they remain below the poverty level. She asked the board to consider the consequences of going outside the district to select a superintendent. She stated that since the board knows which qualifications they want and need in a superintendent, spending a lot of money to find someone wouldn't be a good use of district money. She asked the board to "get rid of the us / them stigma" and to do what is right.

Carrie Stewart discussed the importance of striving for a quality staff by planning to increase the starting salary for teachers to \$40,000. She reported that teachers went without a raise three years ago, received ½ percent two years ago, and 1¼ percent last year. She quoted board member comments that the district is in sound financial condition and "awash in money." Considering those comments, she asked the board to offer an increase at the first bargaining session and to enter negotiations with an open mind.

LaJoy Person addressed the board regarding concerns about the recent painting project at Bale Elementary. She reported that she was informed that the paint was water based and that the fumes were not harmful. She believed they were painting with lacquer, that windows were closed and that there was no proper ventilation. She reported that her child missed school because of the painting and that he suffered headache and nausea.

Fleta Watson stated that she agreed with Ms. Person's comments, and that her child was asthmatic which was exacerbated by the paint fumes. She believed that the paint thinner was caustic and that fumes were emitted that were harmful to children with respiratory problems. She closed by saying that since children can't speak for themselves, it's up to the parents to speak out for them.

C. Update: Volunteers in Public Schools

Debbie Milam briefly reported on the November 16, 2010, ViPS Jane Mendel Reading Day. Parents, grandparents, and other community members read in all 679 elementary classrooms. She thanked all readers and noted the importance of student contact with members of the community, celebrity readers, and other volunteers up close and personnel.

D. Partners in Education

Ms. Milam presented two new school / business partnerships at the board's November 11 agenda meeting. Ms. Milam requested board approval of the partnerships.

Watson Intermediate, represented by *Shannon Deneke*, in partnership with **Highland Valley United Methodist Church**, represented by *Bev Stock, Pam Simpson, Carla Coleman and Reverend Bill Cato*

M.L. King Elementary School, represented by *Tyrone Harris*, in partnership with the **Office of Governor Mike Beebe**, represented by *Sericia Cole*

Dr. Mitchell made a motion to accept the partnerships; Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **passed unanimously**.

E. Donations of Property

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

DONATIONS

| SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT | ITEM | DONOR |
|----------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Otter Creek Elementary | Sanitaire upright vacuum cleaner, valued at \$350.00 | Ms. Debbie Meadows |
| Pulaski Heights Elementary | \$4,000 to purchase a Smartboard for the ETC classroom New backdrop stage curtain and valance, valued at \$2,345.00 for the auditorium | Pulaski Heights PTA |
| Roberts Elementary | \$50.00 cash to the library fund to purchase books in honor of Dr. Don Roberts | Ms. Martha Culp |
| Romine Elementary | \$200.00 check and school supplies valued at approximately \$100.00 | Hunter United Methodist Women |
| Western Hills Elementary | Vito 40 clarinet, valued at \$250.00 to the music classroom | Mr. & Mrs. Henry Buehling |
| Wilson Elementary | \$500.00 cash to assist with student and staff incentives and activities | St. Andrew's Church |

F. Little Rock PTA Council

No report.

G. Little Rock Education Association

Cathy Kohler introduced members of the LR Education Association present at the meeting. She reported that she had read on Tuesday at Woodruff Early Childhood Center.

Ms. Kohler expressed appreciation for the district's Education Support Professionals, noting that the LREA had recently hosted a dinner in recognition of all ESP's. She stated that the support professionals were the group most likely to have students in our schools and that they were "the backbone of everything we do." She thanked Tiffany Hoffman and Dennis Walker for filming commercials for American Education Week. These commercials are running on the local television channels.

She asked board members to pay special attention to the article on page two of the newsletter and the NEA priority schools indicator sheet. Dr. Sheila Simmons, Director of NEA Human and Civil Rights Department, had written about the indicators for a quality school. Those indicators had not changed over the past twenty years. She asked the board if the LRSD was living up to the responsibility of ensuring the LRSD is a quality school district. She closed by informing board members that she would be watching everything and that every vote would be published in their newsletter.

III. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Remarks from Board Members

Ms. Curry reported that she had enjoyed reading day at Mabelvale Elementary School. She encouraged others in the audience to be more involved in the schools.

Mr. Nellums stated that he had received calls after last month's board meeting regarding some of the comments made by Ms. Kohler. He asked for conversation and discussion about employee health benefits and increasing contributions. He heard concerns about how much employees have to pay for health insurance and also heard concerns from parents and taxpayers about how much the district pays every month to provide a health benefit. As a reminder, he added that as employees ask for more in benefits the parents and city taxpayers have to do more with less.

Mr. Carreiro congratulated the National Merit Scholars who were recognized in a reception on the previous Tuesday night. He also acknowledged other students who had achieved recognition in the district's music, band and choir programs.

Mr. Carreiro closed by inviting listeners to attend the Central Region jazz band performances on Saturday at 3:00 p.m. and the Central all-region choir performance on Saturday evening at 6:00 p.m. at First Pentecostal Church in North Little Rock. Mr. Carreiro provided information on student participation in choir and band and noted that the LRSD has the largest representation of students in the Central Region All Region Choruses this year for Senior High. Parkview was 1st, Central was 2nd, and Fair was 5th for the most participants in the region.

Summary information was provided by Mr. Carreiro for inclusion in these minutes:

| Sr. All-Region Jazz Band | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|------------|
| <u>Little Rock Central</u> | | <u>Parkview</u> | |
| First Band | 11 students | First Band | 6 students |
| Second Band | 6 students | Second Band | 9 students |
| | | Alternates | 3 students |

| Jr. All Region Jazz Band | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| <u>Little Rock Central</u> | | <u>Mann Magnet Middle</u> | |
| Jr. All-Region Jazz Band | 8 students | Jr. All-Region Jazz Band | 4 students |
| | | Alternate | 1 students |
| <u>Parkview</u> | | | |
| Jr All-Region Jazz Band | 2 students | | |
| All-Region Choir | | | |
| <u>Parkview</u> | | <u>Little Rock Central</u> | |
| All Region | 43 students | All Region | 36 students |
| Eligible for All State | 24 students | Eligible for All State | 20 students |
| <u>J A Fair</u> | | <u>Hall</u> | |
| All Region | 16 students | All Region | 4 students |
| Eligible for All State | 8 students | Eligible for All State | 3 students |
| <u>McClellan</u> | | <u>Mann Magnet</u> | |
| All Region | 1 students | Junior All Region | 4 students |
| Eligible for All State | 1 students | | |
| <u>Dunbar Magnet</u> | | <u>Forest Heights</u> | |
| Junior All Region | 2 students | Junior All Region | 1 student |

Mr. Armstrong reported on a CBS television program which highlighted a principal from Massachusetts who had increased student performance through teacher training and team building efforts. These teachers were willing to work with students on Saturdays, evenings, and other hours outside the normal school day. When this principal was placed at the school, 75% of the students were failing mathematics and 67% were failing in literacy. It took two years of working together to improve the results to only 15% failure in mathematics and 9% in literacy. Sixty-seven percent of the students are now college bound. He continued to encourage more parents and community leaders to be involved in motivating our children to succeed.

Dr. Mitchell commended the National Merit and National Achievement Scholar students who were recognized at UALR on Tuesday evening. She also reported that she had read to kindergarten students at Booker Elementary School on ViPS Reading Day. She expressed pride in the progress that has been made and confidence that more will be accomplished if we all work together. "Every decision has to be focused on what is best for the children."

Ms. Fox reported that she had read at McDermott Elementary School. She also noted that the district's School Security Officer Appreciation day was today, and asked everyone to thank the security staff in their buildings. She congratulated Mary Katherine Parsons who came in third place for the Arkansas Teacher of the Year.

B. First Quarter Report from Schools on Improvement

The first quarter reports from the principals of schools on School Improvement and information from the School Improvement Specialists were provided in the board's agenda.

Mr. Glasgow provided a brief overview and introduced the School Improvement Specialists, Phil Clark, Shekita McKisick, Isiphine Jones and James Jennings. Board members commented that some of the reports were easy to read and interpret while others were a little harder to understand. It was noted that some of the reports don't include the positives to compare with the negative findings.

Mr. Glasgow reported that he believed they were making progress in the schools and were monitoring the progress of school improvement strategies. He stated that there was a need for school administrators to spend more time in the classroom, and the specialists were able to help with this strategy.

Mr. Carreiro requested information from Clausey Myton, interim principal at J. A. Fair. Mr. Myton reported that efforts to get teachers and parents to work together as a team were his top priority when arriving at Fair. He discussed the "war room" where data for every student was identified with their achievement levels. After each SOAR exam, teachers and administrators examine the data and determine which strategies should be used to increase individual student test performance.

Mr. Carreiro encouraged more support for students in getting them to respond to the open response portions of the tests. He expressed concern because of the emphasis and weight placed on the open response questions and the hesitancy of the students to attempt to respond. Professional development is being provided for teachers to help them increase the students confidence in attempting the open response questions.

Mr. Myton reported that a portion of the J. A. Fair SIG grant had been allocated to support ninth graders who exhibit early warning signs or tendencies for dropping out of school. Students who don't attend school regularly are being court-referred; if a student misses four days of school, there is communication with the home. After seven absences, a postcard is mailed to notify the parent that the student is being court referred. J. A. Fair teachers are using NovaNet to assist students who have fallen behind with their credits to assist in keeping them from considering dropping out.

Mr. Armstrong asked about the process for follow-up after communication has been sent to the home. Mr. Myton responded that the parents usually call once they receive the post card and noted that students who have failing grades are most often those who have missed a significant amount of school.

Mr. Myton reported that Dads on Campus days would begin at JA Fair next week. Fathers, grandfathers, male mentors and community leaders will begin to visit the school to speak to students and spend time with them.

Ms. Curry asked about the participation in the after school program at Fair which started the second week of October. Mr. Myton reported that they aren't getting the participation that is needed with only 76 students attending. The biggest obstacle to participation seemed to be that 98% of Fair students ride the bus to school and do not have transportation if they stay for after school tutoring. AVID strategies are being used in the after school program.

Mr. Adams asked Mr. Myton about the role of the school improvement specialist and how it fit with what they are doing to address achievement issues. Mr. Myton reported that he met weekly with the specialist to review data, discuss individual student progress, strengths and weaknesses. They then have teachers concentrate on the weakest areas and the specialist provides professional development to help teachers in student monitoring and remediation. The specialists are support for the administrators and the teachers at J. A. Fair.

C. Update: Strategic Plan

Dr. Watson reported that Dr. Cohn would be in the LRSD on December 16th to review the progress of the strategic plan. He will attend the board meeting on that day.

D. Discussion: Partnerships with CLR and UALR

Mr. Nellums requested future discussions with the Mayor and City Manager to determine if there is the potential for additional joint use agreements. He specifically asked if there could be discussion regarding abandoned houses and vacant city owned lots in the areas surrounding LRSD schools. He is interested in assisting employees who might want to revitalize properties in the vicinity of schools.

He asked the board to agree to authorize Dr. Watson to begin working with the city to futher develop this idea. Dr. Watson agreed and stated it would be a topic for discussion on the agenda of the next joint board meeting. It was noted that it is the city's turn to host a joint meeting.

The discussion regarding partnerships with UALR was tabled.

E. 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 October 23, 2010 and from a special meeting held on November 11, 2010 were presented, for review and approval. Mr. Nellums made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

V. ADMINISTRATION

A. School Improvement Specialist Position

Dr. Mitchell moved to approve the administration's recommendation to appoint a school improvement specialist to serve Central High School and Pulaski Heights Middle School. Mr. Nellums seconded the motion.

Mr. Carreiro expressed appreciation for the information provided by the district in response to his concerns, but he was not in favor of the recommendation. It was his opinion that the additional school improvement specialist was recommended by the ADE, but not required by law.

Ms. Curry asked about the possibility of losing state funding if the position isn't instated. Mr. Glasgow responded that he had spoken with Elbert Harvey at the Arkansas Department of Education regarding any possible consequences of non-compliance with this portion of Smart Accountability, and it was his belief that we would be risking federal funding.

Dr. Watson noted that it oftentimes takes two to three years for culture change to evidence significant improvement, but that both of these schools are showing significant success with the majority of their students. It is often only one sub-population keeping the school on improvement status.

The motion **carried 5-2**, with Mr. Carreiro and Mr. Armstrong voting no.

VI. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

A. PRE: Review of Data in Annual Report

No additional information was presented. Mr. Nellums had requested information from the PRE Department on the statistical reports provided in the annual report. He asked to see more than just the summary information.

B. Proposed Changes in the Middle and High School Curriculum Programs for 2011-2012 School year

The administration recommended two additions to the course curriculum for the 2011-2012 school year. One would be part of the workforce education requirements, with the course being data base applications as a course prerequisite. The other course would be Astronomy at Central High School, which would not be a required course, but an elective in the science program. Ms. Curry made a motion to approve the recommendation. Mr. Nellums seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

VII. HUMAN RESOURCES

A. Personnel Changes

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

VIII. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

A. Budget Update

Mr. Bailey provided a brief update, noting that revisions were being made to the budget reports to reflect the new enrollment figures. ADE information received the day of the meeting indicated that Arkansas was one of the few places in the nation where teaching positions were not eliminated because of the economy.

B. Monthly Financial Reports

Mr. Bailey reported that the district's financial audit was in process at the current time. Final revenue figures from tax collections were expected at any time. He reported that the district's audit committee would be meeting soon, and he asked Mr. Carreiro if he would continue to serve as the board's representative on that committee.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Watson reminded listeners that schools would be closed Wednesday through Friday of next week for the Thanksgiving holiday. Twelve month employees will work on Wednesday or take leave time.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Armstrong made a motion to convene an executive session to discuss a personnel issue; Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. The board went into closed session at 7:27 p.m. They returned from executive session at 8:28 p.m. and reported no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m. on a motion from Mr. Armstrong, seconded by Mr. Carreiro.

APPROVED: 12-16-10

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