



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

**MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
May 21, 2009**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 21, 2009, in the Boardroom of the Administration Building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Dianne Curry presided.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dianne Curry
Charles Armstrong
Jody Carreiro
Melanie Fox
Baker Kurrus
Katherine Mitchell

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mike Daugherty

ALSO PRESENT:

Linda Watson, Superintendent
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Ms. Curry called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. Six members of the board were present at roll call; Dr. Daugherty was absent. **Jameeka McCray**, student at Hall High School and **Janet Robbins**, teacher from Gibbs Magnet Elementary were present as ex officio members of the board for the month of May.

Ms. Curry welcomed members of the audience and asked Dr. Watson to proceed with the citations and commendations.

II. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

A. Superintendent's Citations & Commendations

Dr. Watson introduced members of the Open World delegation from the Republic of Georgia, who were visiting Arkansas to study inclusive education and the district's various special education programs. They were accompanied by Dr. Walter Nunn from the Arkansas Council for International Visitors. Barbara Halford with the Division of Exceptional Programs coordinated the visits within the district and accompanied our visitors on their tours. The visitors introduced themselves and received certificates from the superintendent. They were: **Anna Arganashvili**, **Maia Bagrationi-Gruzinski**, **Natia Namicheishvili**, **Marina Topuria**, delegation facilitator **Vardo Gvarjaladze** and delegation interpreter **Nana Iosebidge**.

EAST Lab students from Forest Heights Middle School and their facilitator, **Debra Sloan**, were present to demonstrate a community service project they recently completed. Students **Maggie Thannisch, Wilson Jones, Brooklyn Williams** and **Davonte Hokes** developed an interactive virtual tour of the Clinton Library that will be placed on the library's website and will be accessible to everyone on the Internet. The students explained how they approached the project, how it progressed, and they showed a brief portion of the tour.

Linda Derryberry, school nurse at Fair Park Early Childhood Center, was recognized for her selection as one of "Arkansas' Best Nurses." Linda was one of nine runners-up in the state for this honor.

Certificates of appreciation were presented to the ex-officio representatives for the month of May: **Jameeka McCray**, student from Hall High School, and **Janet Robbins**, teacher representative from Gibbs Magnet Elementary School.

B. Partners in Education

Debbie Milam presented one new partnership for the board's review and approval:

Dunbar Magnet Middle School, represented by *Eunice Thrasher* in partnership with **100 Black Men of Greater Little Rock** represented by *Eddie White* and *Darren Hamilton*

Mr. Carreiro made a motion to accept the partnerships, Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. Donations of Property

The Board was asked to approve the acceptance of recent donations to the District. Jasmine Jackson, student ex-officio representative, read the listed donations.

Ms. Fox made a motion to accept the donations as listed; Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**. Donations are listed in the following chart:

DONATIONS

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Hall High School	\$850.00 cash for incentive luncheon for seniors scoring proficient or advanced on literacy exam	The Lost Class of 1959, represented by Donald Angehr Smith, MD
Henderson Magnet Middle School	Supplies valued at approximately \$1,000.00	3M Facility / 3M Supplies for Schools program
Wilson Elementary School	\$1,000.00 cash to assist with Field Day activities, graduation and other student incentives	UALR Children's International
Woodruff Elementary School	\$400.00 cash to purchase incentives and materials for faculty and staff (\$200.00 April, \$200.00 May)	DaySprings Behavioral Health Services of AR
LRSD Health Services	Equipment and resources valued at \$6,843.92 for nurses serving students in the CI program	UALR Children's International

D. Remarks from Citizens

Erma Hendricks addressed the board regarding the city board of directors' consideration of a homeless center at the old Job Corp Center on 21st and Vance. Ms. Hendricks stated that she was speaking as a representative of the Hanger Hill and Pettaway Neighborhood Associations in opposition to the homeless center.

Barbara Phillips, a resident of the Oakland community, also spoke in opposition to placing the homeless center at 21st and Vance Streets. She stated that there were issues of safety for students attending the schools in close proximity of the center.

Barbara Brown Smith expressed concern regarding the proposed site for the homeless shelter. She stated that she lives near the proposed site and believes it is inappropriate for the city to consider placing the shelter in close proximity to public schools.

Alicia Martinez, 10th grade student at Parkview Magnet High School, stated that she had a petition signed by over 300 students, teachers and parents, requesting healthier choices in school cafeterias. She spoke as a representative of "vegetarians, organics, vegans, diabetics, and hypoglycemic students and teachers." Ms. Martinez reported that a diverse group of thirty students had participated in a taste test of vegetarian menu items and that they were overwhelmingly in support of incorporating the menu items into the regular school lunch selections.

E. Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association

Cathy Koehler remarked that she had attended the recent graduation of the Accelerated Learning Center. She reported that over the past 10 years, over 1000 students had been given the opportunity to graduate from high school through the ACC program. The students at the ACC are awarded their regular high school diploma instead of a GED, and she commended the extraordinary commitment of the people who work with these students in our district.

Ms. Koehler recognized LRSD Educational Support Professionals, custodians, secretaries, media clerks, security, and cafeteria workers who were present at the meeting. She addressed the continuing disparity in pay between certified and classified employees in the LRSD. She noted that these employees are as committed as all other employee groups in our schools and that she has pledged to work and advocate for them in order to prove their value to the district. She noted that the custodial workers had voted to become a recognized bargaining unit with the Classroom Teachers Association.

F. Little Rock PTA Council

Patty Barker provided an end of year update for the board's information. She reported that council representatives had started the year by attending school registrations to encourage PTA membership and recruitment. The monthly council meetings were held at schools across the district, ending with the spring luncheon which was held at Philander Smith College. At that luncheon the annual school membership and other awards were given, including the "Spirit of PTA" award to Bernadette Turner and the "Lifetime Membership" to Henri Smothers. In addition, Becky Rather was recognized for her long term of service to the PTA. Ms. Barker closed by announcing the summer leadership training which will be held on July 25 at Fulbright Elementary School.

IV. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Remarks from Board Members

Mr. Kurrus acknowledged and congratulated the students from the Forest Heights EAST lab on the project they presented earlier in the meeting. He noted that his children had attended Forest Heights Middle School and that he believed they received an excellent education. He asked the listeners to visit Forest Heights and to consider the opportunities available there, noting that the school would be full to capacity if parents from the west Little Rock would take a look.

Mr. Kurrus also noted that he had attended the Central High School Jazz Ensemble performance with Wycliffe Gordon. He closed by expressing appreciation for the school district's support personnel for the quality work they perform for our students.

Ms. Fox agreed with Mr. Kurrus' remarks expressing appreciation for the district's support staff. She congratulated Dodd Principal Jill Brooks who recently received a doctorate in education. She also commended the LRSD gifted & talented department for their recent recognition from the Arkansas Department of Education. She closed by thanking the Public Education Foundation for the annual academic incentive awards which are provided through grant funding to teachers.

Dr. Mitchell thanked administrators, teachers, and support staff for an excellent school year. She reported that she had attended the graduation ceremony at Hamilton Learning Academy, and congratulated the students who made significant advances. She announced that the Felder Academy graduation ceremony would be held at Felder on June 1, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Carreiro congratulated the students who had received their diplomas through the alternative school commencement programs and commended those who would receive their diploma next week from the five high schools.

Mr. Armstrong thanked the district's support staff for the excellent work they do in our schools, stating "without you, the district couldn't function." He thanked Patty Barker for her work in increasing the parental involvement in our schools through her work with the PTA. Mr. Armstrong reported that he had attended a banquet luncheon at Metropolitan a few weeks ago, and stated that the district needed more schools like Metro where they train students in a vocation, especially those who may not be interested in attending college.

Ms. Curry commended the EAST lab students from Forest Heights who presented earlier in the meeting. She noted that her own daughter had attended Forest Heights. She also congratulated the students who were in the 2009 graduating class.

B. Legal Update

Attorney Chris Heller reported results in favor of the district in a trial conducted the previous week in federal court. A former teacher sued the LRSD and the former Hall High principal Vernon Smith and former assistant superintendent Dr. Marian Lacey. The jury found unanimously in favor of the district.

In reference to the ongoing negotiations with the state in settlement of the desegregation funding issues, Mr. Heller reported that the state attorney general had requested scheduling a status hearing before Judge Miller. A date had not been set at the time of this meeting.

Ms. Fox had requested a review of the state's statute that requires school districts to rezone after being exempt from rezoning while operating under the terms of a desegregation court order. Mr. Heller reported that the LRSD would not be under any obligation to rezone as a result of the 8th circuit court's recent ruling, but that we would need to review our status after the 2010 census to comply with rezoning requirements of the state.

C. Update: Summer School Programs

Sadie Mitchell, Junious Babbs and Linda Young provided summer school information as part of the board's agenda. They reported that the information regarding summer school budgets was incomplete at the time of this meeting, but that additional information would be provided when available.

Dr. Mitchell thanked the staff for their efforts in organizing and coordinating the summer programs. At the time of this meeting it was estimated that 985 students would attend regular summer school programs with an additional 1,500 students who would receive services through the city of Little Rock parks and recreation program. It was noted that 36 college students would be paid through the city summer employment program to provide tutoring and assistance in the district's summer school. Each of the summer playground sites will receive elementary and intermediate remediation kits to be incorporated into the daily schedule. Eight college students will be trained to use the kits to provide literacy and math tutoring for the students.

Junious Babbs reported that the secondary summer school would provide remediation for students who are achieving at basic or below basic levels in addition to the traditional summer school credit recovery programs.

D. Update: Middle School Task Force

Mr. Carreiro reported briefly and stated that he had e-mailed to each board member a brief status report on the Middle School Task Force. He stated that the committee had met five times, and that a comprehensive list of "action items" for the board would be prepared and presented in June or July. He expressed hope that some of the suggested actions would be ready for implementation in the 2009-10 school year.

E. Update: Early Retirement Incentive

Mr. Hartz provided a brief summary report as requested by the board. He stated that three meetings had been held to provide information for employees since the board approved the insurance incentive plan. E-mail messages had been sent to all employees who were eligible to participate. At the time of this meeting, 25 signed applications had been received from those who were eligible. The closing date is May 31st, and a status update will be provided for the board after that date.

F. Discussion: Homeless Center / Job Corp Building

Board members had asked for this item to be on the agenda, however no additional comments were made other than those provided by the citizens who addressed the board earlier in the meeting.

G. Budget Update

Kelsey Bailey addressed the board briefly regarding the annual budget process. Additional information is presented with the monthly financial reports.

H. Internal Auditors Report

Mr. Becker's report was provided in the agenda. No additional information was requested.

V. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS

A. Minutes

Minutes from the regular board meeting of April 23, 2009 and from a special meeting held on May 14, 2009 were presented for the board's review and approval. Ms. Fox moved to approve the minutes as submitted; Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VI. STUDENT SERVICES

A. Student Handbook Revisions

The administration presented a draft of recommended revisions to the student handbook to be implemented during the 2009-2010 school year. There was a lengthy discussion among board members regarding consistent enforcement of the rules at all schools and on all campuses. Mr. Armstrong asked for the administration to ensure that principals are aware of the sanctions included in the handbook and that the administration provide reinforcements in instances where students wear their pants "sagging" and those who have cell phones obviously present at the school.

Mr. Kurrus expressed his view that the handbook needed to be consistently, fairly, and swiftly applied. He noted that some schools enforce the handbook, but some don't. He also asked the administration to reconsider the increase from 3-5 to 4-6 days suspension for infractions, stating that he didn't believe that increasing the severity of the penalties for first infractions would be effective. He closed by stating that he would vote against the handbook revisions as presented because "discipline is more than punishment." He asked the administration for consistent communication and enforcement of the rules.

Dr. Mitchell made a motion to approve the changes to the handbook as submitted, and Ms. Fox seconded. The motion **failed 3-3** with Mr. Kurrus, Mr. Carreiro and Ms. Curry voting no.

VII. HUMAN RESOURCES

A. Personnel Changes

Routine personnel matters were printed in the board's agenda. Dr. Mitchell moved to approve the recommendations as presented. Mr. Kurrus seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VIII. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

A. Appointment of District Treasurer

The administration recommended appointment of the chief financial officer, Kelsey Bailey, as the district treasurer. This action is in compliance with Arkansas Code 6-13-702(b) which mandates this appointment. A resolution in support of this appointment was presented for the board's review and approval. Dr. Mitchell made a motion to approve the recommendation; Mr. Carreiro seconded the motion. The motion **carried unanimously**.

B. GAAP Financial Statements and Audit Report for June 2008

Jean Ring addressed the board regarding the presentation of the annual audit report and financial statements which must be submitted to the ADE by June 30, 2009. She thanked Mr. Carreiro for attending the auditor's exit conference, and she briefly reviewed some of the exceptions noted in the report. Responses to these exceptions were provided in writing and are included in the audit report.

Mr. Carreiro made a motion to accept the audit. Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. Monthly Financial Statements

The monthly financial statements were attached to the board's agenda. No additional information was requested.

CLOSING REMARKS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Watson announced Academic Signing Day would be held tomorrow, May 22, 2009, at the governor's mansion.

High school graduation ceremonies were scheduled for May 26, 27 and 28 at Alltel arena. A detailed schedule had previously been provided for the board's information.

The strategic planning session with the consulting firm of Picus & Odden was scheduled for Monday, June 1, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Clinton Library.

Mr. Kurrus asked parents to speak with their children about safety and about making quality decisions over the next few weeks. He noted that this is a dangerous time of the year for high school students.

Dr. Mitchell asked Dr. Watson to address the board's concerns regarding the revisions to the student handbook. She noted that the discipline committee would meet again on May 27 and any additional revisions would need to be considered at that time.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m. on a motion by Ms. Fox, seconded by Mr. Armstrong.

APPROVED: 06-25-09

Originals Signed by:
Dianne Curry, President
Jody Carriero, Secretary