



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

MINUTES
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
November 5, 2009

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held a special board meeting at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2009, in the Boardroom of the Administration Building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Charles Armstrong presided.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

ALSO PRESENT:

Linda Watson, Superintendent
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Mr. Armstrong called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. All members of the board were present at roll call. Neither the teacher or student representative were in attendance.

II. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

A. Superintendent's Citations & Commendations

Dr. Watson introduced **Amanda Zraick**, a speech-language pathologist at Central High School. Ms. Zraick was selected by the **Arkansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association** to receive the **Paula Gober Public School Award**. This award is given to an individual who displays distinguished clinical service in a public school setting.

Carol Fleming, a speech-language pathologist, works with students at Pulaski Heights Middle School. Carol was also honored at the **Arkansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association** convention. She received the **Louis M. DiCarlo Award for Clinical Achievement**. This award is given to an individual who has shown advancement of knowledge in clinical practice as evidenced by a significant recent accomplishment. Last year, Carol developed a web-based resource related to Medicaid reimbursement, IDEA compliance and service delivery. At the legislative level, Carol continues to work towards the passage of an appropriations bill for speech-language pathologists in the public schools.

It was noted that Carol Fleming will be the 2010 **President-elect** of the **Council for State Speech and Hearing Association Presidents**. She also has been appointed to the **School Finance Committee** of the **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association** for a two-year term.

Connor Thompson of Parkview Magnet High School was one of three LRSD students named as winners of the **NCTE Achievement Award in Writing**. Connor was among only 544 high school seniors selected this year by the **National Council of Teachers of English** to receive this very prestigious award which honors the best student writers in the country. The two other recipients, **Jessica Riddick** and **Neelam Vyas** from Central High School, were present at the October board meeting.

IV. Partners in Education

Debbie Milam presented five new school / business partnerships for the board's consideration and approval.

Baseline Elementary School, represented by *Eleanor Cox* in partnership with **Quail Valley Apartments**, represented by *Kathy Lawson*

McDermott Elementary School, represented by *Teresa Richardson*, in partnership with **Fellowship Bible Church**, represented by *Reggie Wright*
The Church at Rock Creek, represented by *Charles Hart*
Redeemer Community Church, not represented but certificates accepted by Principal Richardson

Romine Elementary School, represented by *Lillie Scull*, in partnership with **The Church at Rock Creek**, represented by *Charles Hart*

Dr. Mitchell moved for approval of the partnerships. Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

V. Legal Update – Recommendations for Settlement

Chris Heller addressed the board, asking for consideration and approval of recommendations that will allow him to submit a desegregation settlement offer to the State. He provided information that was prepared by CFO Bailey which detailed the financial impact of the offer made by the state in the amount of \$396 million, and the proposed counter offer of \$430 million. Also, he discussed the fiscal impact of continuing the magnet school programs as they are currently operating. He reminded the board that the LRSD has continued to take the position that the 1989 settlement agreement is still in effect and that the state's responsibilities do not end when the three Pulaski County school districts achieve unitary status. None of the parties have asked the court to terminate or modify the terms of the 1989 settlement agreement, and therefore the existing interdistrict obligations still remain in effect and all three districts continue to be bound by the 1989 agreement.

Mr. Heller asked for the board's input on whether it was their desire to include the issue of charter schools in the settlement proposal. He has continued to address the continual drain of affluent, higher performing students to charter schools. He has continued to request information from the state on the students who have left the LRSD for enrollment in charter schools, but he has yet to gain complete information.

Mr. Heller made two suggestions related to charter schools for submission to the ADE: 1) that we ask that no additional charters be approved by the state board of education unless they are also approved by the local school districts; and 2) to offer a compromise that would include provisions for including special education, high poverty or free & reduced lunch students, socio-economic integration, student transportation, and a consideration of the location of the schools. He once again stated that the LRSD continues to suffer the loss of higher performing students because the charter schools are able to limit the students they recruit and accept.

Mr. Bailey was called by the board to respond to questions regarding the financial implications of the settlement proposal. Either proposal, with or without the magnet school stipulations, would require a reduction of approximately \$41 million in the district's budget. He reported that the LRSD sends 895 M-to-M students to Pulaski County and North Little Rock Schools; the LRSD receives 1,295 magnet students. Under the state's proposal, all M-to-M students would return to their home district. If the magnet programs were to continue to operate, the LRSD would be required to provide transportation for inter- and intra-district students.

Board members read the Arkansas statutes regarding the provisions for establishing charter schools. Mr. Kurrus and Dr. Mitchell addressed the approval of new charters, noting again that the state has not operated under the statute when considering new charter school applications. They have set a precedent of approving new charters without regard for the impact on the Pulaski County Schools. They asked Mr. Heller to pursue his past efforts to ask the state to follow the law.

Mr. Carreiro asked the board to consider formulating a vision of what a post-desegregation magnet program should look like, especially at the middle school level. It is important for the LRSD to communicate that we have programs in the LRSD that cannot or will not be provided by a charter school, including the music and fine arts program and athletics. "There would be no reason anyone would leave the LRSD for a charter school if they looked closely at the programs offered by the LRSD."

Mr. Carreiro exited the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Dr. Daugherty asked Mr. Heller to make a recommendation for the board's consideration. Mr. Heller stated that he felt the attorneys were close to agreement, and suggested that the counter offer demonstrated by Mr. Bailey's calculations be made with an understanding that he would continue to negotiate for charter schools to be limited as discussed earlier in the meeting.

Dr. Watson suggested asking the state for a moratorium on charter schools, or some limitations on charter schools, until the three Pulaski County districts "level out" without the magnet school and M-to-M transfer students.

Scott Richardson, assistant attorney general for the State of Arkansas, asked to address the board and reminded them that the negotiations between the desegregation parties began two years ago. The negotiations were with the understanding that it would be more beneficial to both parties to "wind down" funding instead of litigating the conclusion of the desegregation case. He encouraged the board to settle, stating that there was still a wide gulf between the parties on some of the issues, but that the state doesn't feel the district has a strong case with regard to charter school, magnet school or M-to-M issues. It was his belief that the best resolution for the district would be to provide a degree of certainty rather than the uncertainty of litigation.

Mr. Kurrus responded by suggesting that the District might consider an option to settle now only on the financial obligations, but to reserve all rights to litigate with respect to charter schools. Mr. Heller again spoke to the questions regarding the Arkansas Charter School statutes, noting that there was nothing wrong with the law and that it had positive provisions for serving students. The problem lies with the fact that the law is not being upheld and that the State Board of Education, when continuing to approve charter schools, is "clearly not focused on students who are underperforming or living in poverty."

Mr. Heller asked the board to reach a consensus that would allow him to continue to negotiate the settlement with the understanding that any settlement proposal would be brought to the board for final approval. Dr. Daugherty moved to authorize Mr. Heller to proceed with the offer of \$430 million including provisions for magnet schools and M-M transfers. Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**. Mr. Heller asked that it be stipulated that this action does not include any provisions for the charters.

The board took a brief recess prior to conducting the reinstatement hearings.

VI. Student Reinstatement Petitions

Two student reinstatement petitions were presented by Mr. Fields. The two students, Jarvis Milton and Jeremiah Thomas, were involved in a fight with each other while they attended Bryant High School. The Bryant School District expelled the students as a result of the fight. Both students reside within the Little Rock School District and had attended Bryant as transfer students.

Mr. Fields recommended reinstatement to the Little Rock School District, with assignment to Hamilton Learning Academy for one semester. Their behavior would be assessed at the end of the semester, and they would be allowed to return to the regular school setting if there were no other behavioral problems.

Mr. Kurrus made a motion to reinstate Jarvis Milton to the LRSD with assignment to Hamilton Learning Academy. Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion. The motion **carried 6-0**.

Dr. Mitchell made a motion to reinstate Jeremiah Thomas to the LRSD with assignment to Hamilton Learning Academy. Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried 6-0**.

ADJOURNMENT

With no additional business before the board, Ms. Fox moved to adjourn at 7:03 p.m. Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

APPROVED: 11-19-09

Originals Signed by:
Charles Armstrong, President
Jody Carreiro, Secretary

