



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

**MINUTES  
REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
January 22, 2015**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 22, 2015, in the boardroom of the administration building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Greg Adams presided.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Greg Adams  
Joy Springer  
Jim Ross  
Dianne Curry  
Leslie Fiskien  
C. E. McAdoo  
Tara Shephard

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Dexter Suggs, Superintendent of Schools  
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of the Minutes

**WELCOME TO GUESTS**

**I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**

Mr. Adams called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m. All members of the board were present at roll call. The teacher ex-officio, Kate Runder from Fair Park Early Childhood was present at the agenda meeting; Tina Ross attended the board meeting. The student representative, Linzee Jones, from Parkview High School, was also present.

The student ex officio was asked to read the 2014-15 board goals and the teacher ex officio was asked to read the cultural imperatives.

**II. REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**A. Citations / Commendations**

Thirteen Leadership Academy Cohort III graduates were honored during the board meeting. These future school leaders undergo a rigorous process to prepare them for school management. **Dr. Lloyd Sain** is the facilitator.

Those recognized were: **Morgan Ealy, Pam Dial, Shana Loring, Theresa L. Thomas, Nita R. Gray, Millicent Sanders-Anderson, Zoretta R. Finley, Earnest McGee, Laura Holcomb Mosley, Sheree O'Rorke, Andrea M. Robertson-Taylor, Stefanie A. Thompson, and Jennifer L. Thomas**

The *Superintendent's Athlete of the Month* citation was awarded to **Kiara Williams** from Central High School. Kiara was also recently honored by the Kiwanis Downtown Tipoff Club as the outstanding athlete of the month.

## **B. Partners in Education**

The new partnerships were introduced at the agenda meeting by Debbie Milam, ViPS coordinator. The motion to approve the partnerships was made by Ms. Fiskin; Ms. Shephard seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**. The partnerships presented were:

**Chicot Elementary**, represented by *Sherry Chambers*, in partnership with the **Drug Enforcement Administration**, represented by *Mike Davis*

**Chicot Elementary**, represented by *Sherry Chambers*, in partnership with **Community Affairs Office of the Mexican Consulate**, represented by *Maria Rodriguez*

## **C. Remarks from Citizens**

Amanda Warren, teacher at Hall High School, addressed the board on the topic of poverty and how it impacts student achievement. She noted the poverty rate in the LRSD is currently at 27%; however at Hall High School, the student poverty rate is 82%. She said "poverty is not about race," and made some suggestions regarding improving students' ability to read by providing books for pleasure reading and allowing additional time at school for reading. She said 76% of Hall students don't read at grade level, and until strategies are implemented to improve reading, students will not make progress in other subject areas.

## **D. Legal Update**

At the agenda meeting Chris Heller reported that he had visited with Jeremy Lassiter and the Commissioner of Education with the intent of developing improvement plans for each of the schools in academic distress. He was encouraged by comments from Dr. Wilde which said the LRSD was doing the right thing by developing programs and implementing strategies. The plan under development would be specific and would address LRSD personnel and resources needed to ensure the plans are implemented properly. Additional discussion regarding the schools in academic distress included comments from Mr. Heller.

Following a discussion during a previous Board meeting, Mr. Heller answered questions by speaking to the topic of hiring, employing, or appointing school principals. He also noted the Board's policies and regulations which detail the process of having interview committees to select the top applicants. The superintendent has the authority to select and appoint an individual based on the recommendation from the committee. The superintendent also has the option of continuing the search for a suitable employee or appointing someone from within. The District's policies give preference to hiring within

the district, but the policies and processes for posting for external candidates should be followed.

Chris Heller reported briefly at the board meeting, saying that some other pending issues had been postponed as preparation for the hearing on academic distress continued. Additional remarks on this topic are recorded later in these minutes.

### **E. Donations of Property**

Linzee Jones, student ex officio, read the list of recent donations to the district. Ms. Fiskien made a motion to accept the donations; Ms. Curry seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**. The donations are listed in the following chart:

#### **DONATIONS**

| <b>SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT</b>         | <b>ITEM</b>  | <b>DONOR</b>   |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Fair Park Early Childhood Center | 18 Apple Ipad Air with a total value of \$6747.01                | Fair Park PTA  |
| Fair Park Early Childhood Center | \$20000 cash to be used to purchase equipment                    | Roy and Christine Sturgis Charitable and Educational Trust |
| Western Hills Elementary School  | Percussion instruments and classroom supplies valued at \$568.00 | Janell Heffington  |

### **F. Little Rock PTA Council**

Nicole Thomas, 3<sup>rd</sup> vice president of the Council and representative from Hall High, provided information regarding the upcoming Founders Day dinner and silent auction. The PTA Council is preparing for the 2015-16 school year and notice was given to those who might be interested in serving as an officer.

### **G. Little Rock Education Association**

Cathy Koehler announced that the president of the National Education Association, Lilly Garcia, would be speaking at the Clinton School of Public Service. She offered to invite Dr. Suggs and board members for introductions to Ms. Garcia. During her time in Little Rock she will visit Forest Heights STEM Academy and Hall High School.

Ms. Koehler continued by addressing the topic of "change" and she quoted from a book called "The Change Monster." To change an organization in a significant way is never quick or easy; successful change takes a long time.

## **IV. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

### **A. Remarks from Board Members**

Ms. Fiskien acknowledged parents and teachers who are working with their students in preparation for upcoming History Day activities and science fair projects. She encouraged and congratulated the students who would be competing across the district and across the state in these events.

Ms. Shephard greeted the audience and announced that she had reached out to organizations across the city that are willing to assist and collaborate to provide gang interventions at Hall High and in other high schools, especially those that are in academic distress.

Ms. Springer wished the listeners a happy new year. She thanked everyone who is working to prepare for the ADE state board hearing on next Wednesday.

Dr. Ross thanked Ms. Warren for her comments. He complimented her on the work she is doing at Hall High. He also expressed appreciation for the staff of the Fair Park Early Childhood Center, saying that pre-K is essential to the advancement of education, especially for the children from low income families. He thanked Judy Milam for her work, saying that she had "created a strong culture of care."

Ms. Curry thanked the staff members who are working in the academically distressed schools. She also thanked Otter Creek for the invitation to the science fair being held tonight, and thanked all of the retirees who were listed in the agenda.

Mr. McAdoo wished the audience a happy new year. He encouraged children to participate in ACT testing, and said this board supports quality education for all students. "We want our children to be proficient."

Mr. Adams said he had volunteered in a school for kids at risk while he was in college. He had witnessed the importance of having high quality teachers who interact well with their students. He expressed belief in the LRSD and the ability of the teachers here to meet the needs of their students.

## **B. Update: Schools in Academic Distress**

At the agenda meeting, Mr. Heller responded to questions from the Board and discussed possible options outside of a district takeover. These options might include changing the curriculum, improving the curriculum currently in place, or a state takeover of the six schools instead of the entire district. Dr. Suggs expressed concerns about time limitations and being able to submit additional information to the state prior to the 21<sup>st</sup>. He agreed with previous comments from Dr. Ross that planning needs to be done "bottom up" involving the schools' staffs and leadership teams. Building principals have developed interventions and additional work needs to be done to more specifically address the needs of the students in each of the schools.

Dr. Perkins reported and responded to questions. The leadership teams are building capacity to ensure their students are achieving. The teams have been refocused on the three innovations in order to turn the school environments around and they will have to show how implementing these innovations and strategies are making a difference. Mr. Burton followed up and responded to questions regarding how the leadership teams work in developing the processes and strategies.

At the board meeting, Dr. Suggs reported to the Board and responded to questions. As of this date, no additional reports had been developed other than those discussed in a meeting on the previous Tuesday, January 20. Documents were submitted to the ADE by the deadline of Wednesday, January 21. Mr. Heller reported to the Board that copies of all documents were also sent to them for review. The meeting before the State Board of Education is set for Wednesday, January 28, 10:00 a.m.

The Board discussed the division of 20 minutes allowed the District for the hearing on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Heller was asked to present the legal perspective, using 8 – 10 minutes; Dr. Suggs was to provide a statement regarding the status of the progress made in the schools, using 3 – 4 minutes. Mr. Adams was to make a final statement on behalf of the Board.

## **V. CONSENT ITEMS**

There were no objections to the consent agenda, and it was approved.

### **A. Minutes**

Minutes from meetings held on December 18, 2014, January 13 and January 20, 2015, were presented for review. There were no objections or corrections.

### **B. Internal Auditors Report**

Mr. Becker's report was provided as part of the board's agenda. There were no questions or additions.

## **VI. BOARD POLICY AND REGULATIONS REVIEW**

### **A. Second Reading: Board Policy Revision: GBECA Drug Testing Policy**

The scope of the Drug Testing Policy GBECA was revised to specify that all employees injured on the job are subject to post-accident drug testing where there is a reason to suspect that drugs or alcohol could be a factor. Reasonable suspicion is clearly defined within the policy. Additional revisions clarify steps for the collection procedure and the self-referral option. GBECA was approved on first reading at the December meeting of the board. Ms. Fisker moved to approve on second reading; the motion was seconded by Ms. Shephard and carried 6-1 with Mr. Ross voting no.

## **VII. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

### **A. Contract with Curriculum Management Systems, Inc.**

The district's plan for academically distressed schools includes a goal to ensure that the district-approved curricula in literacy and math for grades K-12 are fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards both in content and rigor. A literacy audit was conducted of the district's curriculum a few years ago, and recommendations from that audit for K-5 literacy have been implemented. Mathematics has not had a curriculum audit in recent years. K-12 mathematics and 6-12 literacy are the focus of the proposed audit by an organization with expertise in performing curriculum alignment audits.

Nine providers responded to the district's Request for Qualifications (RFQ). An initial evaluation of the responses to the RFQ narrowed the contenders to three. The three companies were asked to respond to additional questions and provide the best and final offer. Curriculum Management Systems, Inc. was selected by the evaluation committee pending Board approval.

Dr. Suggs recommended approval of the contract presented not to exceed the quoted amount of \$86,400. Ms. Fiskien moved to approve the superintendent's recommendation to enter into the contract as specified in the agenda. Ms. Curry seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

## **VIII. HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **A. Personnel Changes**

Routine personnel changes were printed in the board's agenda. Ms. Curry moved to approve the changes as submitted. Ms. Fiskien seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

## **VII. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **A. Mabelvale Cutoff Road Improvements**

A recommendation was presented to the Board which would grant rights and easements for the purpose of construction and maintenance of roads, sidewalks and drainage structures by the City of Little Rock Department of Public Works, specified as Job No. 3-B-7A on Mabelvale Cutoff. A full legal description, maps, and other information was attached to the Board's agenda.

Mr. Bailey was present to respond to questions. The administration recommended approval of the easement as attached to the agenda. Ms. Curry moved approval; Ms. Fiskien seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

### **B. Facilities Plan**

A discussion was held on Tuesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> regarding the need to undertake a millage campaign and to plan for future facilities improvements across the district. This would include new construction in west and southwest Little Rock, improvements in athletic facilities, and replacement of portable buildings with permanent classrooms.

Mr. Bailey was present to respond to questions. Ms. Springer read a motion prepared in advance of the meeting for consideration at this time. Mr. McAdoo seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**. The motion is included here:

*In order to act upon our commitment to the community to improve the academic achievement and social development of all students; to maintain an equitable, nondiscriminatory learning environment in all schools; to take positive action to enhance the stability and economic growth in all school zones of the district; and to maintain equal facilities of equal worth in all areas of the Little Rock School District, I move that the District make the following specific commitments with respect to school facilities:*

- 1) *To constitute a facilities committee to aide in promoting a millage campaign in order to fund the projects identified in Exhibits A and B;*
- 2) *To submit a bond issue to the voters for approval to address new school construction, additions, and enhancements no later than February 16, 2016;*



- 3) *That the physical standard for all new school construction, at a minimum, shall be Roberts Elementary school;*
- 4) *Construction of a southwest high school shall be the district's first priority. Upon a successful millage, the district shall simultaneously authorize construction of a southwest Little Rock high school and a west Little Rock middle school. (Northwest of Barrow Road and I-630) If for some reason the southwest Little Rock's school construction is delayed, the west Little Rock school construction shall also be delayed pending resolution of the reasons for delay;*
- 5) *That the bond issue shall also include conversion of some facilities, the improvement of others, and the construction of one or more elementary schools. All portables in the district shall be eliminated ;*
- 6) *That the second priority of the district will be those material improvements which the board deems necessary in order to create and maintain relative equal facilities throughout the district; (See Exhibits A and B)*
- 7) *The precept of the district shall be that the resources at all schools shall be allocated upon an equitable basis;*
- 8) *All schools shall be equally accessible to students upon a neighborhood school basis subject to a written geographic school assignment plan; and*
- 9) *The assignment plan referred to in paragraph 8 shall be designed to operate in a manner where school attendance is inclusive, diverse, and not intentionally segregated by neither race nor economic status.*

### **C. Minority and Women Business Enterprise (MBE/WBE) Monthly Report**

The monthly MWBE reports were included in the agenda. Mr. Bailey announced the date and time of the next committee meeting: January 29, 2015, at 1:30 p.m. in the LRSD procurement office. Mr. McAdoo is the Board's representative.

### **D. Monthly Financial Statements**

The financial reports for the month of December were included in the agenda. Mr. Bailey was present to respond to questions.

## **VIII. CLOSING REMARKS**

### **A. Announcements & Reminders**

Pamela Smith announced dates for open enrollment, beginning on Monday, January 26<sup>th</sup> through February 6<sup>th</sup>. The first week will be held at St. Mark on West 12<sup>th</sup> street; the second week will be at the Student Registration office. Announcements regarding enrollment are being conducted through Parent Link, radio announcements, and newspaper ads.

### **B. Superintendent's Comments**

Dr. Suggs encouraged parents to read with their children for 25 to 30 minutes a day. He also noted Friday night basketball games between Parkview and El Dorado, at Parkview. He encouraged listeners to attend the district's athletic events, and especially the Central High ladies basketball team. He also announced the development of study sessions at all high schools for the ACT prep.

## ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

APPROVED: 2-26-15

  
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Dr. Dexter Suggs, Interim Superintendent