



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

MINUTES
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
Monday, October 06, 2014

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held a special meeting on Monday, October 6, 2014, in the Boardroom of the Administration Building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. Secretary C. E. McAdoo presided.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

C. E. McAdoo
Dianne Curry
Jim Ross
Joy Springer

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Greg Adams
Leslie Fiskien
Tara Shephard

ALSO PRESENT:

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

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Mr. McAdoo called the meeting to order without roll call at 5:01 p.m. Four members of the board were present at 5:05 p.m. Mr. Adams, Ms. Fiskien and Ms. Shephard were absent.

II. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The meeting was called for the purpose of hearing a preliminary report on the information prepared for presentation to the ADE on the district's Academic Distress status.

At the request of the Board, these minutes were amended to include specific questions and responses.

III. PRESENTATION

Dennis Glasgow provided an overview of the report which had been prepared for submission to the ADE. Dr. Ross had provided a list of questions for the administration prior to the meeting. *A copy of those questions with notes is attached to these minutes.*

In response to questions, Mr. Glasgow discussed the implementation of the professional development training that will be taking place over the next weeks and months. Principals are required to attend Leadership Institute and will participate in periodic refresher training courses for those who have already participated in the Institute.

Notes from the meeting were taken and submitted for the record by Mr. Glasgow and Dr. Perkins.

Q: Who were the individuals from each school who were trained in Indistar?

A: The principal and one other person who inputs data into Indistar (the process manager – “P”) from each of the priority schools were trained. Principals at the time of the training were:

*John Daniels, Hall High / Marshall Slayden, PM
Steve Geurin, Henderson / Sharon Johnson, PM
Wanda Ruffins, Cloverdale / Kathy Daneshmandi, PM
Jeremy Owoh, Fair / Ashia Jackson, PM
Clausey Myton, McClellan / Dr. Carol Overton, PM
Eleanor Cox, Wilson / Melody Jones, PM
Katina Ray, Baseline / Stephani Franklin, PM*

District staff members who received training:

*Leon Adams, Title I
Dr. Sheketa McKisick, Title I
Dennis Glawgow, Accountability*

Additional training as been provided to:

*Larry Schleicher, principal at Hall
Henry Anderson, principal at McClellan / Emma Nowden, PM*

Additional training will be provided to:

Frank Williams, Henderson and a PM from Henderson

Staff previously trained may receive a refresher course.

Q: When did that training occur?

A: The initial training was on August 29, 2012. The ADE School Improvement Specialists have also provided onsite training to new principals and process managers.

Q: When will the next training occur?

A: *On October 23rd, 2014, Roxie Browning, ADE School Improvement Specialist, and Dr. Veronica Perkins, LRSD Chief Academic Officer, will jointly present Indistar training for personnel at the Priority Schools who haven't yet been trained. Also included will be district-assigned School Improvement Specialists.*

Board members requested information from the schools' leadership team meetings, and identification of the school goals, objectives, plans, and meeting agendas.

Q: Is it possible to receive copies of the vision and goals when each school completes them?

A: *The vision, goals, and objectives would be in the schools' ACSIP plans. Board members can have copies if they haven't received them yet.*

Q: When is training for the leadership team members at each school?

A: *The principals will participate in leadership team training on October 28th and November 6th. Leadership teams will be trained on November 11th and December 2nd.*

Q: Do you have any data for schools (by-laws, goals, objectives, etc.) by zone from last year?

A: *Goals and objectives are in the schools' ACSIP plans with the Priority Improvement Plan included.*

Q: Have we assessed the effectiveness of common planning time?

A: *No, however, common planning time is a research-based best practice. (Report was forwarded to the board on Friday, October 31st.)*

Mr. Glasgow agreed that the strategies used are more effective in the elementary schools, and there are still questions regarding whether this is effective in making improvements at the secondary level. There must be buy-in from the school leadership and from the teaching staff.

Q: Who are the key persons who work to create the master schedule?

A: *The registrar and the principal at the secondary level are the key persons who create the master schedule. At the elementary level, it is most likely the principals, specialists, and secretaries who create the schedules.*

Regarding recent issues with master schedules, particularly at the middle level, Dr. Suggs responded to questions. The principals are ultimately responsible for creation of the master schedules; however registrars provide the necessary support. A professional development session will be held on November 6th at the Tech Center, Room 311. This training, specifically for secondary registrars and assistant registrars, will be facilitated by Trayce Young.

Asked about best practice models, and things that can be done across the district, Mr. Glasgow noted various strategies used within the schools which show positive results:

- Quality instruction
- Quality curriculum
- Consistent lesson planning
- Use of curriculum maps
- Differentiated instruction
- Creation of an instructional culture by the building leadership
- Creating common vision
- Establishing common goals
- Developing professional relationships among the staff
- Developing and nurturing a culture for success.

Q: Is there a process in place to assess the effectiveness of innovations?

A: There are a number of ways to assess the effectiveness of innovations. Those innovations that are unique to a school can be assessed by setting measurable objectives, both interim and final (as found in IMO's in priority schools). Districtwide innovations can be assessed in similar fashion, with goals and measurable objectives. Innovations of particular interest can be assessed using internal evaluators (Testing and Evaluation) or external evaluators at the request of the administration or Board.

Q: Can we give Principals a listing of effective programs?

A: Our improvement efforts are concentrated on effective practices rather than on specific programs. Programs tend to work (or not work) based on buy-in and fidelity of implementation. We do include resources that have shown success in our curriculum maps. The district is collecting information on best practices being used in our schools (see # 14). This data will be shared in the near future.

Q. How are class sizes being monitored in distressed schools as opposed to other schools?

A: The Associate Superintendents over the schools monitor class size at all the schools.

Q: Can you provide data for the class sizes in schools for the past year?

A: Data for the past two years is provided for the schools on academic distress with a group of high achieving schools. The data is based on student enrollment and the total number of teachers from the Faculty Composition Report that is published annually.

In 2012-13 the ratio of students to teachers at selected schools was:

<i>Baseline 10.93</i>	<i>Roberts 14.27</i>
<i>Cloverdale 10.51</i>	<i>Mann 11.97</i>
<i>Henderson 10.11</i>	<i>PHMS 12.19</i>
<i>Fair 10.12</i>	<i>Central 15.04</i>
<i>Hall 10.24</i>	<i>Parkview 12.33</i>
<i>McClellan 11.01</i>	<i>Otter Creek 15.66</i>

In 2013-14 the ratio of students to teachers for the same schools was:

<i>Baseline 11.07</i>	<i>Roberts 14.82</i>
<i>Cloverdale 11.47</i>	<i>Mann 12.05</i>
<i>Henderson 10.24</i>	<i>PHMS 12.70</i>
<i>Fair 11.03</i>	<i>Central 15.36</i>
<i>Hall 10.39</i>	<i>Parkview 12.64</i>
<i>McClellan 10.17</i>	<i>Otter Creek 15.61</i>

Q: Can we do an audit of what is working and what is not?

A: Dr. Perkins has done a "mining for best practices" survey with our schools. Results will be forthcoming.

Q: Is there something about the culture of those buildings, and are we addressing those cultures?

A: A part of culture deals with a feeling of inclusion in the decision-making process. A feeling of being powerless can lead to a culture of inaction and low expectations. The training and revamping related to leadership teams in the schools on academic distress can help improve school culture. Other factors regarding school culture will also be examined closely.

Q: Is the Data Dashboard up and running?

A: This should be done prior to 2nd Semester. Data Dashboard is running with all the Benchmark data, including strand data on each student.

Q: Who is responsible for getting the data into the Dashboard?

A: Jerry Gibson started being responsible for getting the data in the dashboard in early September. Dr. Ed Williams assists Mr. Gibson with the data.

Dr. Suggs responded to questions regarding the Data Dashboard, and instances where the progress information has not been entered into the system. Without the data, teachers aren't aware of who is and isn't proficient.

Q: Are teachers aware of how individual students are performing?

A: Yes, teachers have the data for their individual students.

Building principals and teachers must have an awareness of strategies to meet the special needs of TAGG (Targeted Achievement Gap Group) students, those who are eligible for free and reduced lunch, those with disabilities, and English Language Learners (ELL) students.

Q: Who is responsible for getting the data to teachers?

A: Teachers can get their data directly from the dashboard on their computer. Paper copies of ACTAAP data is made available to schools as soon as it is received by the district. The copies include individual data sheets for each student as well as class and school data. The principal is responsible for getting the data to the staff members.

Q: Can the School Improvement Specialist help with getting the data to teachers?

A: This shouldn't be necessary, but they can help as requested. The School Improvement Specialists can help the school develop tools to capture certain types of data to assess improvement initiatives.

Q: Is the curriculum vertically aligned?

A: The math and literacy departments believe the curriculum is vertically aligned; however, the district will contract with external auditors to assess the horizontal and vertical alignment.

Q: Is there instructional alignment?

A: This varies from teacher to teacher. The curriculum audit will check the alignment of the "taught" curriculum.

Q: How are we pulling feedback?

A: Classroom observation feedback to teachers' instructional efforts is captured as reports on the District's Business Objects pages.

Q: Can you submit a quarterly report?

A: Quarterly reports will be made regarding classroom observations with feedback.

Q: Is the District plan for improvement going to address the four areas highlighted by ADE?

A: The district's plan addresses:

- 1) Lesson planning*
- 2) Classroom observations with evidence-based feedback*
- 3) Rituals and Routines*
- 4) Team structure, emphasizing leadership teams*
- 5) Unit development with pre/posttests*
- 6) Curriculum alignment (checked by an audit)*
- 7) Training and support will be provided to the schools on academic distress on how to use the data in our Data Dashboard system as well as other types of data to make instructional decisions.*

These items cover the bulk of ADE's recommendations. School-specific items will be addressed by each school in their plans.

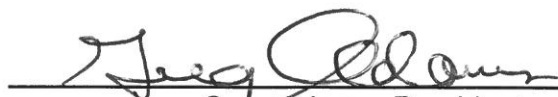
The LRSD literacy and math specialists will be included in a follow up response to the board regarding alignment of the curriculum and establishment of a correlation between the curriculum and the development of the school's rituals and routines. Order has to be there for learning to take place. The administration is looking for sustainability, not just compliance. It must be from the bottom up in order to see continuous improvement.

Administrators will be present at the State Board of Education meeting on October 10th; however, it's not likely they will have questions for the LRSD until the meeting of October 14th.

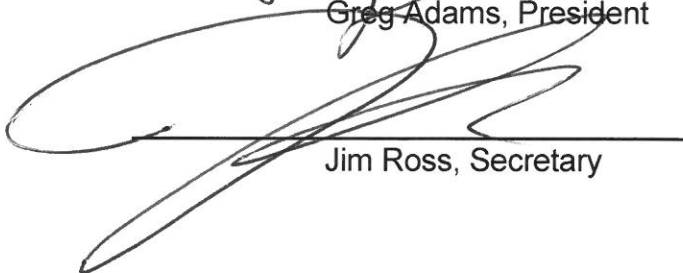
ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m. on a motion made by Ms. Curry, and seconded by Ms. Springer.

APPROVED: 11-20-14

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Greg Adams", written over a horizontal line.

Greg Adams, President

A large, stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, written over a horizontal line.

Jim Ross, Secretary

Dr. Jim Ross' Questions:

Leadership

1. Leadership teams at a number of our distressed schools neither appear to have a satisfactory plan (in the view of the ADE evaluation team) nor understand their role in alleviating distress.

Leadership team training has been provided for the principals with the exception of Mr. Williams. Additional training using the SREB model will be provided to the leaders first, then to all the leadership team members after that.

2. In many of our schools teachers did not understand, could not articulate, or did not see their roles in the plan for addressing issues in their schools.

See number 1: this is a leadership team issue. In many cases the teachers did not know the purpose of the LT or what good came from the team.

LT's should send information from meetings to describe what is discussed during leadership meetings and implementation of 30 day plan. The ADE recommendations will be discussed during LT meetings and during faculty meetings with descriptions of how the schools will address each recommendation.

3. Schools lack common planning time, or their common planning time has not been used effectively.

Cloverdale and Henderson have built-in common planning time. The high schools can develop a schedule that provides for common planning time.

Hall has some common planning for Alg I, Geometry and all the three levels of English. Fair and McClellan don not have common planning blocks due to past LREA issues.

Principals are encouraged to monitor common planning time.

4. ADE evaluators expressed some concern about the number of proposed supplemental innovations as compared to the actual time allocated for principals to work with teachers. (Fair)

LT should focus on 3 or 4 key innovations and do them well. The district plan does just that. It focuses on lesson planning and observations with feedback, rituals and routines, team structure in schools, and pre/post assessments of unit curriculum.

Fair's LT has met and are the process of narrowing the interventions. They will structure interventions aligned to Indistar indicators and student needs.

5. Teachers and staff either do not trust current administration or do not trust that he will stay long, and therefore are not invested in the process. (Hall)

Superintendent and principal turnover has long been a problem in the district.

Hall' staff has simply experienced principal changes every year. The lack of trust relates to how long the principal will remain and implement plans for the school.

6. We have not evaluated the data we have for TAGG students.

Evaluating the data at the school level is a primary function of the leadership team. At the schools on distress there is little difference in the TAGG and the non-TAGG students. Almost all students are TAGG: Fair 88.8%, Hall 88.2%, McClellan 86.4%, Cloverdale 97.2%, Henderson 94.4%. The evaluators were referring specifically to SpEd and ELL.

7. Data on student performance and growth is not consistently communicated with all teachers.

Again, this is a function of the leadership team. Hidden growth, such as lowering the % of students in the BB category, should be identified and celebrated by the leadership team. There are some successes of which schools can be proud.

Also, schools should have instructional teams that plan units of instruction and assess student understanding with pre/posttests.

Curriculum

8. There is a lack of alignment of all curricula with specific growth objectives for each school, as well as the state and common core frameworks.

The growth objectives are set by the individual schools based on their AMO and the difference between that and their actual performance.

9. Schools/courses lack unit-based assessment to provide necessary data to see where students are and to measure their growth.

This is a goal/objective that is included in the district plan.

10. Vertical alignment of math and literacy curricula needs to be reviewed and enforced. We seem to have some big gaps at the elementary/middle and middle/high school transition points.

Math curriculum is vertically aligned. Transition gaps may be evident as the curriculum transitioned from the Arkansas Frameworks to the Common Core State Standards. There are several shifts in mathematics at certain grade levels.

Instruction

11. There is a basic need to identify a few strategies that work and then implement them.

See number 4. The district plan only focuses on a few areas. We have a strong accountability plan in place to ensure implementation.

12. Accountability for staying on the curriculum map/pacing guide, and coaching for better instructional techniques seems to be lacking.

This is the major goal of the lesson planning/classroom observation initiative.

Learning Environment

13. Many of these schools do not have an environment of care, concern, and respect among students, teachers, and administrators. The school climates are not conducive for quality teaching and learning.

Restructuring of one or more of the low-performing schools is needed, such as was done with Forest Heights and Geyer Springs..

14. Teacher and administrator turnover and cynicism is high, and morale is low, due to the chaotic environments at the schools.

One key focus area of the district plan is consistent implementation of school-wide rituals and routines. Also, most educators recognize that the school and classroom environments improve when instruction improves. The district plan focuses on instruction.

Based on this ADE document, we have a profound opportunity to address longstanding issues and make substantial changes in the structure and future of our district. To that end, I have the following questions:

1. What are we doing to address curricular matters? Math department and MIF's are monitoring for curricular issues and those are addressed during our bi-monthly workshops. What are our plans to align the curriculum PK-12? Math is aligned. What are our plans to align the 1:1 technology initiative to the curriculum map? ? How do we tailor our existing curriculum maps and pacing guides to meet the needs of students who are significantly below grade level? I assume this is a secondary question...In middle school, students who are not proficient in mathematics are enrolled in an intervention class where deficits are addressed as well as upcoming topics are front-loaded.

2. What are we doing to identify the programs and interventions that work in our successful schools? What are we doing to get these programs and interventions in our distressed schools?

Generally speaking, programs have not done much to improve student achievement in our schools. Dozens of programs costing millions of dollars have not helped in most cases. Core instruction is the factor that needs to be improved.

3. For each distressed school, what are the specific academic goals? How are these being communicated to staff, parents, and students? How are we assessing the success of these goals?

The draft academic goals and objectives are in the district plan.

4. How are we monitoring instructional delivery? How are we making sure each teacher is following our curriculum and using the best practices? I am not only asking about pedagogy here. I understand our lesson plan model is monitoring best teaching practices, but what specifically are we doing to make sure our content is being taught?

One aspect of principals observing classroom instruction is to determine if teachers are following the curriculum. Instructional delivery is a major component of the district plan.

5. What kinds of meetings are we having with staff and the leadership in the distressed schools? What are we doing to make sure these are meaningful meetings with real substance and allow for the exchange of ideas among reasonable professionals? What are we doing to free up our teachers to actually teach?

The superintendent has met with the leaders and/or key team members several times since the academic distress notification came out. A top curriculum staffer is assigned to each school on distress as a school improvement specialist. The specialists meet with the schools' leadership teams. The specialists also meet regularly with Dr. Perkins, the Chief Academic Officer, who has specific authority and responsibility to lead the C&I team in supporting the schools on academic distress.

6. Who is responsible for evaluating data for TAGG students? Who is responsible for disseminating this data? What specifically are we doing to change intervention and teaching with this data?

TAGG is a specific subgroup in the ESEA Accountability Reports. Almost 90% or more of the students in the academically distressed schools are TAGG. More attention needs to be given to students with disabilities and, in some cases with English language learners. As a district students with disabilities are 22.45% proficient in literacy and 31.04 % proficient in math. ELL are low in both literacy and math at Hall and in literacy at Cloverdale. ELL are slightly lower than the "all students" group in literacy at Baseline but do better than the "all students" group in mathematics.

7. What are we doing to identify weak leadership models in our distressed schools? What professional development are principals and administrators receiving? How are they being assessed? What plans do we have to make sure we have the most effective principals in place for next school year?

The district is hampered by the lack of a real career ladder for administrators. We have too many career assistant principals with no aspirations to becoming a building principal.

All principals in academically distressed schools have enrolled in the Master Principal program of the Arkansas Leadership Academy.

8. What are we doing in these distressed schools to address cynicism and despair among teachers? What are we doing to create common shared values and goals that all teachers and staff can buy into? How are we creating quality learning environments with respect between all adults and students in the building?

Our cultural imperatives are an attempt to provide a foundation for our work with adults, students, and others.

Secondly, the non-negotiables are our second way to create more communication and expectations for our work with each other and how to work mutually toward outcomes.

The ability to deliver is a building level oversight where leaders and teachers must continually examine the school culture to change it.

Three strategies from the research might be used for examining beliefs and actions: self-reflection, research and professional readings related to the issues, and inquiry with colleagues via PLCs, team meetings, faculty meetings, etc.

They are their own agent of change, not the district. School leaders are conducting cultural awareness activities including surveys to capture concerns staff have.