

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

**MINUTES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
April 24, 2008**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held their regular board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 24, 2008, in the Boardroom of the Administration Building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. Vice President Dianne Curry presided.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dianne Curry
Melanie Fox
Charles Armstrong
Larry Berkley
Robert M. Daugherty
Baker Kurrus

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Katherine Mitchell

ALSO PRESENT:

Linda Watson, Interim Superintendent
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Ms. Curry, Board Vice President called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. Six members of the board were present at roll call; Dr. Mitchell was absent. Ex officio representatives, **Gloria Wright**, teacher at Woodruff Elementary School, and **Kelvin Parker**, student from J. A. Fair High School were also present.

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 Lisa Black and Linda Smith of the Public Education Foundation of Little Rock. They were recognized for the recent awarding of the annual Innovative Idea Grants Awards in the Little Rock School District in the amount of \$45,482.77. Ms. Black introduced other members of the Foundation's board of directors.

The Arkansas Association of Instructional Media, or **AAIM**, held its annual convention earlier this week where they recognized **Barbara Williams**, the LRSD Coordinator of Instructional Technology, as the Arkansas Technology Leader of the Year. In addition, **Stella Cameron** and **Carol Thompson**, Media Specialists at Central High School, received the award for Outstanding Media Program.

Tammy Blaylock, Volunteer Coordinator in the ViPS Office, was recognized for her dedicated efforts to coordinate the annual "Evening for the Stars," which honors those who volunteer their time in our schools. Tammy spends countless hours taking care of all the details which make this event a memorable occasion.

Temple Price, Hall High School student, recently won the statewide Poetry Out Loud competition. The contest prize is a cash award and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, to represent Arkansas in the national competition. In addition, Temple received the Interscholastic Star Student recognition award from the Arkansas Activities Association. This award is presented annually to a high school junior who is actively involved in school activities and community service and who has shown perseverance, commitment and an attitude of cooperation.

Dr. Watson introduced **Coach Johnny Johnson**, the district's Athletic Director. He was joined by **Dr. Jimmy Tucker**, **Dr. Eric Gordon**, and **Heather Caracio** of Arkansas Specialty Orthopaedics, and **Margaret Preston** of St. Vincent Health System. These individuals began placing Automatic External Defibrillators in every high school in Arkansas following the death of Antony Hobbs, Parkview student, during a basketball game.

Stephanie Gardner was presented with the Superintendent's Quality Service Award. Stephanie is a paraprofessional, working in Celeste Molsbee's classroom at Fulbright Elementary. She was nominated by a parent who stated in her nomination that, with Stephanie's help, her developmentally disabled child was reading and doing math along with her peers.

Certificates of appreciation were presented to **Kelvin Parker** from J.A. Fair Magnet High School, student exofficio representative; and to the teacher representative, **Gloria Wright**, from Woodruff Elementary School.

B. Partners in Education

Ms. Milam introduced members of the ViPS Board, who presented information on the 26th annual ViPS Evening for the Stars. The ViPS staff reported that 632,256 hours of volunteer service was contributed during the 2007-2008 school year - - the highest number of hours ever and a 10% increase over previous years. A mock check was presented to Dr. Watson, representing the dollar value of the services in the amount of \$111,867,449.00. It was announced that Central High School volunteers had contributed over 100,000 service hours. Patty Barker received the Jane Mendel Award for over 20 years of service to schools in the district.

Tammy Blaylock asked listeners to support ViPS by attending **Fire on the Mountain** at the Arkansas Repertory Theater. Alltel is sponsoring ViPS Night, with proceeds from ticket sales benefiting district volunteer services.

New partnerships were presented for the board's review and approval:

Pulaski Heights Elementary, represented by *Lillie Carter*, partnering with **Metropolitan National Bank – Kavanaugh/Hillcrest Branch**, represented by *Anastasia Taylor & Jaime Teague*

W. D. "Bill" Hamilton Learning Academy, represented by *Kelan Watson and Krishna Young*, partnering with **Jack & Jill, Inc. of Greater Little Rock**, represented by *Members of the organization, including Wanda Hamilton and Carmen Hamilton-Parks*

Wilson Elementary, represented by *Beverly Jones*, partnering with **St. Andrews Church**, represented by *Bob Baxter*

Ms. Fox moved to accept the new partnerships; Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

C. Remarks from Citizens

Jerry McClure introduced himself as a twenty-two year employee in the LRSD maintenance & operations department. He distributed information to the board regarding equality issues within the maintenance, labor and grounds units of the facilities services department. He asked for fair and equal treatment for the employees and stated that following the chain of command he had not been able to come to a resolution with the concerns in that department.

Jeff Hatfield spoke on behalf of Leslie & Nick Fiskin, parents of Cooper Fiskin. Two other citizens who signed up to speak also ceded their time to Mr. Hatfield. He stated that he was appealing to the board to have the administration reconsider their denial of the Fiskins' application to the pre-K program at Forest Park. Although the student will turn five prior to the enrollment cutoff for pre-K students, the Fiskins have asked for Cooper to be allowed to enroll as a five year old in the four year old classroom. Mr. Hatfield contended that other students had been granted enrollment to pre-K even though their birthdates had fallen before the cutoff date. The Fiskins had previously consulted with the district's early childhood director and had been denied a waiver for entrance to the pre-K program.

Erma Fingers Hendix, Ward 1 member of the City of Little Rock Board of Directors, was introduced to the audience. She stated her commitment to and support for the LRSD and promised to attend LRSD board meetings and encourage active participation by parents in her ward.

D. Little Rock PTA Council

Bernadette Turner, outgoing president of the LR PTA Council, addressed the board and pledged to continue to support the PTA as an active volunteer. She congratulated Dr. Watson on her appointment as superintendent of schools, and reminded the board and listeners of the upcoming PTA Council luncheon on May 13th where new officers would be installed. She introduced Patty Barker, the incoming Council president, and announced that the position of recording secretary was open. She encouraged schools and departments to sign up to serve as host sites for the luncheon meetings during the 2008-2009 school year.

E. Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association

Cathy Kohler congratulated Dr. Watson on her appointment as superintendent. She introduced Michael Coleman, a full time staff member of the LRCTA, who will assist Mr. Ledbetter in the development of ESP units.

Ms. Kohler addressed the issue of student behavior and the lack of enforcement by building administrators of the rights and responsibilities handbook. She reported that teachers were complaining about the constant disruption by misbehaving students, and of serious issues by high school teachers with students bringing cell phones into the classroom. She announced that she would be working on an open forum where teachers will be encouraged to speak out about their experiences. She invited board members to attend.

III. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

A. Remarks from Board Members

Ms. Fox thanked the Public Education Foundation for planning and hosting the annual grant awards day. She thanked Ms. Turner for her years serving as the PTA Council President, and she thanked Ms. Barker for agreeing to serve as the new president. She asked Ms. Kohler to notify the board when the forum was scheduled and she committed to attend.

Dr. Daugherty thanked Ms. Turner for keeping the board up to date with PTA activities and for supporting the district during difficult times. He addressed the issues broached by Ms. Kohler regarding cell phones in the classrooms and questioned why students were turning on their cell phones during school hours. He noted that phones would be confiscated if they were found to be turned on.

Mr. Kurrus thanked the volunteers who had been recognized at the ViPS annual *Evening for the Stars*. He reported that he had attended Tiger Fest and had participated by serving as one of the emcees of the talent show.

Amended and corrected prior to approval: Mr. Kurrus also made a public statement regarding the district's offer to purchase a parcel of property from Rocket Properties, LLC for construction of a middle school. Mr. Kurrus stated that he was one of the owners of Rocket Properties, LLC. Mr. Kurrus stated that he was unaware of the district's interest in the property until after the offer was made. Mr. Kurrus reported that he had submitted a memo to the district, the board, the media and attorneys involved disclosing the details regarding Rocket Properties. He said that the offer was allowed to expire without action by Rocket, and that Rocket would not entertain any offers to sell property to the District, in order to avoid any possible appearance of impropriety.

Mr. Armstrong thanked the Public Education Foundation and ViPS for recognizing district teachers and volunteers. He expressed appreciation for the new partnerships presented earlier in the meeting and encouraged others to become involved in supporting the students in our schools. He assured the maintenance employees that he would look into the accusations of inequity within the Maintenance Department as addressed earlier in the meeting.

Mr. Berkley thanked Ms. Turner for her service to the district through the PTA Council and he welcomed Ms. Barker as the incoming president. He acknowledged Mr. Kurrus' earlier comments regarding sale of the property to the district, but he expressed disappointment that the land won't be available to the district for the construction of a middle school in west Little Rock.

Ms. Curry thanked those present for their interest in the board's meetings. She also thanked Ms. Turner and Ms. Barker for their service to the district through the PTA Council, and expressed appreciation to Lisa Black and the Public Education Foundation.

Ms. Curry also reported on some of the sessions she had attended at the National School Board Association conference in Orlando, FL. She had attended sessions that focused on board relationships and board members' roles in understanding the importance of academic excellence.

B. Legal Update

Attorney Chris Heller reported discussions with the Attorney General's office in preparation for settling remaining financial issues in the desegregation case. He stressed that it was beneficial for the LRSD to participate in initial negotiations to mitigate the impact on the long-term financial status of the district, saying that he would prefer to negotiate instead of litigate.

In an agreement with the Arkansas Department of Education, there would likely be no immediate change to the desegregation funding until the Pulaski County District is found to be unitary with their student assignments. The state is expected to pay less over a 7 year period, and the districts would be allowed to phase out existing programs if funding isn't sufficient to continue those programs.

Mr. Heller offered to meet with the board, either individually or as a board to review the implications of the negotiations process. He recommended that we work with the North Little Rock and Pulaski County School Districts to continue the successful programs currently offered. He reported that state legislative committees would meet over the summer and that he would continue to monitor and report their discussions and proposals.

Mr. Kurrus noted that the districts would be wise to work within the law to provide flexible student assignments to promote diversity within the city and the county. He also predicted that district boundaries would be discussed as the city continues to grow and encompass more of the county students.

Dr. Daugherty asked about the operation of the existing magnet programs and whether the schools could continue to operate with the state paying for transportation costs. Mr. Heller stated it was likely the schools could continue to operate, but that the districts would not be obligated to provide transportation for those students.

Mr. Heller closed by notifying the board that a mediation session with Magistrate David Young was scheduled on Monday, April 28, 10:00 a.m., to hear four employee grievances (Washington, Munns, Norman and Walker-Hines) that had merged into one case. Ms. Fox offered to attend as the board's representative.

C. Budget Update

There was no budget report. Dr. Daugherty asked for an update on the search for a Chief Financial Officer. Dr. Watson reported that several applications had been received and that interviews would be conducted. She noted that the financial services department was continuing to work on the required budget reports and that the annual Thomas & Thomas audit was underway.

D. Internal Auditors Report

Mr. Becker's report was printed in the board's agenda. Interviews for an assistant to the auditor were conducted and recommendations had been submitted to Human Resources.

IV. APPROVAL OF ROUTINE MATTERS

A. Board Meeting Dates, 2008-2009 School Year

The administration recommended approval of the schedule of meeting dates for the 2008-2009 school year. By board policy, the second and fourth Thursday of each month are designated as regular meeting dates, however there were several exceptions to the calendar for the 2008-2009 school year. These exceptions included:

- November (Thanksgiving break) 1st and 3rd Thursday
- December (Winter break) 2nd & 3rd Thursday
- March (Spring break) 2nd & 3rd Thursday
- May (High School graduations) 2nd & 3rd Thursday

Ms. Fox made a motion to approve the recommended dates for board meetings; Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

B. Minutes

Minutes from the board meeting held on March 20, 2008, were presented for the board's review and approval. Mr. Armstrong made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted; Mr. Kurrus seconded the motion, and it **carried unanimously**.

V. ADMINISTRATION

A. District Technology Plan 2009-2012

The Arkansas Department of Education requires that all school districts revise their technology plans every three years. Approved technology plans are also required in order to receive E-Rate funding from the federal government. The board was provided a copy of the plan, and was asked to approve the document for submission prior to the May 1, 2008 deadline. Barbara Williams, Director of Instructional Technology, was asked to provide a brief overview of the Plan.

Mr. Berkley made a motion to approve the Technology Plan for submission to the Arkansas Department of Education. Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

VI. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

A. First Reading Board Policy Revision – CFD: Campus Leadership

Board Policy ***CFD Campus Leadership*** describes the process of site-based decision making and the frameworks for shared decision making. The campus leadership teams are charged with assisting in developing and evaluating campus goals and objectives through planning, budgeting, curriculum development, staff development and staffing needs to support the District's commitment to the sustained improvement of schools. The superintendent recommended a revision to the policy to ensure that the district is fulfilling its responsibility to schools identified for school improvement under No Child Left Behind.

Mr. Berkley made a motion to approve; Dr. Daugherty seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

B. Arkansas Department of Education – Grant Submissions: 21st Century Community Learning Center Applications

The administration requested approval to submit applications for two ADE 21st Century Community Learning Center grant proposals. These grants would run for five years, with approximately \$150,000 in the first year and \$390,000 for years two through five.

The proposed community learning center at J. A. Fair would provide intensive academic opportunities and enrichment activities before school, after school and during the summer months. In addition, a partnership with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Arkansas would serve Woodruff Elementary students and another with Junior Achievement would serve students at Pulaski Heights Middle School.

Ms. Fox made a motion to approve submission of the grant applications. The motion was seconded by Dr. Daugherty, and **carried unanimously**.

C. Board Regulation Revision – EDCA-R Authorized Use of Computer Networks Regulations

Board regulation ***EDCA-R Authorized Use of Computer Networks*** provides detailed guidelines for student and staff use of the District's computer networks and the Internet. It is necessary to revise the regulation to include: (1) specific language that provides a definition for social networks, websites that are virtual communities; (2) guidelines prohibiting cyber bullying; and (3) clarifying that students and parents will only need to complete the Authorized Use of Computer Networks agreement form when a student enrolls at a new campus. The revised regulation was provided for the board's review and discussion. No action was required.

VII. HUMAN RESOURCES

A. Staffing Recommendation – Associate Superintendent of Academic Accountability

Dr. Watson presented a recommendation to create the Department of Academic Accountability and a new position of Associate Superintendent. The department would be responsible for monitoring, assessing, and directing individual school activities related to the implementation of individual school ACSIP plans. The department would work with existing Curriculum and Instruction staff and associate superintendents to enhance the district's student achievement efforts. A draft of the job description for the Associate Superintendent of Academic Accountability was attached for the board's review.

Mr. Kurrus asked for information on budgeting for the position and whether requests for new positions could be integrated into the total district budget for 2008-2009. He asked for specific emphasis to be provided on the costs associated with the position and the department. Ms. Fox concurred and asked for the position to be tied to the "big picture" for next school year.

Dr. Watson responded to questions, reporting that the salary would come from general operating dollars. She also reported that she would eliminate the position of deputy superintendent and that existing staff would be realigned under the Accountability Department. She stated that the new position was critical in the realignment of the organizational chart.

Ms. Curry spoke in support of creating the new position and an accountability department for the purpose of holding staff responsible for student achievement. She noted that meeting the state and federal assessment and accountability requirements was critical to the district's success. She asked that the board support the position by setting high standards for student achievement and accurate reporting.

Dr. Daugherty also supported Dr. Watson's recommendation and stated that it was the board's responsibility to allow the superintendent to do what she feels is necessary to ensure the district's success. He also asked the board to start the process of developing attainable goals and objectives for use in evaluating the superintendent. He asked the board to conduct an evaluation of Dr. Watson's term as interim superintendent.

Mr. Armstrong made a motion to table this item until the next board meeting; Mr. Kurrus seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. The board asked for additional discussion and information in conjunction with the May agenda meeting.

B. Report: In-House Legal Counsel

The board requested information from the administration regarding the feasibility of securing in-house legal counsel for routine issues outside the scope of the on-going desegregation case. The current legal expenses are based upon an hourly rate ranging from \$110 an hour for an associate to \$175 per hour for representation by a partner in the firm. The report revealed that these fees are comparable with districts across Arkansas, which pay from \$125 to \$195 per hour.

In March 2006, information gathered from the larger school districts across the state found that there are no districts with in-house counsel. Nationally it was found that in-house legal representatives were only utilized in districts with a student enrollment in excess of 30,000 students. No action was taken and the board requested additional information from the superintendent.

C. Personnel Changes

Routine personnel changes were printed in the board's agenda. In addition, the administrators assigned to oversee the district's 2008 summer school programs were submitted for the board's review and approval. Dr. Daugherty made a motion to approve the personnel items as submitted. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously.**

VIII. FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

A. Donations of Property

The Board was asked to approve the acceptance of recent donations to schools and departments within the District. The donations are listed in the following chart. Student ex officio, Kelvin Parker, student from J. A. Fair High School, read the items listed in the Board's agenda. Dr. Daugherty made a motion to accept the donated items, Ms. Fox seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously.**

DONATIONS

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	ITEM	DONOR
Bale Elementary	Cash donations for the KABOOM Playground Project: \$500.00 \$500.00 \$1,152.77	Ms. Barbara J. Wood LR ViPS Board of Directors Johnny Bale / Bale Chevrolet
Brady Elementary	\$300 cash for library books 21 bicycles, valued at \$1,500 to be used as student behavior and incentive rewards	Kiwanis Club of Pulaski Heights Kirk White / Academy Sports
J. A. Fair High School	\$125 to the Poetry Club	Larry Gilreath
Williams Elementary	Two Brava soccer goals, valued at \$171.98	Clay Fendley, attorney
Wilson Elementary	31 basketballs, valued at \$8.00 each for playground use	Car-Mart of Little Rock
Woodruff Elementary	\$200 cash to be used for incentives and materials for faculty and staff	DaySprings Behavioral Health Services of Arkansas

B. West Little Rock School Land Purchase

The board was asked to approve a resolution granting the purchase of two additional tracts of land located at 16501 and 16505 Taylor Loop Road, contiguous to the property for the construction of the new west Little Rock School. The board was also asked to designate the person(s) authorized to execute documents on behalf of the District to finalize this purchase of property. The resolution was approved by a **unanimous vote**; the motion was made by Ms. Fox and seconded by Mr. Armstrong.

C. Monthly Financial Reports

The financial reports for the month of March 2008 were provided as part of the board's agenda. No action was required.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned 8:00 p.m. on a motion by Dr. Daugherty seconded by Ms. Fox.

APPROVED: 05-22-08

Originals Signed by:
 Katherine P. Mitchell, President
 Melanie Fox, Secretary