



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Johnny Key, Commissioner

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Statement from Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner Johnny Key Regarding Little Rock School District

LITTLE ROCK — Timing and expectations are critical, as I have been reminded over the last few days. I deeply regret my poor implementation of a transition in Little Rock School District leadership and the timing in which it occurred.

The quality of our children's education is deeply personal – every bit as personal as health care or other issues that dominate the headlines. That this announcement was not handled consistent with the community's expectations is my mistake, and as commissioner, I take responsibility.

It is important to understand that timing and implementation were my primary errors, not the content and context with which this decision was made.

A state takeover of any local school district is never ideal and was a decision of last resort for the State Board of Education. While many had their doubts it would work, state control has proven to be a productive temporary tool that, to date, has led to significant improvements within the Little Rock School District. The credit should be given to Baker Kurrus and the dedicated educators and students throughout the district.

Mr. Kurrus is a selfless public servant, and his contribution to our city and our children is laudable. His appointment was extraordinary, as he is an outside-the-box superintendent and an invaluable leader for our community.

It should be noted that the original decision to move the Little Rock School District toward state supervision was a result of academic distress. Mr. Kurrus successfully steered the district through the most tumultuous year in decades and prepared the district for the next stage of improvement.

It is my position that Michael Poore can best move the district forward and maximize the academic progress that is needed to return the Little Rock School District to local control. Mr. Kurrus is on a previously scheduled vacation and upon his return will meet with Mr. Poore. I am confident that together they will determine the best role for Mr. Kurrus to support the district's continued progress.

In my efforts to be more responsive to the community's expectations for public input, I am expediting the appointment of the Community Advisory Board, an important step toward returning the district to local control. The Community Advisory Board will play a key role in the district's success.

Michael Poore has a proven track record of improving schools in academic distress. I have no doubt that under Poore's leadership, combined with the support of the community and the Little Rock School District educators, success awaits us here in Little Rock.

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