

**Minutes**  
**Little Rock Area Public Education Stakeholder Group Meeting**  
**Monday, July 25, 2016**

The Little Rock Area Public Education Stakeholder Group met Monday, July 25, 2016, in the Arkansas Department of Education Auditorium. Chair Tommy Branch called the meeting to order at 5:02pm.

Members Present: Tommy Branch, Chair; Jim McKenzie, Vice-Chair; Tamika Edwards; Ann Brown Marshall; Antwan Phillips; Leticia Reta; and Dianna Varady.

Members Absent: none.

Audience: ADE staff, general public, and press.

The meeting was live streamed and the recording was posted on the ADE website at [http://www.arkansased.gov/state-board/minutes/board\\_meeting\\_categories/2016](http://www.arkansased.gov/state-board/minutes/board_meeting_categories/2016).

**Consideration to Approve Minutes – July 11, 2016**

Mr. McKenzie moved, seconded by Ms. Varady, to approve the July 11, 2016, minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

**Consideration of Perceptions from Open Enrollment Charter School Directors**

Ms. Luanne Baroni, Mr. John Bacon, Ms. Katie Tatum, Ms. Valerie Tatum, Dr. Mary Ann Duncan, Mr. Curtis Shack, Ms. Tina Long, Ms. Shannon Nuckols, and Mr. Atnan Ekin, leaders of Little Rock area charter schools, worked collaboratively to prepare the presentation.

Dr. Mary Ann Duncan said the Little Rock area included nine charter schools. She said these charter schools utilized different models designed to meet diverse student needs. She said the Charter School Act of 1999 focused on improving students learning, increasing learning opportunities for all students, encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods, creating new professional opportunities for teachers, providing parent and pupils with expanded choices, and holding the schools accountable. She said there are 22 open-enrollment charter schools in Arkansas with two more scheduled to open in Fall 2016.

Mr. John Bacon said quality schools focus on student learning, all students, innovative teaching methods, expanded choices, and accountability. He said the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides flexibility for state accountability. He recommended the Arkansas accountability plan include multiple characteristics such as student

performance (proficiency and individual student growth), graduation rates, school safety, school climate, attendance, and curricular offerings. He also proposed metrics to measure the characteristics of a quality school.

Mr. Bacon said the proposed questions were on target to meet the goals of the stakeholder group. He said we should be focused on providing the best teachers for all students. He said now is the time for collaboration with all public schools – traditional and charter to ensure the needs of each child are addressed.

Mr. Scott Smith, Arkansas Public School Resource Center Director, said charter schools received the same per pupil funding and categorical funds. He said the charter schools do not have any additional millage funds. He said the facilities funding has stipulations and limitations.

Mr. Smith said the location of an open-enrollment charter must follow an extensive process to be approved.

Ms. Alexandra Boyd, Charter School Director, said finding a location suitable for open-enrollment charter schools was often a challenge. She said \$5 million dollars were set aside for charter school facilities.

Ms. Tina Long, superintendent of Little Rock Preparatory Academy said the school developed a transportation plan to address the change in locations.

Mr. Smith said the school facility locations are responding to consumer/population needs.

Mr. Bacon said eStem was located in downtown Little Rock because a larger building was available, the location is served by public transit, and a downtown building was very unique in education. He said the demographics of the students reflect the city demographics. He said economics and availability are factors in selecting future locations. He said a focus on college readiness led to conversations that resulted in forming a high school on the UALR campus.

Ms. Luanne Baroni, representing Lisa Academy, said the new campus was available, close to current campus and could be converted into classrooms.

Mr. Bacon said most of the charter schools are members of the Arkansas Public School Resource Center. He said the Little Rock area does not have an education service cooperative. He said at one time the charter schools shared a Local Education Agency (LEA) Supervisor for Special Education. He said it has been important to collaborate in order to ensure quality resources for students.



Dr. Duncan said traditional and charter schools could collaborate and learn together about solving problems for students.

Mr. Bacon shared that he was working on a teacher quality pipeline and he would love to share this information with other schools. He said eStem was collaborating with Little Rock School District (LRSD) to develop effective leaders. He said maybe these partnerships need better communication.

Ms. Long recommended shared professional development. She shared that her teachers attended professional development at another charter school.

Ms. Long said Exalt Academy of Southwest is 45% Hispanic. She said specialized teachers were hired to serve the students. She said courses are available to parents. She said all communication is translated.

Ms. Valerie Tatum, Director of Covenant Keepers, said the Hispanic population was growing at her school.

Ms. Linda Dawson, representing SIA Tech, said the school served students that may have dropped out of school or may be at risk. She said the school provided a chance to earn a standard high school diploma.

Ms. Baroni said Lisa Academy enrollment was 17% Asian, 44% African America, 16% Hispanic, 18% Caucasian, and 5% other. She said communication and sharing would be important for moving forward. She said approximately 8% of students will receive Special Education services. She said the Circles Program included community-based instruction.

The group requested the following additional information and data from each charter school:

- Demographics
- Percentage of students – free/reduced lunch
- Additional questions or research needed to benefit their school
- How National School Lunch (NSL) funds are utilized to close the achievement gap
- Information regarding community-based instruction
- A list of the ways charter schools are collaborating
- Ways the schools are meeting the needs of at-risk students

The group requested Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) provide the following information:

- Access to the state applications (current and under review) for federal charter grants.

Dr. Denise Airola, Director of the Office of Innovation in Education, said a researcher would coordinate the questions the group is asking and provide the information in a formatted report. This may be a more organized way for the information to be shared and consumed by the stakeholder group and the public. The sooner a researcher is brought on board to organize the efforts, the sooner the stakeholder group can get to the discussion of the recommendations.

### **Master Plan for Children, Youth, and Families**

City of Little Rock Director of Community Programs Director Ms. Dana Dossett said the Department of Community Programs has been in existence for 20 plus years and is funded by taxpayers. She said the work is contracted through specialized organizations. Ms. Dossett introduced the staff working to implement the three-year master plan. She said this is an information gathering time period for making strong decisions in the future. She said the Department has a vision to serve as the hub of services being provided to youth in Little Rock. She said the master plan recommended five goals.

Ms. Dossett said she collaborated with Mr. Poore and the Little Rock School District and is developing a plan to move forward. She said school resource officers (police officers in schools) are another example of the collaboration with schools.

### **Consideration of Maps**

Mr. Jim McKenzie said the maps, provided courtesy of Metroplan, addressed some of the questions previously asked by the group.

### **Consideration of Potential Questions for Research**

Dr. Denise Airola said the questions submitted included the work done at the last meeting. The group added questions related to:

- Educational best practices
- Existing collaborations between charters and why the collaborations are in place
- Barriers in place that may inhibit collaboration, who should initiate collaboration
- Opportunities for collaboration that did not fully develop
- Implementation similarities and barriers to professional development/learning
- The means and frequency with which charter schools are presently sharing professional development, innovative models, and/or coaching concepts with one another, and the topics of such sharing



- How to meet the needs of diverse groups of students
- Community based instruction, inclusion, and employment of students with special needs
- Use of the Promise Grant
- Characteristics of students/families that seek charter schools – do not seek charter schools
- Protocols for determining locations of schools (open or close)
- What is the community impact of opening or closing a school
- Political impact of opening or closing a school
- Use of NSL funds to close the achievement gap
- Percentage of students – free/reduced lunch
- Resource allocations
- Location and impact of facilities (use, reuse, renovation, or other)
- Facilities funding

Dr. Airola recommended hearing from a representative from the Center for Reinventing Public Education at a future meeting. Ms. Marshall recommended hearing from Mr. Richard Emmel regarding his concept of schools as collaborative centers of learning for children and families.

### **Consideration of Public Comment**

No one signed up for public comment.

### **Consideration of Agenda for Next Meeting (August 15, 2016)**

Dr. Gary Ritter will provide a report on school discipline. Mr. McKenzie will provide additional maps and plan time for discussion of the maps. Ms. Coffman will draft a report for the State Board.

### **Consideration for Reporting Progress to the State Board**

The State Board has requested a quarterly report and timeline of expected progress. Ms. Coffman will draft a report for the group to review/revise.

### **Adjournment**

Ms. Edwards moved, seconded by Ms. Varady, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

*Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman*



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Tommy Branch, Chair