

**Minutes  
State Board of Education Meeting  
Tuesday, May 5, 2015**

The State Board of Education met Tuesday, May 5, 2015, in Room 303-B of the Department of Education Building. Chairman Sam Ledbetter called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

Present: Sam Ledbetter, Chairman; Toyce Newton, Vice-Chair; Alice Mahony; Diane Zook; Vicki Saviers; Dr. Jay Barth; Jonathan Crossley, Teacher of the Year; and Johnny Key, Commissioner.

Present via phone: Mireya Reith and Kim Davis

Absent: Joe Black

**Action Agenda**

**Consideration of Arkansas Department of Education Recommendation Pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-430 regarding the Administration of the Little Rock School District**

On July 10, 2014, the State Board of Education classified six schools within the Little Rock School District as being in academic distress. On January 28, 2015, the State Board of Education voted to assume authority over the Little Rock School District. Pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-430, the Arkansas Department of Education recommends that the State Board of Education waive the application of certain Arkansas laws and corresponding State Board of Education rules regarding the administration of the Little Rock School District.

Commissioner Johnny Key said Arkansas Code Annotated, Section 6-15-430 allowed the State Board of Education to waive the application of Arkansas law or corresponding State Board of Education rules. He said he had been engaged in a search for a new administrator for the Little Rock School District and would like to hire an individual from the Little Rock community who has extensive, relevant experience in the Little Rock community and the Little Rock School District. Mr. Key said he would like to hire someone who is a proven leader and who will engage with the Little Rock community in a collaborative way to improve education in the six academically-distressed schools and the district as a whole.

Commissioner Key requested that the Board grant flexibility allowed in law under Arkansas Code Annotated, Section 6-15-430 to waive any educator licensure, administrator licensure, and experience required by Arkansas law and corresponding State Board of Education rules relating to the qualifications of



superintendents so that he can hire an individual to administer and supervise the Little Rock School District, even though that individual may not have an educator's license or an administrator's license.

Commissioner Key's request for this waiver included, without limitation, a waiver of all statutory and regulatory requirements related to educator and administrator licensure and experience, including the Rules Governing Educator Licensure, the Standards for Accreditation, and Rules Governing the Superintendent Mentoring Program. He said this waiver request was specific to the position of superintendent. He said he was seeking to hire Mr. Baker Kurrus of Little Rock. He said he would ask Mr. Kurrus to serve in this role until the district is returned to local control.

Mr. Jeremy Lasiter said this waiver was for a period of time confined to academic distress identification.

Mr. Kurrus said he does have a work plan in mind. He said his role is to facilitate the community's involvement. He said he will be asking questions and listening. He said the LRSD Civic Advisory Committee needed to be the eyes and ears of the district. He said this is a community problem that will need to be solved by the community. He said morale in the district is at a 25-year low. He said his focus is motivating and energizing the adults and students to do the hard work in this district.

The Board discussed the intent of the LRSD Civic Advisory Committee. Board Members clarified the LRSD Civic Advisory Committee does not have the same role as the Community Advisory Board as noted in Code for the second year under state authority.

Ms. Newton moved to approve Commissioner Key's request for a waiver. Specifically, Ms. Newton moved that the Board exercise its authority under Arkansas Code Annotated, Section 6-15-430 to waive any educator licensure, administrator licensure, and experience requirements in Arkansas law and corresponding State Board of Education rules pertaining to the position of superintendent. This motion included, without limitation, a waiver of all statutory and regulatory requirements related to educator and administrator licensure and experience for the position of superintendent, including the Rules Governing Educator Licensure, the Standards for Accreditation, and Rules Governing the Superintendent Mentoring Program. The specific intent of this motion is to waive the operation of any and all laws and administrative rules that would require a superintendent of the Little Rock School District to hold a teaching license, administrator's license, or to hold certain educational or experience requirements, and to allow the Commissioner of Education to appoint, employ, and compensate an individual to administer the Little Rock School District who may not hold an educator's license or an administrator's license. The motion was seconded by Ms. Saviers.

Substitute motion: Ms. Mahony made a substitute motion to include Ms. Newton's motion plus reinstate the LRSD Board, as the membership existed January 22, 2015, as a working partner with Mr. Kurrus. Ms. Reith seconded the motion. Ms. Zook, Ms. Saviers, Ms. Newton, Dr. Barth, and Mr. Davis voted no. The final vote was 2-5. The substitute motion failed.

Dr. Barth made the motion to add the following two amendments to Ms. Newton's motion: the waiver applies to this hire only and the LRSD leadership team must contain a member with a superintendent's license. The amended motion was approved by Ms. Newton and Ms. Saviers. The amended motion carried unanimously.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 2:54 p.m.

*Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman.*

  
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Sam Ledbetter, Chair