



ARKANSAS
DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

AGENDA
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

January 8, 2015

Arkansas Department of Education

ADE auditorium - Special Committee on Academic Distress

9:30 AM

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Work Session

W-1 Discuss report to the State Board

Presenter: Vicki Saviers, Chair

Minutes
State Board of Education Special Committee on Academic Distress Meeting
Wednesday, January 7, 2015

The State Board of Education Special Committee on Academic Distress met Wednesday, January 7, 2015, in the Auditorium of the Department of Education Building. Chairman Vicki Saviers called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

Present: Vicki Saviers, Chair; Sam Ledbetter; Toyce Newton; and Diane Zook

Additional State Board Members present: Joe Black; Dr. Jay Barth; Alice Mahony, Kim Davis, and Mireya Reith

Little Rock School District Representatives:

Dr. Dexter Suggs, Superintendent
Marvin Burton, Deputy Superintendent
Henry Anderson, Principal of McClellan High School
Larry Schleischer, Principal of Hall High School
Wanda Ruffins, Principal of Cloverdale Aerospace Technology Charter School
Katina Ray, Principal of Baseline Elementary School
Frank Williams, Principal of Henderson Middle School
Jeremy Owoh, Principal of J. A. Fair High School
Additional Little Rock School District representatives were in attendance.

External Provider: none

Arkansas Department of Education Staff Representatives:

Annette Barnes, Assistant Commissioner of Public School Accountability
Elbert Harvey, Coordinator for Public School Accountability
Dr. Richard Wilde, Director of School Improvement
Chantel'e Williams, School Improvement Specialist
Kyron Jones, School Improvement Specialist
Roxey Browning, School Improvement Specialist
Additional ADE staff members were in attendance.

Little Rock School Board Members in attendance:

Greg Adams, President LRSD School Board
Joy Springer
Tara Shephard
Dianne Curry
Jim Ross
Leslie Fiskien
C. E. McAdoo

Consent Agenda

The committee approved the consent agenda.

Items included in the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes - November 13, 2014

Reports

Little Rock School District Quarterly Report

Chair Saviers said that at the Special Board Meeting on March 28, 2014, former State Board of Education Chair Brenda Gullett appointed a special committee to study chronically underperforming school districts. Ms. Saviers said the State Board of Education classified Schools in Academic Distress on July 10, 2014. She said at the request of the district, the Special Committee on Academic Distress heard a report on October 14, 2014, pertaining to the schools classified in Academic Distress in the Little Rock School District. She said this meeting was a follow-up to the previous meeting. Chair Saviers said this was an informal meeting to determine barriers and solutions to the success of these schools.

Little Rock School District

Little Rock Superintendent Dr. Dexter Suggs said there was no quantitative data to support the progress in the plan, but there was qualitative data and anecdotal evidence. He introduced building principals from the academically distressed schools and asked them to give a brief report of progress. He said the following Little Rock schools have been classified in academic distress:

- Baseline Elementary School
- Cloverdale Aerospace Technology Center
- Henderson Middle School
- Hall High School
- J.A. Fair High School
- McClellan Magnet High School

Ms. Katina Ray, Baseline Elementary School Principal, said the school had refined their goals to include individual teacher goals, but the school needed more time to show student achievement.

Ms. Wanda Ruffins, Cloverdale Middle School Principal, said the teachers were collecting data to drive instruction and provide interventions for students. She said they revised their school leadership team so that leadership goals are being

carried out in small group team meetings. She said teachers were utilizing test preparation tools.

Mr. Frank Williams, Henderson Middle School Principal, said the school focused on celebrating the attendance of students and teachers and reducing discipline actions. He said the school was collecting pre- and post-assessment data in math classes.

Mr. Larry Schleicher, Hall High School Principal, said the school offered Saturday school for ESL certification, had hired a consultant to work with SPED teachers and co-teachers, and the principal enrolled in the Arkansas Leadership Academy. He said the school had a new leadership team, used SMI and SRI testing, utilized before and after school tutoring, and implemented a new reading intervention program.

Mr. Jeremy Owoh, J.A. Fair High School Principal, said the school streamlined interventions and worked on better evaluation methods. He said the school focused on the leadership team and intended goals. The school celebrated student success. He said teachers analyzed data to inform instruction, used pre- and post-tests, students became knowledgeable of their progress, and utilized small group literacy and math interventions.

Mr. Henry Anderson, McClellan High School Principal, said the school analyzed data to monitor the progress of students and the work in professional learning communities. He said the school is teaching the Common Core State Standards through the intended curriculum. He said the teachers are utilizing discipline and attendance data to make effective decisions for students.

Dr. Suggs said there was a lack of urgency within the district. He said the plan is a quality one, but the schools have failed to provide a quality education to the students.

Deputy Superintendent Marvin Burton said that three high schools received a total of approximately \$22 million in school improvement grants over three years. He said money has not resolved all of the problems.

Dr. Suggs said there currently was a better focus on the issues in the district, but some resistance still existed. He said he does not have the support necessary to deal with this resistance. Dr. Suggs said two scholastic audits were completed. He said some segments of the curriculum were updated, and the district was designing professional development to train staff on utilizing data to make decisions for instruction. He said the district is at a critical point in time - a state of emergency. He said he was concerned about the pace of improvement. He said the sense of status quo is alarming. He said he has the freedom to come up with the plan but not the freedom to implement the plan.

Arkansas Department of Education

Assistant Commissioner Ms. Annette Barnes said she was encouraged by some of the reports from the principals. She said the Department's report is critical of the progress, not critical of the personnel.

School Improvement Director Dr. Richard Wilde said the district needed a more focused implementation and evaluation plan. He said the district is attempting to do too many things and is therefore not doing them well. He said the report is supportive of the best practice efforts but critical of the amount of work proposed without building the culture and providing the support needed to fully implement the interventions. He recommended the Board intervene and give the Commissioner oversight of the district. Dr. Wilde said he perceived limited autonomy at the building level and a one-size-fits-all intervention across schools. He said the biggest barrier to improvement is the time needed to logistically support the changes required.

Ms. Barnes said the lack of capacity building in the district might not permit the needed changes to be sustained. She said the school improvement specialists who have worked in the schools have also expressed concerns about the progress of the schools.

Department General Counsel Mr. Jeremy Lasiter said the State Board of Education identified six Little Rock Schools in Academic Distress in July 2014. He said Ark. Ann. Code §6-15-430 outlines sanctions for consideration.

Public Comment

Ms. Doris Wright, Vice-Mayor of Little Rock, said she was speaking on behalf of the released prisoners. She said the young people need something different to keep them from entering the penal system. She said a good education is critical to helping students.

Ms. Marla Johnson, CEO of Aristotle, requested a bold move to reset the Little Rock School District. She said businesses stand ready to assist the effort.

Mr. Jason Hamilton, Executive Director of Arkansas Commitment, said there must be support from the top down and bottom up and collaboration from all stakeholders. He said accountability is critical.

Mr. Hugh McDonald, CEO of Entergy, said maintaining and growing business is critical for the area. Every employer asks about the quality of education, and he said Little Rock has failed to present itself as having a school district on the rise. He said too many students are not getting the education they deserve. He said

this is a watershed action and the change needed to put the city on a trajectory of success.

Mr. Gary Smith, President of Glass Erectors, said he thinks this issue is critical for central Arkansas. He said many families are desperate for better schools. He encouraged the committee to put the district under state authority. He also encouraged the committee to consider changing some boundaries of the district.

Mr. Van Tilbury, President and CEO of East-Harding Construction, asked the Board to take over the Little Rock School District. He said his business could not grow with the current status of the school district.

Mr. John Riggs IV, President of J.A. Riggs Tractor Company, said the poor performance of the elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools require a bold move. Mr. Riggs shared his notes from 1994 when he served on the Little Rock School Board and named several notable people who have identified problems in the Little Rock School District. He said the change starts with the State Board but does not end there.

Little Rock School Board

Mr. Greg Adams, Little Rock School Board President, said there are options. He said the decisions made by this School Board have been focused on students. He said the School Board is committed to implementing the plan as submitted.

Mr. C. E. McAdoo, Little Rock School Board member, said the School Board would not tolerate what has occurred in the past.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman.