

**Minutes of Regular Meeting of the El Dorado School Board**  
**January 9, 2023**

The directors of the board met on the above date at 6:00 p.m. in the Central Office Board Room, 200 West Oak St, El Dorado, Arkansas with Susan Turbeville presiding. Other directors present were Vicky Dobson, Renee Skinner, Kenneth Clemons, Wayne Gibson, and Keith Smith. Director Todd Whatlet was absent. Also in attendance were Jim Tucker, Melissa Powell, Sherry Floss, Shelley Pruitt, Taylon Steele and Missy Passmore.

Mr. Tucker stated that January is School Board Appreciation month and that it is an honor to brag on our board, and it is very easy to do! He stated that he has spoken with other superintendents and boards across the state and he knows that there are not many boards like ours. He also stated that though they might have deferring opinions, they are always respectful and carefully discuss the issues to determine the best interest of the students and staff of ESD. He also stated that it is a thankless job, where they sign up to get fussed at, and they do it for free! Mr. Tucker said that he is amazed and thrilled to work with the Board of the El Dorado School District and he is thankful for all that they do. Mrs. Turbeville spoke for the group and said that it is a privilege to serve!

Mrs. Turbeville asked if there were corrections or additions to the minutes of the meetings held December 12. On a motion by Wayne Gibson, a second by Vicky Dobson, and carried on a 6-0 vote the minutes were approved and are on file in the superintendent's office.

The board reviewed the monthly bills. After a time of discussion and on a motion by Keith Smith, seconded by Kenneth Clemons, and carried on a 6-0 vote, the minutes were approved and are on file in the superintendent's office.

Shelley Pruitt stated that it was time to renew our Board Liability Errors and Omissions Insurance Coverage. She informed the board that we are required to keep this up to date and our current coverage ends February 1, 2023. ASBA offers coverage through BancorpSouth, Inc at \$25,128 and the policy written by QBE Insurance Company. On the recommendation of Mr. Tucker, a motion by Renee Skinner, a second by Vicki Dobson and carried on a 6-0 vote it was

RESOLVED that the board hereby approves the renewal of the Board Liability Errors and Omissions Insurance coverage, through BancorpSouth, Inc, QBE Insurance Company at \$25,128.

Mr. Gibson stated that Mrs. Allgood was not able to attend the December meeting so she was being recognized for being the WMS Classified Employee of the Month for December 2022. Washington Middle School's Classified Employee of the Month is Denise Allgood. Ms. Allgood is a paraprofessional and has worked ESD for six years. Mrs. Allgood was not able to attend.

Coworker Kristyna Newton shared, "Mrs. Allgood is such a valuable asset to WMS. She is always willing to do what is needed to ensure the school runs smoothly. The students love her because she holds strong academic expectations, yet she is able to use each child's unique strengths to help them overcome their struggles and develop a positive self-concept. I feel privileged to be able to work beside her every day. Her devotion and tenacity are admirable. She is willing to do whatever it takes to help the students reach their goals.

Coworker Katie Taylor, "Denise Allgood is so deserving of this award! She goes above and beyond to help anyone that needs her. She also steps up and does anything she is asked to do. She never complains about not getting to do her regular job or having to eat at a different time."

Principal, Bethanie Hale: Denise Allgood is irreplaceable at WMS. She is one of the hardest workers I have ever met and will jump in wherever she is needed without a positive attitude. From subbing in classes to covering the office when we are short staffed, Denise is willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done. She is passionate about literacy and works hard with her students to help them close the gaps they may have. I am so thankful to have Denise a part of our WMS family and it would not be the same without her.

Barton Junior High's Student of the Month is Sophia Clark. She is a 7th grade student and the daughter of Trey and Carmen Clark. The nominating teacher said Sophia is so helpful and always has a smile on her face. I enjoy her so much!

Her Assistant Principal, Cori Martinez said that Sophia is one of the kindest students. She is positive, respectful, and polite every single day! As an office worker, any task you ask her to do, she does it efficiently with pride. What a hardworking young lady! She is in archery and also excels in advanced

courses. I cannot think of a more deserving student to represent Barton as student of the month. Well deserved for sure!

Barton Junior High's Classified Employee of the Month is Brenda Richards. She has been faithfully serving in the BJH Cafeteria and ESD for 12 years! She has been married for 42 years to Bernard Richard. They have two daughters, Latoya Buffert and Chiquita Richard and one grandson, Damerio Buffert.

The nominating staff member said Brenda is always so sweet, polite and helpful. She loves what she does and loves Barton students!

Ms. Geneva Odems states that Brenda cares about her job. When she is assigned a task you don't have to worry about it being done right. She has a good work ethic. She is very friendly and hospitable. She is faithful to her job, loves people and God. She calls the cafeteria workers her family and friends.

Principal Michelle Henry stated that Barton is so glad to have employees like Ms. Brenda to serve our students and staff. We appreciate Ms. Brenda and we are happy she calls Barton her home! Ms. Richards stated that she appreciates being nominated as Classified employee of the month for BJH and stated that she thanks the Lord that she can be there to serve the students and staff. She also stated that she loves her co-workers and Ms. Kim and sees them as her family.

Barton Junior High's Teacher of the Month is Karen Silmon. She received her bachelor degree in Elementary Education from Louisiana Tech and her Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Arkansas State University. Ms. Silmon has been teaching for 34 years with 29 of those being at ESD. Her very first year of teaching was at BJH! She has also taught 3rd and 4th grade at Yocum, She has been IRT, Dean of Students, and School Improvement Specialist at Washington Middle School, and a School Improvement Specialist at El Dorado High School. She is currently teaching 7th grade math. Ms. Silmon has been married for 30 years to Tim Silmon. They have three children, Cody (Brandy) Silmon, Alexis (Dustin) Davis, and Allyson Silmon. They have three grandchildren, Sidda Silmon, Lynlee Davis, and Kase Silmon.

The nominating co-workers stated that Mrs. Silmon teaches hard every single day! Math is her language and the kids know in her room it's time to learn and focus. She will pull students through RTI, tutoring and all just to get students where they need to be. Mrs. Silmon holds all of her students to high expectations. She is just here for the kids! Another co-worker stated that for as long as I can remember, Mrs. Silmon has been a teacher. She is not just any teacher, but one with patience and excellent teaching abilities. Another stated that Mrs. Silmon is an amazing teacher. She goes above and beyond to make sure that every student has what they need to be successful. Another stated that Mrs. Silmon is a joy to be around. The way she has taken on additional classes to ensure that no child is left behind in math is amazing! She does all of this with a smile on her face. We share a wall and I can hear her teaching and the students participating, and it makes me smile. She truly has the heart of an educator.

Principal Michelle Henry stated, Karen Silmon was at Yocum when I began my teaching career. She served as a mentor and friend to me during those years. She has continued to be a friend for the years since that time. Karen has always been a strong teacher, and she continues to show that every day not at Barton. She leads her co-workers, she holds her students accountable, and she pushes for success! Karen has taken the lead among the 7th grade math team to ensure all Barton students are successful. Karen would literally teach all 315 7th graders by herself if she had enough desks and it wasn't against the law! In addition to teaching math, Karen does early morning cafeteria duty each day and helps out wherever she sees a need. She is positive and friendly to all around her. We are so happy she decided to return to the El Dorado School District and call Barton Junior High her home. Mrs. Silmon stated that she is just so thankful that Mrs. Powell and Mrs. Henry hired her back and said that she is glad to be home!

Mrs. Henry then presented the principal's report for Barton Junior High. She said that Barton Junior High really appreciates the board and all that they do and all of the work that goes into it. She then stated that it was time for her to brag on BJH and said that it is just so easy to do!

She is very excited to be at Barton and there is so much going on there! Last year the play was Matilda, and this year they will be presenting the Little Mermaid on March 31st and April 1st at the EHS auditorium. Last spring Mrs. G took the student council to Washington DC and this year they will be going to New York City. It will be a combination of Student Council and MP3 Students. She shared many pictures from the fall dance. Students and teachers alike had a blast! This coming spring there will be another dance! From the ticket and snack sales from the first dance they were able to donate \$800 to UCAPS.

There is a lot of learning going on as well! Outside Science, making learning fun. The library had a book tasting. They just did another round of testing. She stated that they just completed the middle of the year STAR math and reading testing. She said that last year the math scores were not great, but they had  $\frac{1}{3}$  of 7th graders and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of 8th graders increase at least 50 or more points! 239 students moved 50 or more points, some even moved over 100 points in math. There were 85 students who improved in reading. We are very excited about the upward trend and we will be keeping a close eye on the scores this spring.

We have a lot of sports going on as well, it is great to be a Wildkitten! Cheer, football, cross country, track, they have done really well this year. we have basketball. There are many other things going on as well. Band, digital art, orchestra, Barton Bakes. If you are not a fan of sports, there are many other options to choose from! Our band is really good, they had 19 band students who were All Region! We also have a Robotics Team who had the opportunity to go to the Vex IQ Ready Tournament. There were a few teams, they placed 2nd and 4th. The team who placed 2nd will have the opportunity to go to State in March. They are doing all kinds of things that are just amazing! We have had Pep Rallies, our students love it. It seems like chaos, but it is actually really good. The students really enjoy participating, it has been great.

Our teachers are a large part of what really makes our school so great. We have amazing teachers doing amazing things every day. Teachers have been highly involved in the PLC process, our teacher excellence winner from last year. First Baptist Church has decided to support our staff. They have supplied lunches, but one of the greatest things they do is support our staff with prayers. It has been really amazing and our teachers have felt very loved and encouraged. Our staff had a door hanger party and really enjoyed spending time with each other.

Mrs. Henry briefly discussed Barton Gives Back and shared that last May they raised over \$5000 through sales of tickets and snacks. This helps them to give back all throughout the year. This year some of that was used for 8 students to have Christmas. This covered gifts and stockings for the student and their siblings, food items for a Christmas meal. Mrs. Gleghorn does an amazing job of getting all of that organized and customized for each student and getting it wrapped. It was very heartwarming to be able to do that.

One of our 8th grade students had an idea to have a powder puff football game which was in October. There was a t-shirt made and sold district wide. The boys cheered, the girls played football, with the sales of the tickets and the t-shirts they were able to give \$1500 to Team Corri and \$1500 went back into the Barton Gives back fund.

In an effort to help the Salvation Army they had a "Block the Door" contest. Students brought canned goods to school and they tried to stack it high enough to block the teacher from being able to enter the classroom! They gathered over 1500 cans of food, and some of the classes had over 200 cans of food stacked in their teacher's doorway. The classes who had their door blocked were allowed to have a "fun day" in their 5th period class.

This year they have implemented a new behavior program at Barton called the Wild Kitten Way. It is mirrored after the Wildcat Way, set up to have a smooth transition from Barton Junior High to El Dorado High School. We are working with Solution Tree author Jessica Hannigan. We have the appropriate behavior expectations posted throughout the school. They have instituted a positive behavior reward and students can earn Minga points. There is an app that students can access. They will have a point exchange and there are many rewards they will be able to choose from. They did a contest 7th vs 8th on who had the least amount of tardies and the 8th graders won. This seems to be working well as the behavior referrals seem to be down about 50% from this time last year.

Mr. Tucker stated that every January we are required to let each of the board members know how many CEU hours they received for the previous year. Each board member is required to receive a minimum of 6 hours of continuing education. He was very proud to state that all of our board members had at least triple if not quadruple the amount of required hours for 2022. He stated that is just an example of how dedicated our board members truly are.

Assistant Superintendent, Melissa Powell, then gave an update on the recruitment and retention plan and the SAU partnership. She stated that Taylon has been a vital part of improving our marketing materials and is currently updating all of them as well as creating a new commercial for ESD that will help us be more competitive!. She has worked on a new marketing campaign and has also expanded our recruitment efforts. She has increased ESD's presence at Job fairs and has started taking principals and other leadership with her to these events. They are able to conduct interviews at the job fairs and the principals have done an amazing job in recruiting and getting their teachers involved in that process as well. She has been able to host candidates beyond their interview, having principals or teachers take them out to enjoy a meal or explore what our wonderful town has to offer. She has also been able to give candidates gift cards if they are traveling more than 3 hours away and have been able to put them in a hotel for the night. We have also hosted our own ESD Job Fairs for both Certified and Classified positions! She has been able to speak with people in the community who might have a bachelor's degree that are interested in teaching and has made many connections in that area.

National research shows that the #1 reason most teachers leave the profession due to lack of support. Our own research that we have collected through exit surveys and interviews shows that ESD has a strong support system and it is not ranked high as a reason for them to leave. Our research shows that people like to stay close to home. They generally branch out and spend the first five years away and then move back closer to home. There is a study from the researchers in the U.S. Census Bureau and Harvard University says nearly 60% of young adults, around age 26, live within ten miles of where they grew up. 80% live within 100 miles. Therefore we need to focus on building teachers who are El Dorado Natives.

Our data shows the following six things. One, Making El Dorado Home: With signing incentive and relocation incentive, licensed employees have more opportunities to move to the El Dorado area, increasing the probability of them staying in the district. Two, Social events: In a pre-covid world, staff events were enjoyed by many. Post-Covid brought back Christmas parties, and soon district wide game night! We will be having our first large event post covid. Andria Gleghorn is putting together a game night for staff to mingle and enjoy! The third is Community Connections: Stephanie Lowrey has done an amazing job with the mentoring program. This provides teachers who are new to the district and area with a wide variety. The next is El Dorado Connections: Connecting with El Dorado natives and paving the way for them to enter the classroom leaves us with employees that are tied to the success of our community. The fifth item is Additional Feedback: Constructive criticism is helpful in moving our practice forward. One we have improved on is our pre-school training with our mentoring program and district-wide mini-sessions. The final item is Internships: After an internship ends, interns want to stay in the district. We are working to capitalize on that with the partnership with SAU and Forward Arkansas. She was very excited that we had already been speaking with SAU and discussing the possibility of paid internships at the same time that Forward Arkansas started discussing the possibility.

Forward Arkansas provided a grant opportunity that we had already discussed and postured ESD to participate in. They have the Educator Preparation Programs Design Collaborative. 16 of the 19 who applied moved to Phase 1. El Dorado School District was one of those 16, we created the vision for our grant proposal to partner with SAU to transform student teaching to move into phase 2. SAU was able to jump on this grant because we had already discussed the opportunities and they knew that we were on board and interested in the opportunity Forward Arkansas was presenting. El Dorado School District is one of the two schools in Arkansas that has partnered with SAU for this wonderful opportunity.

SAU was one of two universities to get phase two, and will receive \$1,800,000 from Forward Arkansas Grant over the next three years. This will help with the training of the mentor teachers but most of this will be at the university level. SAU will be completely revamping their program so that the internship will last for a year instead of a semester. This requires many changes and more support from the university.

Mrs. Powell stated that they have partnered with a company called Ed Prep, they are a well known company that has done a lot of work in Texas. They told us that we “developed a bold innovative plan to transform student teaching that has the potential to dramatically change the teacher pipeline.” She stated that she read that over and over in her mind because it just sounded so good! We decided to go ahead and have a pilot semester for the spring semester. We will start full blown year long interns in the fall. We pay these student teachers at a paraprofessional pay rate. Instead of the normal student teaching model, we are doing a true co-teaching model, they are both in charge of the classroom. We currently have 9 student teachers on seven campuses. We do not have one at Yocum Primary simply because there was not a k-1 candidate. These student teachers are paid on the paraprofessional pay scale and commit to work for ESD the following school year.

Mr. Tucker then gave a brief update on the current construction projects. He stated that the Solar Field project was complete and they will be having the “flip the switch” ceremony on January 30, 1:00 pm. Mr Tucker also stated that Northwest Elementary and Hugh Goodwin Elementary additions should be complete in approximately three weeks. He finally stated that the EHS AG building was coming along quite well and will end up being the nicest in the state! Pictures were displayed of the completed solar field.

Mrs. Turbeville stated that we had received the following transfer requests. One student who resides in the Strong-Huttig would like to transfer to the El Dorado School District. One student who resides in the El Dorado School District would like to transfer to the Junction City School District. Mr. Tucker recommended these legal transfers. On a motion by Vicky Dobson, a second by Kenneth Clemons and carried on a 6-0 vote it was

RESOLVED, that the board hereby approves these legal transfers as presented by the superintendent.

Mrs. Turbeville made the following announcements:

- **ASBA “hybrid” School Law Seminar:** February 7, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Double Tree by Hilton Hotel Little Rock (424 West Markham St)

The meeting recessed to an executive session to discuss personnel matters. The board reconvened to an open meeting and on a motion by Renee Skinner, a second by Keith Smith, and carried on a 6-0 vote. it was:

RESOLVED that the board hereby approves the superintendent’s recommendation concerning the acceptance of resignations and the employment of new personnel.

The board discussed adding another year to the superintendent’s contract and the terms of the superintendent’s contracted pay for the years 2023-2026 as \$195,700, a travel stipend of \$ 6,000 for a total amount of \$201,700 per year. On a motion by Wayne Gibson, a second by Renee Skinner and carried on a 6-0 vote it was

RESOLVED that the board hereby approves another year to the superintendent’s contract with the annual superintendent’s salary for the years 2023-2026 being \$195,700 with a travel stipend of \$6,000 for a total of \$201,700.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.