

**Minutes of Regular Meeting of the El Dorado School Board
January 17, 2012**

The directors of the board met on the above date at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room, School Administration Building, 200 West Oak Street, with Vicky Dobson presiding. Other directors present were Wayne Gibson, Larry Holder, Renee Skinner, Susan Turbeville, Will Vance and Todd Whatley. Also attending was Supt. Bob Watson, Rhonda Simmons, Shirley Billingly, Bonnie Haynie, Angie Drummond, and Lou Ann Voris.

Mr. Watson reported that thirty minutes prior to the regular board meeting he visited with patrons in a public hearing about the district's ten year facilities plan. The public meeting is a new requirement from the state and time is given, after the report, for input from those in attendance, Mr. Watson said. He informed the board that from 2012 to 2016, the school district has two major projects it needs to give attention to. First is the possibility of turning a part of the old high school into Barton Junior High School. The present Barton campus main building was built in 1949 and is a very high cost maintenance facility. He said the estimated cost to convert the old high school is about twenty million dollars.

Mr. Watson explained that due to the population in the district, between 150,000 to 175,000 square feet of space would be needed, as required by the state, to house junior high students and the old high school is 165,000 square feet. Administrators have been talking with Blake Dunn about the possibility of turning the old high school campus into a facility for the junior high, eliminating the courtyards, and bringing the facility under one roof. He noted that property is a great location and has lots of advantages with parking and utilities already there. Due to the age of Barton and the moisture issues – such as water coming through the bricks – the district can receive partial state funding for the project. Blake Dunn said part of the feasibility study to determine if the old high school could be converted to house the junior high school students would be to look at each building on the campus and strategies to enclose the school. Mr. Watson said since the current junior high is landlocked and because of the age and condition of some of the areas on that campus, some of the old buildings will possibly be torn down and remaining areas could be used by the school district and community.

Mr. Watson explained the second project that needs to be addressed in the future is a new storage building for the transportation and maintenance departments and the food service program at the district. This will be at a cost of approximately two million dollars. He said that all three of these areas are in old buildings and need more space. School buses, transportation and maintenance shops are currently housed where the former Smith Avenue School was located and the food service program is located in the former Colonial Bakery building. He said the district might try to sell the property where the three departments are now located.

Mr. Watson said about four or five years ago the district bought seventy-two acres of land east of El Dorado. He noted the district might house all three departments in a metal building at that location, with a common area that would be shared by employees. Mr. Watson stressed that the ten year facilities plan is tentative and could change from year to year. In the years between 2015 and 2020, painting, floor replacement, new HVAC equipment installed and electrical updating will need to be addressed at Retta Brown, Hugh Goodwin, Yocum, and Murmil Educational Center. To address future facility upgrades and renovations for the district, the board may have to ask voters to approve a millage increase. He said the economy will dictate a lot and this work depends on student growth and funding. The district has 4,581 students enrolled, nine campuses including five elementary schools (K-4), one middle school (5-6), one junior high (7-8), one high school (9-12), and one alternative school. The district has just completed the new 317,000 square foot high school at a cost of about \$43 million – which cost about \$49 million total – for land, furniture, technology, and construction. The school will house 1,600 students at capacity.

Mr. Watson stated that a small addition of 2,767 square feet was recently added to Northwest Elementary that included speech, occupational and physical therapy space, and

conference and storage space for the special education program at the school. Also, during the past summer, Northwest was roofed, repainted, and new student lockers were added.

Mrs. Dobson asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the meetings held December 12 and January 10. On a motion by Wayne Gibson, seconded by Susan Turbeville, and carried on a 7-0 vote, the minutes were approved.

The board reviewed the monthly bills. After some discussion and on a motion by Larry Holder, seconded by Renee Skinner, and carried on a 7-0 vote, the bills were approved for payment. A list of bills paid and monthly financial statement are on file in the business office.

Mr. Watson stated that Governor Mike Beebe has proclaimed January as Arkansas School Board Member Recognition Month. He read the proclamation from the governor and stated that he, staff, students, and patrons greatly appreciate the board's time, commitment, and energy to the students of the district.

Mrs. Dobson introduced two Students of the Month, sisters Claire Van Sickle from Hugh Goodwin Elementary and Abigail Van Sickle from Washington Middle School. She stated both girls are the daughters of Patti and Scott Van Sickle. Claire is in Mrs. Margaret Cupp's fourth grade classroom. She noted that Claire exhibits qualities that not only make her an exceptional student, but an exceptional person as well. She shines in the classroom – thanks to her intelligence, hard work, and creativity. She is always willing to lend a helping hand to her teachers and her peers. Her teachers state that she is a delight to teach and know. Washington staff and students are proud that Claire was chosen Student of the Month! Mrs. Dobson presented her with a certificate from the board.

Abigail Van Sickle is a sixth grader at Washington Middle School. Her teacher, Mrs. Goode, stated that Abigail is a great choice for Student of the Month. She comes to school eager to learn and challenges the students with the questions she asks in class. Abigail waits patiently while others work at an answer, yet she is also willing to help whenever needed. Mrs. Goode stated she is an asset to my classroom! Her principal, Mrs. Vines stated that Abigail is an honor student and very interested in all school work, as her grades validate. Her teachers report that she actively participates in all her classes and is eager to please. She is highly regarded by her classmates and works well with others. Mrs. Harwell, her art teacher, stated that Abigail demonstrates outstanding talents as an artist and one of her projects was recently submitted to the Barrett Hamilton Young Arkansas Artist Competition. Staff and students are proud that Abigail was chosen Students of the Month. She presented Abigail with a certificate from the board.

Mrs. Dobson stated that Sandra Holden was chosen Classified Employee of the Month. Mrs. Holden is a special education paraprofessional at Northwest Elementary and has been working in the district since September 1984 and she has been with the same teacher for the past 27 years! Mrs. Holden stated from Rock Island to Carver and from Carver to Northwest the experience has been a wonderful journey. Mrs. San as she is affectionately known by the students is a model paraprofessional; she has exemplary clerical skills and her classroom management abilities are off the chart. She has excellent attendance, a wonderful rapport with students, and a pleasant disposition with co-workers. Mrs. Kemp stated that Mrs. Sandra can read her thoughts, she knows what needs to be done and she has no problem doing it with excellence; "My life as a teacher would be weary without her." Mrs. Lori Bagley stated that Mrs. San is SO good with all the children, not just the ones in her classroom. She probably knows all of their names! They all love her and enjoy getting to spend time with her when she has duty. Staff and students are thrilled that Mrs. Sandra Holden was chosen Classified Employee of the Month. Mrs. Dobson presented her with a certificate from the board.

Teacher of the Month from Hugh Goodwin is Gennette Graham. Mrs. Dobson stated that Mrs. Graham received her Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. This is her thirtieth year of teaching in our district. Those nominating her stated when trying to picture a dedicated, accomplished, and caring

teacher, our eyes immediately go to Gennette Graham. Mrs. Graham is a person of influence in the community and is unwavering in her beliefs and moral character. She brings these caring and firm attributes to her classroom. Students hold her in high regard and she daily inspires her students to do their best. Mrs. Graham spends classroom time teaching and focusing on each and every student; taking into consideration each and every background that she encounters. At lunch you will find her spending extra time with a student so they can readily understand a math concept. Her math test scores have consistently been at the top and she creates a classroom of achievers. Staff and students were happy that Mrs. Graham was chosen as Teacher of the Month. Mrs. Dobson presented her with a certificate from the board.

Mrs. Dobson introduced Lindsey Adams as Teacher of the Month from Washington Middle School. Ms. Adams received her Bachelor of Science in middle school education from Arkansas Tech University. She is working on her Master's degree – having completed six graduate hours and currently enrolled in nine at Southern Arkansas University. This is her second year of teaching in our district.

Those nominating Ms. Adams stated she is very talented, energetic, and dedicated to her profession. She incorporated a variety of teaching styles into her lessons – including games, outdoor activities, art, and music. Ms. Adams is a team player and recently began team-teaching with Mrs. Robin Morgan, a fifth grade pre-AP science teacher. Ms. Adams also tutors before school and continuously thinks outside of the box and has very high expectations of her students. As a result, over 80% of her students were proficient or advanced on both Chunk tests this year! Her principal, Mrs. Jody Vines, stated that Ms. Adams is a dynamic teacher. She puts lots of emphasis on planning her sixth grade pre-AP math lessons, incorporating a wide variety of instructional techniques. She holds high expectations for student learning and works to find instructional material to meet the needs of all of her students. Lindsey comes to school early each morning and works with individual students that might need a little extra help. She and co-teacher Mrs. Morgan provide real-life math and science lessons that make learning fun. Staff and students were excited that Ms. Adams is Teacher of the Month. Mrs. Dobson presented her with a certificate from the board.

A Petition for Transfer Request was approved for a student to transfer to another district.

Bonnie Haynie visited with the board about what staff is doing to inform parents and the community about Common Core. She stated that Joan Hershberger with News Times will include information about Common Core in the Education Edition section on Tuesdays. These articles will include what Common Core is, how it affects the community, classroom, and other areas to inform the public. Mrs. Haynie will also add information to the district's Facebook page.

Mr. Watson stated for the 2012-2013 school year he needed to recommend a reduction in expenses of between \$900,000.00 and one million dollars to balance next school years budget. The loss of students, fifty-three today over this time last year, and increased costs make this reduction necessary. The proposed reduction would include a recommendation to close Union School at a savings of \$364,854.00. The school presently has only fifty-six students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade. Next year the number will be forty-eight and the other elementary schools can handle those numbers with additional space or personnel. Mr. Watson stated the need is real – legitimate and he wished he could make that need go away.

Mr. Watson also noted the district's need for more money to fund the VARtek proposal; \$192,000.00 to fund the salary schedule; an increase of about \$400,000.00 in unemployment insurance and funding for new teachers. The West Woods ELL program currently has twenty-eight students and a staff of five teachers. Students spend half a day in the ELL program and the other half of the school day at their home schools, Mr. Watson said. If the board chose to close the program, one person will be retained to assist ELL students at their home schools. Eliminating the ELL program will save the district an estimated \$262,346.00. Other proposed staff positions to be eliminated will include a high school study hall, orchestra, music, Murril Elementary position, high

school aide position, Retta Brown assistant principal, and a high school position – for a total savings of about \$302,077.00 for the district.

Mr. Watson stated that each year the district hires about forty-five new teachers and everything will be handled by attrition, if the board members vote to approve the suggested elimination of staff positions. He noted that eighty-five percent of our budget is people. There will be positions for most staff affected by the proposed closure and elimination, he said. The cost of things is going up dramatically. Utilities and gasoline costs are increasing and we have to upgrade our technology to better serve our students. He noted there are lots of issues to address. Todd Whatley stated that a lot of people in the Union district are concerned about Union School. He asked if he can have a meeting at the school to visit with the people in the Union area. Mr. Watson stated he feels a meeting with residents, parents, and personnel would be appropriate. Mr. Watson asked for the board's consideration of these cost reductions and vote in the next board meeting.

The meeting adjourned to an executive session to discuss personnel matters, then reconvened to an open meeting. On a motion by Wayne Gibson, seconded by Will Vance, and carried on a 7-0 vote, it was

RESOLVED, That the board hereby approves the superintendent's recommendations concerning the acceptance of resignations and the employment of new personnel. The board also approved the addition of another year to the superintendent's contract and will re-visit the current salary in six months.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.