

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

February 25, 2013

LRSD: High School Student Found with Gun, Loaded Magazine on Campus (KARK, Channel 4)

A high school student in Little Rock is in trouble after being found with a gun and loaded magazine.

According to LRSD, a random scan at Hall High School found an unloaded gun on a student. The student then surrendered a loaded magazine.

The district says safety and security personnel confiscated the gun and magazine, and the student was disciplined according to the student handbook.

LRSD officials say information received indicates that this was an isolated event, but as a result of the discovery, Little Rock Police school-based resource officers and security personnel are conducting a full school scan of the student body.

LRSD requires quarterly scans of all students on campuses, three random scans of students and two random scans of lockers. Schools may elect to do them more frequently. Hall conducts one random scan of five rooms daily.

In a news release, LRSD stated the following:

"Please be assured we are constantly working to ensure the safety of the student body, faculty and staff of all students. We will provide you additional information as it becomes available. If you have further concerns or questions, feel free to contact principal, John Daniels, at 501-447-1902."

Sequestration and Arkansas (Pine Bluff Commercial)

LITTLE ROCK — The White House compiled the following estimates from federal agencies and its own budget office. The numbers are based only on the \$85 billion in cuts for this fiscal year, from March-September, that are set to take effect Friday. As to whether states could move money around to cover shortfalls, the White House said that depends on state budget structures and the specific programs. The White House did not have a list of which states or programs might have flexibility.

EDUCATION

Arkansas will lose about \$5.9 million in funding for primary and secondary education, putting about 80 teacher and aide jobs at risk. In addition about 10,000 fewer students would be served and approximately 30 fewer schools would receive funding.

About \$5.6 million in funds for about 70 teachers, aides, and staff members who help children with disabilities.

About 380 fewer low-income students in Arkansas would receive aid to help them finance the costs of college, and about 110 fewer students will get work-study jobs that help them pay for college.

Head Start and Early Head Start services would be eliminated for approximately 600 children in Arkansas, reducing access to critical early education.

ENVIRONMENT

About \$1.6 million in environmental funding to ensure clean water and air quality, as well as prevent pollution from pesticides and hazardous waste.

About \$842,000 in grants for fish and wildlife protection.

DEFENSE

About 4,000 civilian Department of Defense employees would be furloughed, reducing gross pay by about \$19.2 million in total.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

About \$159,000 in Justice Assistance Grants that support law enforcement, prosecution and courts, crime prevention and education, corrections and community corrections, drug treatment and enforcement, and crime victim and witness initiatives.

EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

About \$273,000 in funding for job-search assistance, referral, and placement, meaning about 9,850 fewer people will get the help developing employable skills.

CHILD CARE

Up to 200 disadvantaged and vulnerable children could lose access to child care.

About 1,140 fewer children will receive vaccines for diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, whooping cough, influenza, and hepatitis-B because of reduced funding for vaccinations of about \$78,000.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Arkansas will lose about \$279,000 in funds to help upgrade its ability to respond to public health threats including infectious diseases, natural disasters, and biological, chemical, nuclear and radiological events.

About \$660,000 in grants to help prevent and treat substance abuse, resulting in about 200 fewer admissions to substance-abuse programs. And the Arkansas Department of Health will lose about \$84,000 resulting in about 2,100 fewer HIV tests.

STOP Violence Against Women Program could lose up to \$62,000 in funds that provide services to victims of domestic violence, resulting in up to 200 fewer victims being served.

Arkansas would lose about \$310,000 in funds that provide meals for senior citizens.

Pupil achievement said to be LR finalist Phillips' strength (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — Stefanie P. Phillips, a former deputy superintendent in Georgia and now a finalist for the superintendent's job in Little Rock, did not follow the traditional path into school district administration.

The native of Oakland, Calif., used a bachelor's degree in business and a master's in business administration to work for the California Department of Finance in the world of big-picture budgeting. It was in the state agency that education funding piqued her interest, which led to a job as a senior director in the business operations of the Grant Joint Union High School District in 2000 in California.

"At that time I just took every opportunity to learn about the education side of education," Phillips recalled last week. "I went through curriculum academies and began to teach at the university level and got a doctorate in educational leadership. I really took on additional experiences, voluntarily as well as assigned, that were going to support and broaden my abilities to support the educational process."

She said she learned about teaching and learning on the classroom level not so much from textbooks on pedagogy but through "hands-on-the-ground" experiences visiting classrooms with chief academic officers, and then going back and working with them to design curricula based on student needs.

Phillips, who until earlier this month was the deputy superintendent of the nearly 52,000-student Clayton County, Ga., Public Schools, is now one of four candidates for the superintendent's job in the 25,000-student Little Rock School District. The educator who is hired will replace 73-year-old Morris Holmes, whose contract expires June 30. No salary is set for the new hire. Holmes makes a base salary of \$215,000.

Phillips, 44, is married to Bryan Phillips and is the mother of two teenage sons. She is a breast-cancer survivor of seven years and said she is excited about the possibility of living and working in Little Rock. She called Little Rock a midsize Southern city with big-city amenities, a stable economy and a value for family life.

"It feels like home to me," she said.

Phillips was an associate superintendent and then deputy superintendent in the 34,000-student Chino Valley University School District in California from 2006-09.

She then followed Chino Valley Superintendent Ed Heatley when he moved in 2009 to the top post in the Clayton County system, southwest of Atlanta and home to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. As the deputy superintendent, Phillips was responsible for the daily operations of the 67-school district, including its academic, human resources, operations and financial divisions.

In 2008, the Clayton County district had lost its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. When Phillips arrived, the association had moved the district to probation status. Loss of high school accreditation had the effect of jeopardizing high school graduates' unconditional admission to college.

Phillips' role was large in getting the accreditation restored for the district and its schools.

"That was the first order at hand," she said. "How do we get back our accreditation? How do we make a sustainable solution to this crisis so we don't have to keep revisiting this every year. Let's put in procedures and structures and build a culture that supports that automatically so we don't have to worry about the report."

At the same time, the Clayton County district was facing the prospect of reduced state and local revenue.

Phillips said her California government training on budget forecasting helped her and her staff to better prepare for the prospect of shrinking revenue in Georgia.

“We were able to cut \$198 million over three years, keep the system in the black and, at the same time, increase programs to children in the school buildings,” she said. “We overcame a lot of obstacles by reorganizing, redesigning and rethinking what we were doing.”

Still, some of the cuts were painful - such as furlough days ordered for employees and reductions in some bus transportation service to students, according to Georgia news reports at the time.

The increased services to children included replacing blanket remedial programs with improved, targeted point in-time remediation programs for pupils to keep them on pace to score well on state and national exams. The remediation was given within the traditional school day and not delayed until summer school.

Phillips said district students showed gains on many categories of state and national exams during her tenure in the Clayton County system.

She highlighted the increases in the number of students who took the ACT college entrance exam and the improved average scores they earned. A total of 861 students earned a composite score of 17.3 in 2008-09. That improved to 936 test takers and a composite score of 17.4 in 2010-11.

The results for the different tests and different grade levels are shown in detail on the Georgia State Report Card for the 2010-11 school year. The percentages of Clayton County 11th-graders who passed the Georgia High School Writing Test, for example, improved from 90 percent in 2008-09 to 94 percent in 2010-11.

The percentage of eighth graders meeting or exceeding state standards on the math section of the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test rose from 68 percent in 2008-09 to 80 percent in 2010-11. At sixth grade, however, the math results remained basically the same over that time period.

During the time Phillips was in the Clayton County district, the enrollment slide in the district was reversed. The count went from 48,499 students in 2008-09 to 50,765 in the 2011-12 school year. The district had a 71 percent black enrollment, 17.5 percent Hispanic, and 3.4 percent white, according to the district’s 2011-12 annual report to the public.

Phillips resigned from the Clayton County district three weeks ago to actively pursue other opportunities, she said.

“It was a mutual and amicable parting,” Phillips said.

She has applied for jobs in other districts besides Little Rock. She is a finalist only in the Little Rock district as of Friday.

Wanda Smith, a former member of the Clayton County School Board, called Phillips a person of great integrity and an excellent candidate for a superintendent’s position.

“Her strength is student achievement,” Smith said last week, adding that Phillips was highly visible in the community.

“She worked well with the board members,” Smith said. “She uses good judgment and has emotional stability and poise.”

Phillips’ bachelor’s degree was earned in 1992 from the University of California at Davis in managerial economics. Her master’s of business administration in finance is from the same institution, and her doctorate in education leadership is from the University of Southern California.

“I’m very passionate about the work we have to do,” Phillips said. “I want all the kids to be exposed to high expectations and high rigor. Not everyone will go to college or into the military,” she said, but everyone must contribute to society if the country is to remain No. 1 in the world.

“We have to train our kids up. That’s what I’m all about.”

Ex-GI seeking LR school post says problems are opportunities (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — Dexter Suggs Sr., an Army veteran and chief of staff at Indianapolis Public Schools, said his personal history has made him a “strong advocate for kids” and that he could offer unique insights as the next superintendent of the Little Rock School District.

Suggs was shot twice in his early teenage years after tangles with gang-related activity, he said. He later transferred schools and avoided violence by excelling at athletics.

During a combat tour in the Persian Gulf War, he decided he wanted to become an educator.

“This is my calling,” Suggs said. “This is not just a job for me.”

Suggs is one of four candidates who will interview with the Little Rock School Board starting this week. The new superintendent will replace Morris Holmes, 73, whose Little Rock contract expires June 30.

Suggs, 44, who has never been a superintendent, has worked in various administrative roles and as an award winning principal in the Indianapolis school system, which has had its enrollment drop from 39,000 to 31,000 during his time there.

As chief of staff, Suggs leads special projects initiated by the superintendent, coordinates School Board meetings and helps oversee operations of several departments, including information technology, vocational education, alternative education and student assignments.

The McPherson & Jacobson search firm of Omaha, Neb., receiving \$21,500 plus expenses, used the Little Rock School Board’s criteria to find candidates for the superintendent position. Among other things, those criteria called for an “ethical and courageous leader,” an “analytical academician who implements best practices in student achievement,” and “an excellent communicator who can build consensus throughout the community.”

Suggs said his experiences in Indianapolis have prepared him for and attracted him to the 25,000-student Little Rock district.

“They’re both urban-based districts,” he said.

Suggs said district leaders should address out-of-school problems that may cause some students to struggle, such as living in high-crime or high-poverty areas.

In 2007, the Milken Family Foundation awarded him its National Educator Award and a \$25,000 unrestricted prize in recognition of his work as principal at Indianapolis' Donnan Middle School.

The school was "one of the most dangerous schools in the city" when Suggs started work there, he said. "It was totally out of control."

Suggs moved his office to the middle of the school so he could see how students and teachers were interacting. He confronted gang members who were recruiting outside of the school, and he worked with community groups to find resources for students from poor families, he said.

"What some people would call problems, I call opportunities," Suggs said.

Suggs said he would improve student achievement in Little Rock by holding regular meetings among teachers to discuss multiple kinds of student data and by observing how student test scores are influenced by demographic factors.

He said he is prepared to tackle Little Rock's priorities, such as retaining students who might otherwise transfer out of the district and into private schools or open-enrollment public charter schools.

"It's an open market, and it should be that way," Suggs said. "If you want kids to come to your school district, make your schools better."

References contacted by McPherson & Jacobson called Suggs "a fast learner capable of adapting to any setting" and "very articulate," according to his candidate file.

Ann Wilkins, president of the Indianapolis Education Association, the district's teacher's union, said in an interview that Suggs is viewed as "a good guy who tries to be aboveboard most of the time."

The union meets with Suggs and other administrators regularly to discuss problems as they emerge, Wilkins said.

In Suggs' early years at the district, he was criticized as having poor listening skills, Wilkins said.

"Once he had his mind made up, that's the way it was, but that's not how it is now," she said. "He's not as myopic as he used to be. He's learned how to listen and listen to both sides."

Suggs has a bachelor's degree in speech communication and education from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, a master's in curriculum and instruction from Indiana Wesleyan University, a master's in educational leadership from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis and a doctorate in education organizational leadership from Indiana Wesleyan.

He has a wife, Shenja; two sons, 15 and 16; and a daughter, 9.

Suggs said he has been approached about superintendent positions in a few other school districts, but he is not a finalist in any school system but Little Rock's.

The board has not publicly set a salary for the new superintendent. Holmes' annual salary is \$215,000.

'Flipped learning' sends lessons home (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

PRAIRIE GROVE — Anne Minton didn't have to spend 25 minutes of class time teaching a grammar lesson on verbals, a class of verbs that function as other parts of speech in sentences.

Instead, she developed a series of six slides about verbals for her eighth-graders to watch on a computer at home. She sent them an eight-question quiz by e-mail to gauge their understanding of the lesson. Minton's pupils at Prairie Grove Middle School completed the quizzes and submitted them online.

Teachers nationwide are diverging from the traditional classroom model of lectures, note-taking and homework assignments. Thousands are experimenting with "flipped learning," in which they record lectures or create slideshow presentations for students to watch as homework. Sending the lectures home frees up class time for other activities.

Flipped learning can be done intermittently or as part of a daily classroom routine.

Minton, who teaches pre-Advanced Placement English, turned to flipped learning to teach the basics of grammar and literary terms, and to help address problems that appear in students' writing. She produces a 10- to 15-minute lesson every Monday and Wednesday, accompanied by a quiz.

That allows her to devote more of her 90-minute class period to writing, reading and analysis, she said.

"As teachers, we compete with video games, texting, music, Internet, movies," Minton said. "So rather than compete with it, why not join it?"

The videos keep her students engaged in learning outside of the classroom, teaching them that learning is ongoing, she said.

"They're on the computer anyway," she said. "It's a fun way to grab their attention."

Minton's 90-minute class period begins with a short writing assignment. Students can watch the flipped lesson and complete the quiz in class if they weren't able to do it the previous evening. Then they complete the writing assignment as homework instead.

If three-quarters of the students understand the lesson, they can move forward on other assignments, Minton said.

"I can tell my time is better spent," Minton said. "I can make sure everybody gets what they need."

BIRTH OF A CONCEPT

A flipped class allows for more learning and at a higher level than rote memorization does, said Kari Arfstrom, executive director of the Flipped Learning Network, a national network of educators. The network has grown since January 2012 from 2,500 members to 11,000 members nationwide, with 37 members from across Arkansas.

The concept developed in the spring of 2007 out of necessity for two chemistry teachers in a rural Colorado high school of 950 students, Arfstrom said. They were tired of repeating lectures for students who missed their

classes because of ball games and school activities. The teachers discovered software that would allow them to record a PowerPoint slideshow with voice and annotations, and then convert it to a video file that could be shared online.

The recorded lectures were so popular, students asked them to do more, Arfstrom said. Students then began watching recorded lectures for homework and completed their assignments, labs and tests in class. In 2012, teachers Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams published *Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day*.

Some teachers set up cameras in the front of their classrooms and simply give the lectures and notes that they ordinarily would in a classroom of students, Arfstrom said. Others record what they write, type or display on the screens of electronic tablets.

“You have to make sure all students have access to it,” Arfstrom said.

Nationwide in 2010, an estimated 71.1 percent of households had access to the Internet, according to annual survey data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. In Arkansas, 58.8 percent of households had Internet access.

WORK AT OWN PACE

Greg Biggers adopted a modified version of flipped learning several months ago for his eighth-grade math class at Harrisburg Middle School, he said. Students have the option of watching each five- to seven minute video at home or at the beginning of class, said Biggers, who has taught for nine years at the school in Poinsett County.

“Instead of the students trying to keep up with the teacher taking notes, they can rewatch it,” Biggers said of the instruction.

Instead of spending the bulk of his 45-minute class period teaching from the front of the classroom, Biggers spends it answering questions and working with smaller groups.

At Prairie Grove Middle School, Minton’s eighth-graders may not need to remember what gerunds, infinitives and participles are, but they need to know how to use them correctly, she said.

“Flipping the lesson helps me manage my classroom because everyone has something to focus on and everyone is learning at his or her own pace,” Minton said.

Pine Bluff School District to Mull Shutting Down Greenville Elementary (KARK, Channel 4)

Parents with children at Greenville Elementary School in Pine Bluff may want to mark their calendars for a public meeting to decide if the school will remain open.

The Pine Bluff School District is looking at funding and feasibility to keep Greenville Elementary open.

A meeting to gather information and public input is scheduled for Tuesday night at 6 at Greenville Elementary School.

According to district administrators, students continue to leave the district, reducing funding for operations.