

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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Groups aim to fill jobs in science, technology (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Nearly 20 percent of workers in the Little Rock area have expertise in science, technology, engineering or mathematics, or STEM, according to a Brookings Institution report released Monday. That's four times more than was previously thought.

Most studies underestimate the skills and educational needs of thousands of workers in the area by only counting professional workers who hold college degrees and expertise across multiple such education fields, the report said. In Arkansas, that means many workers in health, construction and repair industries were not considered skilled in a science and technology-based education component.

But business and education leaders have been aware of the need for workers with some expertise in one of the four components and are working to fill the employment gap.

"It's the perfect match because we hear from employers all the time that they have many applicants that don't qualify because of lack of skills," said Susan Harriman, director of policy and special projects for the Arkansas Department of Education. "We needed to work together to impact the state."

College graduates are well paid to keep businesses on the cutting edge of research and to develop new products, the report found. But businesses also need workers who can implement ideas, repair products and advise researchers. Those jobs often don't require college degrees but pay about 10 percent more than non-science and technology jobs with similar educational requirements, according to the report.

The report found 61,500 science and technology jobs in the Little Rock area out of 320,400 total jobs.

"We need that highly skilled worker, that engineering and [information technology] person, but we also need the electrician and welder to build the machine," said Shane Broadway, interim director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. "You have to start emphasizing that as early as possible to students and parents."

Members of STEM Works, an initiative started by the Governor's Workforce Cabinet in August 2011, proposed several programs aimed at providing more science and technology education for both kinds of workers. The programs include initiatives to expand science education in earlier grades, provide additional training and equipment, support hands-on learning and encourage college students with hard-science backgrounds to return to school as teachers.

About 40 high schools and three universities are participating in the programs, according to a STEM Works news release. Harriman said the programs reached twice the number of schools the Education Department anticipated, but a lack of high-speed Internet in rural schools might hinder future growth.

About two-thirds of the funding for the programs comes from agencies in the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, according to the STEM Works news release.

"The interest has always been there, but many times it wasn't reflected in the dollars," said Suzanne Mitchell, executive director of the Arkansas STEM Coalition. "We're trying to provide a variety of resources."

Business leaders want those dollars to provide education for younger students. They hope to ignite an early interest that will lead some to study science, technology, engineering or mathematics beyond high school.

"There's just very little science in [kindergarten through sixth grade]," said Walter Burgess, vice president of sales and engineering at Power Technology. "If we don't get kids interested before the eighth grade, it's not going to happen. We want to spark their creativity."

Burgess said he faces shortages of qualified engineers, and assembly workers need a basic science, technology, engineering or mathematics background to do their job.

"For production-type employees, we look for those with electronics backgrounds," Burgess said. "You can't take the basics for granted anymore."

More students are graduating with STEM education credentials, though Burgess said there are still not enough workers to fill needs. The total number of students earning such credentials increased 66 percent from 2008 to 2012, according to a Higher Education Department report on education trends. More than 4,210 students were awarded some type of science, technology, engineering or mathematics degree or qualification in 2012, up from 2,540 in 2008.

Most of the increase came in the form of four-year degrees, but two-year colleges are creating more programs that attempt to fulfill specific needs. Half of all jobs requiring a science, technology, engineering or mathematics education are available to workers without a four-year degree, according to the Brookings report.

Aviation programs at Pulaski Technical College are high-profile examples of a community college filling a business need, Broadway said. But community colleges are also trying to fulfill smaller, more specific needs for companies such as Power Technology, which designs and manufactures laser equipment.

Burgess said Pulaski Technical College will offer a technician program this year that will directly benefit 13 optical technology equipment manufacturers in the state that employ a total of about 500 people.

"They have listened and been really responsive," he said.

In Arkansas, funding remained steady for two-year colleges in the past several years. Nationally, the situation was different. The Brookings report said community-college funding decreased substantially in most states, and only 20 percent of federal aid went to programs outside four-year colleges.

Broadway said the state's stable higher-education budget demonstrates a commitment to job training.

"Land is important, and incentives are certainly part of it," Broadway said. "But ... if they don't have the work force, then all the land and all the incentives don't really do very much good."

State board gives charter 3 more years (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

The Imboden Area Charter School, the state's third-oldest open-enrollment charter school and its smallest in terms of enrollment, received a green light from the state Monday to operate for another three years.

The Arkansas Board of Education voted unanimously to grant the renewal of the school's charter, voicing concerns about the small enrollment but also calling the school unique because of its rural, remote location and its willingness to work with a relatively high percentage of pupils with special-education needs who may also be from low-income families.

School leaders had asked for a 10-year renewal.

Also Monday, the state Education Board accepted the surrender of the conversion charter granted to Paragould School District's Oak Grove Elementary in 2009.

The state board's actions on the Imboden and Oak Grove charters are expected to be the last of their kind under the state's current charter-school law, which subjects charter-school applications, renewals, revocations and surrenders to state Education Board approval.

Act 509, which was adopted by lawmakers earlier this year and will go into effect in mid-August, makes the state Department of Education the designated authorizer of charter schools. The agency's decisions, however, may still be reviewed by the state Education Board - but only upon request by the charter-school planners, a state board member or an affected school district.

The Imboden Area Charter School's enrollment fluctuated between 40 and 56 students in kindergarten through eighth grades in the school year that just ended. That school, which provides free school bus transportation, is approved to serve as many as 150 students.

"I don't worry about the numbers but about serving the students that we do have very well," Judy Warren, director of the school since its founding in 2002, told the state board in response to questions.

Warren said that despite the small size, the school is projected to be financially solvent in the coming year with even a minimal increase in enrollment.

Open-enrollment charter schools, like traditional public school districts, receive state foundation aid on a per-student basis. The more students a charter school has, the more money it receives.

The Imboden school serves students in four multistage classrooms. Kindergarten and first grade are grouped together, as are second and third grades, fourth and fifth grades, and sixth through eighth grades, an organization model that Warren said promotes student achievement.

“We have a unique delivery system that is highly individualized for each student, and when we combine this system with our small family atmosphere ... students gain character and self confidence and, with that, the desire to achieve,” Warren said,

The school has met yearly accreditation standards, has a state-approved special-education program and has routinely received clean annual financial audits, Warren said. She also said students have shown academic progress.

Gary Ritter, director of the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, spoke on the school’s behalf about academic achievement as compared with the surrounding Sloan-Hendrix School District and the state as a whole.

“In literacy, you see progress at roughly the same pace as the rest of the state and the surrounding region,” Ritter said about the school, which showed a gain of 13 points in the percentage of students scoring at proficient or better between 2008-09 and 2011-12. The school went from 60 percent proficient to 73 percent.

That was done with a student body in which 80 percent of the students are from low-income families and 23 percent are identified as requiring special-education services, he said.

The state - in which 60 percent of students qualify for subsidized school meals based on low family income - grew by 14 percentage points in literacy to 82 percent proficient or better in the same period.

The nearby Sloan-Hendrix School District grew by 16 percentage points to 79 percent proficient or better with an enrollment in which 65 percent of the students are from low-income families.

In math, the Imboden charter school grew by 15 points to 55 percent proficient or better, while the state grew 5 points to 78 percent and Sloan Hendrix grew by 3 percentage points to 75 percent proficient or better between 2009-12.

The board approved the three-year renewal at Imboden based on the recommendation of the Education Department’s charter advisory council.

Education Commissioner Tom Kimbrell said the council recommended three years instead of the requested 10 years because of concerns about the size and finances for the school.

Regarding the request from the Paragould School District to voluntarily surrender the conversion charter for the Oak Grove Elementary Health, Wellness and Environmental Science School,

Superintendent Debbie Smith said the district is reorganizing its elementary grades and cutting expenses.

The district is opening a new kindergarten and firstgrade primary school, leaving only grades two through four at the Oak Grove campus, Smith said. Additionally, two people teaching special courses related to the charter program have either resigned or moved to another position in the district. The vacancies won't be filled, Smith said, as a way to trim costs.

ES School Board narrows super search to four candidates (Lovely County Citizen)

At a special board meeting Thursday night, the Eureka Springs School Board narrowed a list of 14 superintendent candidates to four and voted to hire a consultant to assist in the search.

The board has set two meet-and-greet sessions with the top candidates, for Tuesday, June 11 and Thursday, June 13. The public is invited to attend these sessions. Details are at the end of this article.

At the meeting, one more candidate was added to the list of 13 the board had received by June 5: Andy Chisum, K-12 principal with Western Yell County School District.

The board returned from executive session to name the four to be interviewed: David Kellogg, superintendent of the Cossatot River School District; Bryan Pruitt, high school principal at Bergman School District; Teresa Ragsdale, superintendent of the Hartford School District; and Paul Shelton, superintendent of Caddo Hills School District.

Kellogg has served as superintendent at Cossatot since 2011 and was a school improvement consultant for one year before that. Before that, he had served as principal at various Arkansas high schools since 1987.

In his present position, he is overseeing the construction of a high school and the recent consolidation of two school districts. He has served as president of the Arkansas Association of Secondary School Principals as well as officer and board member positions of other professional organizations.

Pruitt has been the principal at Bergman for seven years and was an agriculture instructor there since 1987 before that. He is the administrator of the high school ACSIP program, has served on the personnel policy committee and is a curriculum instructional leader. He has also taught at the college and university level.

Ragsdale has served as superintendent at Hartford since 2010, was assistant superintendent in McGehee from 2007 to 2010 and was principal in El Dorado from 2003 to 2007 and in Stamps from 2001 to 2003. She has also taught mathematics at the college level and was a mathematics instructional specialist at the Arkansas Department of Education in Little Rock in 1998-99. She is the immediate past state president of Arkansas Association of Federal Coordinators.

Shelton has been superintendent and federal coordinator at Caddo since 2009 and before that served as elementary principal and federal coordinator from 1993-2009. He also served as high school principal in Beaumont, Texas.

Before executive session, the board approved hiring Dr. Diana Julian of McPherson & Jacobson to give limited assistance in the superintendent search at a cost of \$500 per day, plus travel cost and accommodations, if needed. President Al Larson said Julian does not anticipate being here more than two days.

Julian will work with the "stakeholder" groups to prepare them to interview the four candidates. Those groups will consist of representatives of administrators, teachers, classified staff and students. Each group will meet with all four candidates separately, and the school board will also meet and interview the candidates. Julian will compile the results of the interviews from the stakeholder groups and convey them to the board. Board members will not be present at the stakeholder interviews.

Members of the public, the same as during last year's superintendent search, will not be one of the groups interviewing candidates.

"The public should be a stakeholder group," said board member Jason Morris.

"That all came up in the questions we were asking a year ago," said Larson.

Although the members of public did not interview candidates last year, they were one of the groups involved in generating a list of criteria for a desirable superintendent candidate.

Those selection criteria will be used again this year. They are:

- * An experienced person with superintendent skills necessary to lead the district successfully, both financially and academically.
- * A strong instructional leader who is knowledgeable about the Common Core Standards and who is student focused with a strong resolution to maintain high academic standards and promote math, science and the arts.
- * A community oriented leader and a skilled communicator who promotes the district and understands the diversity of the community.
- * A technology oriented leader who will be innovative in obtaining for the students the necessary technological tools/skills for college and career readiness.
- * A visionary leader who will be committed to the future of the district and able to recruit, retain and further professionally develop talented personnel.

Board member Sam Kirk suggested having a "meet and greet" for the candidates to which the public would be invited.

"That's a good idea," Larson agreed. "I would like to see some kind of reception."

The district has scheduled board and committee interviews with all four candidates this week and announced four separate public "meet and greets" with candidates. The first will be with David Kellogg on Tuesday, June 11, from 4 to 5 p.m. in the high school cafeteria at 2 Lake Lucerne Rd., then with Teresa Ragsdale from 5 to 6 p.m. On Thursday, June 13, a "meet and greet" will be held with Bryan Pruitt from 4 to 5 p.m. and with Paul Shelton from 5 to 6 p.m., also at the cafeteria.

Lawmakers Examine Readiness for Acts of School Violence (KARK, Channel 4)

Video available at http://arkansasmatters.com/fulltext/?nxd_id=670632

LITTLE ROCK, AR -- Tragedies like the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting still fresh in the minds of Arkansas lawmakers who are now coming up with ways to protect your child's school from an act of violence.

Hallways and classrooms are not as busy in Pulaski County Special School District in June but the work to improve school safety never stops.

PCSSD superintendent Jerry Guess says the district plans to fill a new head of security position when school starts again in the fall.

"We're particularly looking for someone who has law enforcement experience who understands security issues," Guess says.

But Guess says it goes further for PCSSD. It includes more cameras on campus and for the first time, cameras on all district school buses.

Act 107 of the recently wrapped up legislative session directs lawmakers at the capitol to study the readiness of schools to prevent and respond to an act of violence.

Something sponsor state Senator Linda Chesterfield, D-Little Rock, feels all schools need.

"Many times we go about things helter skelter and we've got to stop that," Chesterfield says. "Arkansas schools have been hit by acts of violence in the past. We don't want to lose any children, we don't want to lose any adults."

And tragic school violence remains fresh on lawmakers and school leaders minds.

"It's not a matter of responding to Sandy Hook, although that tragedy caused all of us to stop and think about what we're doing," Guess says.

The House & Senate education committee will meet monthly for the rest of the year. The goal is to have a working list of best practices every district in the state can use to proactively prepare and prevent acts of violence by 2014.

2 districts taken off fiscal-distress list (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

The Arkansas Board of Education on Monday released the Bismarck and Cutter Morning Star school districts from the state's fiscal-distress program after the districts reduced staff positions and took other steps to successfully rebuild their financial reserves.

Cutter Morning Star, a 600-student district in Garland County, sought and received voter approval of a 1-mill property-tax increase last year to increase its revenue.

The district also eliminated nine positions for people who hold state teaching certificates and five noncertified jobs over the course of two school years. The decrease in staff members was accomplished through resignations, retirements and layoffs.

Other cuts included the elimination of a custodial service for the schools, the cancellation of cell-phone service for administrators and the consolidation of school-bus routes, resulting in one fewer route.

"We closely monitored spending," Superintendent Nancy Anderson told the state board. "I said 'no' a lot."

The district, which had a year-end operating-fund balance of \$194,546 in June 2011 and \$844,110 in June 2012, is projected to have a balance of \$1.3 million this year, according to Arkansas Department of Education records. The district's operating-fund expenditures this year are projected to be \$4 million.

The 1,000-student Bismarck district in Hot Spring County had a year-end operating-fund balance of \$872,020 in 2011. That is projected to be \$1.14 million by June 30 in a district in which annual spending is about \$7.1 million.

The Bismarck district cut two certified positions and one noncertified position through the retirement and resignation of employees. It also reclassified some certified and noncertified positions to better use state categorical and federal funds.

Additionally, the Bismarck district restructured its debt to get a lower interest-rate payment. It didn't renew a security-camera maintenance agreement and discontinued providing uniforms for district maintenance, transportation and cafeteria employees.

The Arkansas Board of Education classifies districts as being in fiscal distress when they show a year-to-year pattern of spending reserves to pay expenses and/or are cited for audit violations.

The districts must develop and comply with state-approved financial-improvement plans, and their expenditures are subject to state Education Department approval. Districts that don't show improvement are subject to a state takeover and a possible merger with another district.

Curry, Burkhalter announce Democratic bids for lieutenant governor (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Two people — the president of the Little Rock School Board and a highway commissioner — on Tuesday announced their bids for lieutenant governor as Democrats.

Dianne Curry, president of the Little Rock School Board, said in a statement Tuesday that she considered different offices but settled on lieutenant governor because it seemed the best fit.

"For the last few months, I began a conversation with people all across Arkansas, and not just wealthy political donors, but everyday, hardworking Arkansans," Curry said in a statement. "I told them I am looking at opportunities like U.S. Congress or State Auditor, but the office that seems to make the most sense, that fits my experience and my abilities is Lieutenant Governor."

Curry, a native of Malvern, said her top priorities if elected would include promoting healthier eating for Arkansans of all ages and attracting new jobs to the state.

Curry is set to start a campaign listening tour with a first stop planned for the Bradley County Pink Tomato Festival in Warren on Saturday.

She is the first Democrat to enter the race, though her candidacy was announced hours before Highway Commissioner John Burkhalter, also a Democrat, also announced his bid for the office.

Burkhalter, who is also a small-business owner and entrepreneur, announced his bid for lieutenant governor in a Tuesday afternoon conference call.

Burkhalter said he considered running for governor, but he and his wife decided that lieutenant governor was the right choice for now.

"For months, I've debated what I was going to do," he said. "My wife and I finally decided this was the best place for me to serve my state at this time."

If elected, he said, his focus would be on spurring economic development in the state by supporting existing businesses, encouraging industries to come to Arkansas and helping spawn new businesses.

He said he would not step down as highway commissioner while he campaigns.

"I plan to continue to keep doing a good job for my state," Burkhalter said.

Republican Mark Darr is serving his first term as lieutenant governor. He hasn't said if he will seek reelection or run for a different office.

Schools, 1 district are put on notice (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

The Arkansas Board of Education on Monday assigned an accreditation status to each of the state's schools and school districts, putting 30 schools and the Jessieville School District's central office on probation for violations of standards that include exceeding class-size limits and using improperly certified teachers.

The affected schools include Hall and McClellan high schools in the Little Rock School District, seven of 10 schools in the Pine Bluff School District, the KIPP Delta High charter school in Helena-West Helena and four schools in the Bentonville School District.

While the schools and the district on probation remain accredited, they are in jeopardy of facing more serious state sanctions if they violate the accreditation standards in the coming school year and are placed on probation for a second time for either the same or an entirely different violation.

In those cases the state Education Board is mandated to take one of eight specific actions against the school. They can include removal of the superintendent or the merger of the school with another.

Johnie Walters, leader of the standards-assurance unit in the Arkansas Department of Education, reported to the board that no schools or districts violated standards for a second consecutive year in the just-completed 2012-13 school year, the first time that has happened in several years.

"This is quite a pleasant report to give," Walters said in an interview after the meeting.

In addition to the schools put on probation, the board accredited a total of 787 schools in the state for the year. Another 256 were accredited in regard to certified teachers who taught out of their fields while earning college hours to achieve certification in the subjects.

The accreditation report includes open-enrollment charter schools, the state Youth Services Division schools, the Arkansas School for the Blind and the Arkansas School for the Deaf in addition to traditional schools.

Walters said that 1.5 to 3 percent of schools are put on probation in any given year. This year that percentage is about 2.8 percent, according to his report.

The board placed Jessieville School District's central office on probation for failing to meet the state-required ratio of counselors to students.

Education Board members questioned the nature of the violation committed by the KIPP Delta High charter school, which recently received a 10-year renewal of its charter for its schools that operate in Helena-West Helena and Blytheville.

Open-enrollment charter schools are typically held more accountable for their operations in return for state-approved waivers of some state rules and laws on their campuses.

Walters said there were “transcript irregularities” found during the fall semester at the KIPP school, the result of “oversight” and “misunderstanding” that has since been corrected.

State Education Commissioner Tom Kimbrell said the school gave some students a required fine-arts credit for a drama course that didn’t meet the fine-arts credit requirement. Additionally, some students graduated without a required health credit. Kimbrell said later that the school leaders incorrectly believed a different course was a satisfactory substitute for the health requirement.

State Education Board member Alice Mahony of El Dorado said it bothered her that the KIPP charter was renewed for an extended period in light of the violations.

Kimbrell said that KIPP Delta School Executive Director Scott Shirey had mentioned the likely probationary status when he addressed the board about the renewal in March. Other board members said they remembered those comments.

Efforts to reach Shirey and his executive assistant Chintan Desai were unsuccessful Monday afternoon. Shirey was out of state. Desai did not return a telephone message Monday afternoon.

KIPP Delta Public Charter Schools, which serve 1,161 students in kindergarten through 12th grades, is in its 11th year of operation in east Arkansas and is one of the state’s oldest charter systems.

KIPP Delta High School is one of five schools labeled in November by the state as “exemplary” for outstanding achievement and for outstanding achievement progress on state tests.

The four Bentonville schools - Bentonville High, Old High Middle School, Ruth Hale Barker Middle School and Bright Field Middle School - were put on probation for exceeding class-size limits, Walters said.

In Pine Bluff, the Broadmoor, Greenville, Oak Park, 34th Avenue, Southwood and W.T. Cheney elementary schools and Pine Bluff High School were all put on probation. The Pine Bluff School Board voted in March to close the Greenville school, citing declining enrollment.

Walters said the elementary schools were affected by the failure of a teacher providing gifted-education services to meet licensure requirements in that field.

“It was a single issue with six of the schools,” Pine Bluff Superintendent Linda Watson wrote in an e-mail after the state board meeting. “The employee did not take the necessary university classes to satisfy the requirements for adding an additional license.”

She said the employee had plans to move to another state and “just did not take the classes” in the first semester, nor did the employee enroll in them during the second semester. Either action would have prevented the probationary status, she said.

Pine Bluff High School’s accreditation status also was affected by an employee who did not take the courses necessary to fulfill licensing requirements in an additional field of certification, Watson said.

In that case, the affected course is not required by the state to be taught and it won't be offered in the 2013-14 school year, Watson said.

Hall and McClellan high schools in the Little Rock School District violated two different standards, said Dennis Glasgow, the district's associate superintendent for accountability.

At Hall, there was no physics class taught, contrary to state requirements that the course be not only offered but also actually taught every year. Glasgow said that a student was registered to take the course but then that student did not attend the school last year.

McClellan High was cited for a student transcript matter, Glasgow said. A check of student transcripts by state officials determined that at least one student lacked the necessary fine arts credit required for graduation.

Glasgow said the district has responded by requiring two McClellan counselors to independently check student transcripts. Additionally, the district will now produce for high school students a computerized report on the courses they are required to take to graduate and which of those courses they have yet to complete.

"We don't like to get it," Glasgow said about probation. "In the overall scheme of things, it's not a good label to get, but the things that caused it are easily fixed."

Two School Districts Removed From Fiscal-Distress Status (Southwest Times Record)

LITTLE ROCK — The state Board of Education on Monday removed the Bismarck and Cutter-Morning Star school districts from fiscal-distress status.

Both districts have corrected problems that led to them being classified as fiscally distressed for the 2012-13 school year, officials with the state Department of Education and the two districts told board members.

Susan Stewart-Harper, superintendent of the Bismarck School District in Hot Spring County, told the board the district has reduced operating expenses in a number of ways, including reducing personnel through attrition, refinancing a bond, training staff members to serve in more than one capacity and monitoring and cutting back on the use of utilities.

Nancy Anderson, superintendent of the Cutter-Morning Star School District in Hot Springs, told the board the district has reduced personnel through resignations, retirement and layoffs. The district also passed a millage increase, combined bus routes, replaced a custodial service with existing personnel, stopped paying for administrators' cell phone service and kept a tight rein on spending, she said.

"I said 'no' a lot. That's what you have to do. I'm not real popular, but I'm not there to be popular," Anderson said.

Under legislation enacted this year, Arkansas school districts in fiscal or academic distress have five years to get out of that classification or face mandatory consolidation or annexation to one or more nearby districts. Previously, districts had two years to fix their problems.

Johnie Walters, standards assurance unit leader for the state Department of Education, told the board that 30 schools across the state are on probationary status for failing to meet accreditation standards. All of the schools are in their first year of probation, he said.

On the list are schools in the Bentonville, Brinkley, Cleveland County, Fordyce, Foreman, Harmony Grove, Horatio, Hoxie, Jessieville, Lee County, Little Rock, Pine Bluff, Riverview, Shirley, South Conway County, Spring Hill, Stephens and Valley Springs school districts, as well as the Arkansas School for the Deaf in Little Rock and KIPP Delta Collegiate High School, an open-enrollment charter school in Helena-West Helena.

The district with the highest number of schools on probation is Pine Bluff, with seven.

A district that has a school on probationary status for two consecutive years is subject to consolidation or annexation. Walters said state education officials will work with the districts to help them correct the violations that resulted in probation.

The board also renewed the charter of the Imboden Area Charter School for three years and granted its request for a waiver to allow it to hire uncertified teachers. The school, an open-enrollment charter school serving grades K-8, had requested a 10-year renewal.

The board accepted the voluntary surrender of the charter of the Oak Grove Elementary Health, Wellness and Environmental Science School, a conversion charter school operated by the Paragould School District.

Paragould Superintendent Debbie Smith told the board the district's elementary school is about to go from serving grades K-4 to serving grades 2-4, with a new school being built for grades K-1. She also said the district has had declining fund balances and is looking for ways to save money.

Watson Chapel School Board approves one-time bonus for full-time staff (Pine Bluff Commercial)

The Watson Chapel School District Board of Directors voted Monday night to approve a \$1,000 bonus for all full-time district employees employed as of May 29.

District superintendent Danny Hazelwood recommended the move during the board's regular monthly meeting and said that the bonuses would be paid out of district reserve funds and will be distributed during the month of June.

Special education

In other business the board listened to an appeal by special education teacher Katherine Guynn.

“Our department is in compliance with state Department of Education requirements thanks to the support of the consultants who have helped us with due process paperwork,” Guynn said. “We have been told that the consultants will be removed by the next school year but we need them. I have been at work from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. every day to make sure that we stay in compliance and that is with the help of the consultants. We are getting to the point that we can’t teach because of the parent conferences that we must hold.”

Hazelwood sought to set the record straight regarding the plans for the 2013-2014 school year in the special education department.

“Now, it is true that we are eliminating the consultant positions,” Hazelwood said. “We just don’t have the money in the budget for them anymore. They are expensive hires because they are retired special education teachers who are at the top of our salary scale. Last year we spent \$2 million on our special education kids who are only 8 percent of our total student body.”

Hazelwood said that the three consultants will be replaced with less expensive due process clerks who will be trained to assist the special education teachers.

“I think we can train other people to do their work,” Hazelwood said.

Milk and bread

The board approved bids from Hiland Dairy for dairy products and from Tankersley Foodservice for bread products for the 2013-2014 school year.

“Hiland Dairy is what used to be Coleman Dairy,” Hazelwood said. “We have been using them in the past and they are the only vendor in this area to supply milk. We have also used Tankersley before.”

Handbook changes

The board approved several changes to district handbooks to make corrections and allow the school district to be in compliance with state law.

“We will have 60 seconds of silence as a part of the instructional day as required by Act 576 passed by the Arkansas Legislature,” Hazelwood said. “The Watson Chapel School District parental involvement policy and plan is also included in the handbook changes. The district policy on emergency medical treatment and medication administration is also included. There are a number of other small changes as well.”

Personnel

The board approved the hiring of Lenette Burns as a high school secretary; Sara James as a junior high secretary; and Shawn Poindexter as an auto mechanics instructor.

The board approved the retirements of Lynette Mitchell, Beverly Boyd, Christopher Nelson and Minnie McAfee.

The board approved the resignations of Rony Jones, Taryn Echols, Jennifer Barbaree, Matt Holcomb, Kelly Stone, Dorothy Armstrong, Karen Stewart and Marcus Aynes.

Financial report

The board approved the financial report for May, which included revenue of \$2,250,103 and expenses of \$1,886,541 with an ending balance of \$7,397,550.

UAM to offer one-day camp for third and fourth-graders (Pine Bluff Commercial)

MONTICELLO — The School of Education at the University of Arkansas at Monticello will host its third annual “Read, Write and Paint-A-Lot Day Camp” for third and fourth-graders on Aug. 1-2 in the art classroom at Monticello High School.

The one-day camp for third-graders will be Aug. 1. Fourth-grade camp is scheduled for Aug. 2. Both camps run from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., with a box lunch, drinks and snacks provided. Cost of the camp is \$50 with enrollment limited to 12 students each day.

Camp activities will include reading, writing, art, science, music, technology and physical education. The camp will be taught by Sue Martin, associate professor of education at UAM, Terri Smith, UAM STEM science specialist, and public school teachers Melissa Wilson and Kim Wilson, the 2012 Arkansas Teacher of the Year.

This year’s event is themed “Tales from Earth, Water and Sky: Modern and Mythical.” Students will illustrate and write a book to be published into a hardcover story book. When the book returns from the publishing company, an authors and illustrators book signing party will be hosted for camp participants and their families and friends in the school of education.

A copy of the book will be presented by each child to his school’s librarian at a back-to-school assembly. To register for either camp, contact Martin at martins@uamont.edu or call 870-460-1562 or 870-460-1063.