

Board Members

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MOUNTAIN PINE SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 46

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
P.O. BOX NO. 1
MOUNTAIN PINE, ARKANSAS 71956

Robert Gray, Superintendent
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http://www.edline.net/pages/mountain_pine_sd

April 9, 2015

Johnny Key, Commissioner
Arkansas Department of Education
Office of the Commissioner
Four Capital Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201

RECEIVED
COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
APR 14 2015
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Re: Arkansas Public School Choice Act of 2015

Dear Commissioner Key,

Please accept this letter and its attachments as the Mountain Pine School District's (District) claim of a conflict between the terms of its active desegregation court order in the case of W.T. Davis, et al. v. Hot Springs School District, et al., Case No. 89-CV-06088 (U.S. District Court-Western District of Arkansas) and the Public School Choice Act of 2015 (ACT 560 of 2015). Since 1992, the District has been required by the Federal District Court's Settlement Agreement (Agreement) to consider school choice transfer requests pursuant to Act 609 or 1989.

As you are aware, the District, along with five (5) of the other six (6) Garland County school districts, has filed a petition seeking the Federal District Court to terminate the 1992 Order and relieve the District of its obligations under the Settlement Agreement. A copy of the Order and Settlement Agreement is attached. Until such a termination occurs, however, the District is bound by the Court's Order in regards to school choice transfers and must follow Act 609 of 1989 and not the Public School Choice Act of 2015.

Please contact me if you have any questions, or if I may be of assistance in any way.

Sincerely,

Robert Gray
Superintendent

Cc: Scott Hickam, Attorney at Law
Garland County Superintendents
Jeremy Lasiter, ADE General Counsel

GARLAND COUNTY SCHOOL DESEGREGATION CASE
COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

I.

Introduction

On August 18, 1989, the NAACP and individuals desiring to represent a class of black patrons and students filed this action seeking the consolidation of all of the public school districts in Garland County, Arkansas. Also joined as defendants were the Garland County Board of Education and the State Board of Education.

The parties are persuaded that the principle result toward which they should aspire in this case is quality education for all children of Garland County. The parties are further persuaded that the settlement terms expressed herein should facilitate the end product of quality education and that consolidation of the school districts in Garland County is not necessary to achieve this common goal.

The parties desire to avoid expensive, divisive and protracted litigation in this matter. They have, accordingly, evaluated their respective positions and come to agreement regarding essential terms and conditions designed to further the quality of education in Garland County and to end this litigation. They believe that the settlement of the issues is in the best interest of the students, patrons, staffs of the districts and the people of the State of Arkansas.

The Superintendents of the districts support the settlement and agree to recommend it to their respective boards of directors. The black plaintiffs ("Davis"), the black intervenors, and the Garland County Chapter of the NAACP pledge and endorse its support to this settlement. The Arkansas Department of Education and the State Board of Education are supported in the settlement by the Governor of the State of Arkansas.

II.

Act 609. The School Choice Act

The Hot Springs School District, Lakeside School District, Mountain Pine School District, Cutter Morning Star School District, Jassieville School District, Fountain Lake School District, and Lake Hamilton School District (hereafter the "districts") agree to implement, or have already implemented as a show of good faith, Act 609 of the 1989 Regular Session of The Arkansas General Assembly, better known as the School Choice Act. The parties recognize that the implementation of this Act will facilitate the movement of students, both black and white, who desire to avail themselves of the diverse educational offerings offered by the respective school districts in Garland County. The districts pledge to facilitate implementation in accordance with the terms and conditions embodied within Act 609.

The State Board of Education and the Arkansas Department of Education (hereafter "ADE") agree to provide the funding specified pursuant to Act 609.

III.

The Garland County Education Consortium

The districts agree to organize a Garland County Education Consortium. The Consortium shall meet at least semi-annually and shall, among other matters as may be agreed to by its members, discuss and examine the following issues:

1. Enrollment fluctuations between and among the districts.
2. The ratio of black students to white students in each district and any changes that occur in those ratios.
3. The compliance of each district and each school therein with the Arkansas Educational Standards as established by the Arkansas Department of Education as well as any pertinent statutes adopted or as may be adopted by the Arkansas General Assembly.
4. Any issues related to consolidation of one or more of the school districts in Garland County, Arkansas, including the impact upon teacher and staff salary schedules, the impact upon student transportation, the impact upon community influence and patron access to elected school board representatives, the impact upon per pupil expenditures and any impact upon issues of diversity and differing philosophies as may exist among the respective school districts.
5. The potential for joint and/or bulk purchasing to the

extent such may be economically feasible.

6. The sharing of programs and personnel between and among the districts as appropriate considering all reasonable logistical issues including transportation and personnel compensation.

7. The hiring of minority teachers and staffs in compliance with all pertinent standards and statutes. To that end, the Arkansas Department of Education agrees to study and determine and to report to the parties in this case, the composition of the available labor pool for black teachers and staffs for Garland County.

The Board of Directors of the Garland County Education Consortium shall consist of the superintendents of the seven school districts, or their designated representatives, and one Board member from each district. The president of the local chapter of the NAACP will be an ex-officio, non voting, member of the Garland County Education Consortium and will be invited to all meetings and will have the right to express opinions or thoughts to said group. The President or designated representative shall be informed of each and every meeting and may attend and participate in all activities of the consortium except the voting on specific measures. The Consortium's recommendations to the respective school boards shall be by majority vote with final action authorized by the concurrence of all affected individual school boards.

IV.

State Board of Education Responsibilities

The State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, agrees to perform and fund the following acts or to provide the following described services to the school districts in order to assist these districts in providing quality desegregated education for all of their students.

A. Staff Development

To ensure that the staffs of every school district receive necessary and appropriate staff development, the State Board of Education agrees, upon request of any district, to waive two student interaction days from the school calendar for the first two full school years following the execution of this agreement. The districts agree to use the two days waived to provide extensive staff development in areas selected from the staff development activities listed below, or which may be available in the future, which the Department of Education agrees to provide at its expense, except for the expense of substitute teachers. This agreement does not alter the districts' in-service obligations under the Standards but should be viewed as additional staff development. The programs listed below can be offered on the districts' regularly scheduled staff development days.

The Department of Education agrees to provide the following staff training programs to the school districts during the first

two years following the execution of this agreement and to provide these programs, at its expense, periodically after that time to new staff members of the school districts.

1. Teacher Assistance Team Training - a building level skill development program by selected consultants and ADE staff designed to reach teachers, as a team, how to intervene with students who are at risk of school failure. This program is designed to reduce the number of students who may be mistakenly referred to special education because of disciplinary problems. Teachers are taught to intervene in ways which address the cause of behavior problems.

2. Civil Rights Awareness Training - a workshop program by ADE staff and selected consultants designed to educate staff members regarding the districts' civil rights obligations under the law and to provide practical information and direction on compliance.

3. Race Relations Seminar - an awareness and skill development program designed to assist staff in understanding race relations issues and to teach them problem solving skills in managing race relations problems.

4. Multicultural Counseling Strategies - a two-day skills development program by ADE staff and selected consultants for the districts' counselors designed to teach counselors multicultural counseling strategies.

B. CURRICULUM

The Department of Education agrees to provide, at its expense, the following curriculum development to the school districts:

1. Multicultural Education Seminar - an awareness program by ADE staff and selected consultants designed to educate staff about multicultural education philosophy. This program will be followed with a series of Multicultural Curriculum Development Workshops, with smaller numbers of staff, which are designed to provide the technical assistance necessary for a district to develop its own multicultural curriculum.

2. Textbook and Instructional Material Selection Assistance - when the districts' textbook selection committees meet to select books for the district, the Arkansas Department of Education will provide a specialist in the curriculum area to assist the committees in selecting textbooks which reflect the multicultural curriculum established by the district.

3. Self-Esteem Curriculum - the Arkansas Department of Education will assist the districts in developing a self-esteem curriculum which is infused and integrated into the regular curriculum to raise the self-esteem of students who are at risk for school failure.

C. TESTING AND ASSESSMENT

The focus of any school district's desegregation plan should be upon reducing the disparity between the test scores of African American students and white students as groups. To adequately measure a district's progress toward this goal it is necessary for the district to collect and analyze students' test score data. To assist the districts in conducting this activity in a nondiscriminatory, unbiased manner, the Department of Education agrees to provide the following assistance:

1. Testing and Assessment For Multicultural Schools - an awareness seminar designed to teach staff about sex and race bias in assessment and how to avoid it in testing and assessing students.

2. The Diagnostic Use of EPSF Survey - training for kindergarten and first grade teachers designed to teach the correct diagnostic use of the Early Prevention of School Failure survey in order to prevent the early sorting and labeling of students that sometimes contributes to their failure.

3. Assessment as Diagnosis - a skill development workshop designed to train staff in the appropriate diagnostic use of test and assessment instruments to improve student achievement.

D. SPECIAL EDUCATION AND GIFTED AND TALENTED

The Department of Education agrees to assist the districts, at its expense, with problems of over identification of special education students, over identification of minority students in special education and the under identification of minority students in gifted and talented programs by providing the following programs:

Over representation of Students in Special Education - an education and skill development workshop designed to teach staff how to identify over representation of minority students, male students and students with particular handicapping conditions in special education, and to design and implement programs to alleviate over representation. This workshop will be followed up with specific technical assistance in developing and implementing corrective action plans as needed.

2. Under representation of Students in Gifted and Talented Education - an education and skill development workshop designed to teach staff how to identify under representation of minorities and children from lower socio-economic backgrounds in gifted and talented education and how to design and implement programs to alleviate under representation. This workshop will be followed up by specific technical assistance in developing and implementing corrective action plans as needed.

E. STUDENT/TEACHER INTERACTION

The most critical factor affecting the individual achievement of students is the day to day relationship between the student and the teacher. Recognizing the importance of this relationship, the Department of Education agrees to provide, at its expense, the following programs aimed at improving student/teacher interaction.

1. Teacher Expectations for Student Achievement - an awareness and skills development program designed to teach teachers how their expectations affect student achievement and how to alter their expectations in order to improve student achievement. School districts agree to provide release time for teachers to participate in this training and follow up. This program is especially effective in reducing the differential treatment of students which sometime exists in the classroom.

2. Effective Schools Management - a school management program designed to help administrators identify the characteristics of an effective school and to assist them in developing management skills which will produce those characteristics in their schools.

3. Parental Involvement - a technical assistance program by ADE staff in which a parent involvement program, which will effectively involve parents in the desegregated setting, is developed for the districts and implemented. Training is provided to parents.

4. Classroom Management - a skills development program designed to teach teachers how to maintain classroom control and create a classroom environment conducive to learning.

5. Establishing a School Volunteer Program - A skills and program development seminar which provides a "how to" guide for establishing an effective school volunteer program.

6. Cooperative Learning - an instructional skills strategy which is designed to teach teachers and administrators how to teach students who are grouped heterogeneously by race, gender, socioeconomic level, and ability level. This program helps eliminate the need for "tracking" or "ability grouping" students which sometimes leads to segregated classes. Successfully implemented, Cooperative Learning produces significant gains in self-esteem, academic achievement and social skills.

7. The Provision of Equity: Evaluating for Standard XV Compliance - a technical assistance program by ADE staff designed to assist the districts in conducting their self-evaluation and compliance plans.

F. GRANTS

1. The Department of Education will fund the attendance of one representative, selected by the Consortium, to the Annual Institute For Special Education Law on the conditions that: (1) the school districts provide release time for the person to attend and (2) the districts agree to have the person who attends conduct a workshop for building principals, counselors and

special education supervisors and teachers, in which the seminar materials are disseminated and discussed.

2. The Department of Education agrees to assist the school districts in applying for and securing Drug-Free schools and communities grants, and to develop programs concerning drug abuse awareness, education, and prevention.

3. The Department of Education agrees to assist the school districts in applying for and securing Effective Schools Grants.

4. The Department of Education agrees to assist the school districts in applying for and securing Math and Science grants.

5. The Department of Education agrees to assist the school districts in applying for and securing Classroom Management Grants.

6. The Department of Education agrees to assist the school district in applying for and securing an Alternative School Grant to develop an alternative school which could be used by all districts within the county.

7. The Department of Education agrees to assist the school districts in applying for and securing a Middle Level School Grant upon the condition that the Department receives the grant funds for which it has applied.

G. MONITORING

The Arkansas Department of Education agrees to provide equity monitoring in compliance with Standard 15 of the Arkansas

Educational Standards in order to determine if the districts are providing a quality, desegregated education to all of their students.

Each defendant, school district shall appoint to its equity committee and retain one member of the Garland County Chapter of the NAACP. The representative so appointed shall be provided a copy of the school district's annual review by the equity committee, including any and all supporting data.

H. PARTICIPATION IN CONSORTIUM

The Arkansas Department of Education agrees to send a designated representative to at least one (1) meeting annually of the Garland County Education Consortium. It is specifically understood that at that time enrollment, attendance, and black/white ratios in the schools of Garland County will be discussed with the understanding that all parties hereto will be working to achieve a quality education in each school district and to prevent a depreciation in the quality of education in school districts in which there is an unequal racial balance.

I.

The Arkansas Department of Education agrees that the Garland County Schools shall have the highest priority in those programs identified in paragraphs A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H of this Agreement.

V.

Attorney Fees

The Districts and the State Defendants agree to pay the total sum of \$30,000.00 as attorneys fees and expenses to counsel for Davis. Such sums will be due and payable within ten (10) days of final Court approval of this Agreement. Of that sum, the State of Arkansas shall contribute 50% with the balance being paid by the respective school district in proportion to their respective average daily memberships for the 1990-91 school year.

VI.

Release and Dismissal

Within ten (10) days of final Court approval of this Agreement, each party shall deliver to the other a release in the form set forth as Exhibit "A" to this Agreement.

The parties condition this settlement upon their dismissal from this litigation with prejudice in accordance with the terms of Exhibit "A". The parties pledge to diligently pursue acceptance of the settlement by the Court.

VII.

Class Certification

The settlement is contingent upon a final determination that the settlement is binding upon the classes of all current, past and future black students, their parents and next friends in Garland County. As part of this settlement, the parties will stipulate that the Davis plaintiffs are proper class representatives under, and otherwise meet the requirements of

Rule 23(A) and (b)2 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, and will support their certification.

VIII.

Agreement Regarding Litigation

The Davis plaintiffs release the Districts and the State of all liability for issues which have been raised in this litigation and commit that there will be no further litigation among or between plaintiffs, the State and any of the Districts, other than proceedings to enforce the terms of this settlement as finally approved by the court.

IX.

It is the intent of this Agreement that the parties hereto act promptly and expeditiously in implementing the terms of this settlement. It is agreed that the Garland County Education Consortium will be immediately organized and will conduct an organizational meeting no later than forty-five (45) days from the date of final approval by the Court of this comprehensive settlement agreement. The State Board of Education and the Arkansas Department of Education agree to have their part of this comprehensive settlement agreement in effect, or substantially in effect, prior to the commencement of the 1991 fall school term.

IX.

Execution

The Garland County school desegregation case comprehensive settlement agreement is executed this _____ day of _____, 1991.

WITNESSED AND APPROVED:
Hurst Law Offices
201 Woodbine
Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901

HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS BRANCH
OF THE NAACP:

By: [Signature]
Its President

By: [Signature]
Q. Byron Hurst, Jr.
Its Attorney

EXECUTED this _____ day of _____, 1991 by:

WITNESSED AND APPROVED:
Evans, Farrar, Reis & Love
600 West Grand, Suite 201
Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901

HOT SPRINGS SCHOOL DISTRICT

By: [Signature]
President, Board of Directors

By: [Signature]
Bryan J. Reis
One of its Attorneys

EXECUTED this 11th day of September, 1991 by

WITNESSED AND APPROVED:
Wood, Smith, Schnipper & Clay
123 Market Street
Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901

LAKESIDE SCHOOL DISTRICT

By: [Signature]
President, Board of Directors

By: [Signature]
Don Schnipper
One of its Attorneys

EXECUTED this 16th day of October, 1991 by:

WITNESSED AND APPROVED:
Hargraves & McCrary, P.A.
P. O. Box 519
Hot Springs, Arkansas 71902

MOUNTAIN PINE SCHOOL DISTRICT

By: Ronald Owens
President, Board of Directors

By: Robert Hargraves
One of its Attorneys

EXECUTED this 16th day of October, 1991 by:

WITNESSED AND APPROVED:
Laser, Sharp, Mayes, Wilson
Bufford & Watts, P.A.
One Spring Street, Suite 300
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

CUTTER MORNING STAR SCHOOL
DISTRICT

By: William Spilay
President, Board of Directors

By: Dan Bufford
One of its Attorneys

EXECUTED this 16th day of October, 1991 by:

WITNESSED AND APPROVED:
McMillan, Turner & McCorkle
929 Main Street
P. O. Box 607
Arkadelphia, Arkansas 71923

JESSIEVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

By: Hell Meredith
President, Board of Directors

By: Ed McCorkle
One of its Attorneys

EXECUTED this 16th day of October, 1991 by:

WITNESSED AND APPROVED:
Smith, Stroud, McClerkin,
Dunn & Nutter
Suite #6, State Line Plaza
Texarkana, Arkansas 75502

FOUNTAIN LAKE SCHOOL DISTRICT
By: R. M. [Signature]
President, Board of Directors

By: Hayes McClerkin
Hayes McClerkin
One of its Attorneys

EXECUTED this 16th of October, 1991 by:

WITNESSED AND APPROVED:
Wright, Lindsey & Jennings
2200 Worthen Bank Building
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

LAKE HAMILTON SCHOOL DISTRICT
By: [Signature]
President, Board of Directors

By: [Signature]
H. Samuel Jones, III
One of its Attorneys

EXECUTED this _____ day of _____, 1991 by:

WITNESSED AND APPROVED:

THE DAVIS PLAINTIFFS

By: _____
Hot Springs Class Representative

By: _____
Lakeside Class Representative

By: _____
Mountain Pine Class
Representative

By: _____
Cutter Horning Star Class
Representative

By: _____
Jessieville Class Representative

By: _____
Fountain Lake Class
Representative

By: _____
Lake Hamilton Class
Representative

EXECUTED this 23rd day of September, 1991 by:

WITNESSED AND APPROVED:
Ray Owen, Jr.
Attorney at Law
1234 Central Avenue
Suite 20
Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901

GARLAND COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

By: *Van Smith*
Its President

By: *[Signature]*
Ray Owen, Jr.
Its Attorney

ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

By: *Nancy M. Wood*
Chairman, Board of Directors

By: *Sharon Streett*
Sharon Streett
One of its Attorneys

