

Comprehensive Transition Plan:  
Rockefeller Elementary into Full Rockefeller Early Childhood Center

April 14, 2015

## HISTORY OF THE LRSD Pre-K PROGRAM

The Little Rock School District Early Childhood (Pre-K) program has its roots in the Kramer School, which was built in 1895 and named for Frederick Kramer who served as mayor of Little Rock and as a LRSD school board member for twenty years. The renowned Kramer Project gained national attention as the site for the Center for Early Development and Education established by Dr. Bettye Caldwell, professor of education at UALR. The Center opened in 1969 with a staff of 35. The project served infants through school-aged children side-by-side.

When Rockefeller Elementary was built in the 1980s, the decision was made to move the center into the school, and Rockefeller was designed to serve young children through elementary grades. In 1987, Rockefeller became a Pre-K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade school and named Rockefeller Elementary and Early Childhood Magnet School as the successor of the Kramer Project. Currently, the school operates in two parts, the Elementary School and the Early Childhood Center.

In 1991, LRSD received the first Arkansas Better Chance funds which were allocated for prekindergarten students in poverty. Initially, the district was allocated 78 students; throughout the years the district has been awarded, through competitive application, additional seats/slots to the current level of 1,137 funded students (more than 5.5 million annually). The district has a required 40% match which is met largely through in-kind funds (i.e. parent transportation, teachers completing their own required assessments, SNP/Child Nutrition reimbursements). The additional funds provided from ABC also allowed students with other qualifying factors to be eligible for funding (i.e. incarcerated parent, deployed parent, illiterate parent, low birth weight, etc.). Beyond the state-funded seats, the district decided to provide Pre-K to other students who do not qualify, and as a result, about 350 four year olds participate in the LRSD program annually who would not otherwise qualify.

ABC requires that programs receiving funding must be evaluated by external evaluators to ensure the level of quality remains high. Quality in Pre-K classrooms is the greatest predictor of long-term success and the retention of gains made in Pre-K into the later grades. Classrooms are assessed using the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)*. A minimum score of 5 out of 7 on 43 indicators is required by ABC to maintain funding. An annual application must be submitted for continued funding pending compliance with ABC and DHS regulations.

Over the years, Pre-K classrooms have been placed in various elementary schools and in the four Pre-K centers. In some situations, classrooms have been moved to other sites due to the need for more space for K-5<sup>th</sup> grade or due to a change in the school. Currently there are 74 classrooms serving P3 or P4 students in the district, serving more than 1,400 children, the majority of whom are P4 students. As more seats have become available, we have increased the number of P3 classes to accommodate the strong community interest in P3 classes. In addition, a little less than half of incoming kindergarteners have attended the LRSD Pre-K program, and almost 75% are still in the district schools at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

## THE VALUE OF PRE-K CENTERS

Pre-K centers have a number of unique features. First, they focus solely on the development and needs of young children. This is evident when entering the Pre-K centers that they are different from schools. From children singing while walking down the halls, working in a variety of centers, and spending more time than older students in outdoor/gross motor play; these features create the tone of

a Pre-K center. When all activities, family events, and experiences are focused on young children, there is a strong level of community within the school and with families.

Pre-K classrooms and centers operate under different regulations (DHS, ABC) and do not require the same staffing and requirements as elementary schools. Pre-K centers have a principal/coordinator who evaluates staff and runs the center, custodians, secretary, and child nutrition workers; however, Pre-K does not have requirements for art, music and PE, as these are a part of their daily, integrated curriculum. In addition, they do not have the additional staff such as counselors, facilitators, media specialists, etc. which keeps the cost at a minimum for a school setting.

Finally, LRSD Pre-K centers have been successfully developed within existing school sites with minimal changes required. Fair Park and Woodruff required changes to playgrounds, restrooms, and painting/décor specific to a school for young children. But, given the right location, the changes were easily accomplished.

#### FEATURES OF THE SITE

Rockefeller is located on the East side of Little Rock with easy access to downtown and highways. Its location is far enough from the current centers located in Central Little Rock and Southwest Little Rock so as to have options throughout the city.

The current Pre-K area of the building includes modified open-space rooms in which 2 classes share one enclosed room. The K-5 section of the building is open space with movable partitions to separate classes. The current Pre-K area is licensed by DHS as required for Child Care Centers (Minimum Licensing). The partitioned areas can be licensed without the addition of permanent walls.

#### TRANSITIONING ROCKEFELLER SCHOOL INTO AN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

##### Actions/Process:

Rockefeller already houses an Early Childhood Center within a part of the building. Converting the rest of the building can be easily accomplished without major changes/renovation. The following actions are needed:

- 1. Establish a Family/Community Advisory Committee.**
- 2. Close the Building for the summer, beginning immediately following the last day of school.**  
No Summer School programs and no infant/toddler programs will occur. Formal conversion would begin immediately following the last day of school.
- 3. Phase out the Infant/Toddler Program after the 2015-2016 school year.**  
The program will be closed during the summer, ending on the last day of school and reopening on the first day of school for the 2015-2016. Children currently enrolled in the program could attend for the 2015-2016 year. Information will be provided to families in the current Infant/Toddler program about the summer closing, area day cares, cost, and rates.
- 4. Use the existing Early Childhood area for P3 students and the current K-5 section for P4 students.**  
With the exception of the current Infant/Toddler area (during 2015-2016), the current EC wing will be allocated for P3 classes.

Having specified areas for the different ages, provides teachers and students with spaces unique to their age. P3 families to drop off/pick up students in the existing Early Childhood Area/entrance, and P4 students from the front/main school entrance.

**5. Establish Rockefeller ECC as a school that does not have an attendance zone.**

Just as Fair Park and Woodruff have no attendance zone, this would allow families equal access to select another center in a convenient location.

**6. Relocate the district Early Childhood Office to Rockefeller.**

**7. Hold additional Open Enrollment to allow for the additional new spaces.**

**8. Move the one P4 class at Carver to Rockefeller.**

Considerations

*Summer School/Programming*

There will be no summer program held at Rockefeller in summer 2015. Any previously planned programs will be relocated (summer literacy and math) or suspended (Infant/Toddler Program).

*Physical Space*

The location is one level, which with minimal stairs, is optimal for young children. There is a spacious cafeteria and a gym which will accommodate indoor gross motor play/development (required in inclement weather).

The current Early Childhood Center can house 8 P3 classes in the current EC wing for 2015-2016. The current K-5 section of the school will require some adjusting of the current partitions and will accommodate 12-14 P4 classes. These plans are contingent on licensing by DHS.

The teachers will have ample space either in teaching lofts in the P3 area, or in offices behind the P4 classes. Two P4 teachers would share an office which allows a greater amount of space for students in the classrooms.

*Staffing/Personnel*

The school will need a full-time principal who is carefully selected and who can work with a large number of young children. Careful selection of this person cannot be underestimated, as the leader must also work effectively with the family members and the unique needs of young children.

Each classroom must continue to have a certified teacher in Early Childhood and a highly-qualified aide/paraprofessional. In addition, for every two-three classrooms, a "rotational" paraprofessional is added to maintain required teacher-student ratio, provide for teacher planning, and provide supplemental support (such as story time, lunch, and outdoor gross motor time). In order to cover planning for this many classrooms, one additional paraprofessional is needed. Pre-K does not have the requirement to have separate art, music, and PE, as these are integrated into their Pre-K day.

*Initial Summary of staffing needs:*

1 Principal/Coordinator

1 Secretary + one paraprofessional to maintain COPA records and all EC required paperwork  
20-24- certified teachers (one per class) (Depending on # of classes)

34-38 paraprofessionals (one per class plus 10-12 rotational paraprofessionals) (Depending on number of classes)

- 4 Custodians (current number)
- 1 Nurse (currently at school)
- 2 Security Guards (one on the P4 side/entrance; one on the P3 side/entrance; addition of one)
- Cafeteria Workers – (currently at the school)

Paraprofessionals in Pre-K must hold a Child Development Associate (CDA), AA in Early Childhood, or a degree with at least 12 hours in Early Childhood topics. Any vacancies would need to be filled by qualified staff, or pay for the staff to complete the required training and assessment.

#### *Materials/Furniture & Curriculum*

A Pre-K classroom set up of required furniture and materials along with the current curriculum are needed for each new classroom. Materials, furniture, curriculum, and other items will be ordered and available before the start of school. Existing Rockefeller P3 and P4 classrooms will be inventoried to determine if items are needed to provide consistent classroom experiences. Similarly, as the class from Carver moves to Rockefeller, the same process will occur.

An inventory of items in the K-5 school will be completed, and items that can be utilized for small children will be requested to at the site.

#### *Outdoor Playground and Equipment*

Play equipment: Outdoor equipment for Pre-K includes trikes, scooters, balls, hula hoops, sand/water tables, and items to stimulate jumping, kicking, hopping, running, walking, hitting, and bouncing. Additional items will likely be needed to meet the requirements of the number of students. In addition, indoor gross motor equipment will be needed for use on days when students cannot go outdoors.

Playground: The current P1-P2 playground will remain for the 2015-2016 year. After this, the playground would become an additional P3 playground. The current P3-P4 playground would serve the P3 students at the present time. Minimal changes would be needed.

The current K-5 playground must be converted to accommodate the P4 students. K-5 playground equipment is not designed for and does not meet the requirements for 3-4 year olds; therefore, new equipment is needed. The current K-5 equipment is newer and can be removed and relocated to another site; new equipment compliant with P3-P4 ages will be installed for the P4 playground. In addition, the P4 playground will need to be completely fenced to comply with DHS regulations.

#### *Projected School Enrollment*

Pending DHS licensing, the Rockefeller Early Childhood Center is projected to house 384 students in 8 P3 classrooms (18 per classroom) and 12-14 P4 classrooms (20 per classrooms). Specifically, the site could accommodate up to 144 3-year olds, and 240 4-year olds in 12 classes. Current Rockefeller P2 students whose families applied for the P3 program are granted a space in P3 (about 14 students for 2015-2016). Rockefeller currently has 2 P3 classes (36 students) and 3 P4 classes (60 students) for a total of 96 students. The net increase of students for 2015-2016 would be 288 children (5 classes of P3; 9 classes of P4).

### *Staff Notification*

A meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 15, at 3:00 P.M. with the Rockefeller staff to discuss the recommended reorganization plan.

Current, qualified Rockefeller P3 and P4 teachers and aides will have the option to stay at Rockefeller. Additional staff needed for the reorganized Rockefeller Early Childhood Center must meet the certification requirements for consideration for hiring.

K-5 staff would follow the Professional Negotiated (PN) Agreement (2012-2015) as detailed below:

1. In the event of a school reorganization, those teachers in the affected school(s) will be ranked by area of certification with seniority to be based on total years within the district except that teachers with three (3) or fewer years of experience in the certification area to which he/she is assigned at the time of the school closing or reorganization will have his/her seniority counted in the certification area in which he/she has the most years of experience within the district.
2. Along with this, a ranking of all the district's teachers by seniority as described in paragraph D,1, above will be made by the same grade-level organization as school(s) involved in the closing or reorganization.
3. A list of the known vacancies in the district will be compiled and published at the time of school reorganization.
4. If the number of vacancies available within each area of certification at school(s) involved in the reorganization is fewer than the number of displaced teachers, the position(s) of the least senior teacher(s) in each certification area will be declared vacant so that the number of vacancies will then equal the number of displaced teachers.
5. These displaced teachers will then be given the opportunity to choose from the positions vacated at the same grade-level as school(s) involved in the closing or reorganization where they will be assigned for the upcoming school year. The most senior displaced teacher will choose first, the second most senior displaced teacher will choose second, and etc.

Once enrollment needs are identified, the Human Resources Department, in cooperation with the principal and Early Childhood Department, will develop, publish, and announce all vacant positions. Depending on the number of applicants for the position, not all employees will be guaranteed an interview, and those selected for an interview will be selected upon review of their qualifications, education, and experience.

### *Family Notification*

Parents will be informed of the proposed restructuring of Rockefeller on Thursday, April 15, at 5:30 P.M. Students who have been assigned to Rockefeller Elementary for 2015-2016 will have the option to relocate to Carver Magnet School, Washington and Stephens Elementary schools. An official letter will be sent to parents on Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup> and will also be followed by a parent link call.

Advertisements and announcements will be made to announce the additional enrollment period for the additional P3 and P4 seats at Rockefeller. Families in the current Infant/Toddler Program will receive a notification in April indicating the closure of the program for the summer and the option for returning in the fall. A list of local day care providers will be given.

### *Scheduling/Pick up/Drop off*

DHS requires families to walk students in and sign them in and out each day. To accommodate the number of families, it is recommended that an arrival period is at least 15 minutes and staggered for P3 and P4. For example, arrival could occur between 7:45-8:00 and P3 arrival between 7:55-8:10. Similarly, the end of the day would be staggered to meet the required 7 hour day (ABC regulation).

CARE programs will be offered for those students needing before and after school provisions.

### *Child Nutrition*

It is recommended that students eat in the existing cafeteria. Snacks would be served in the classrooms and if possible, Breakfast in the Classroom.

### *Renovations*

The initial walk-through of the building indicates the building is in good shape. A few renovations are required including:

- Update painting and addition of visual cues (i.e. shapes by classrooms, arrows, etc.) –touch up is needed
- The boy's restroom near the cafeteria requires sheetrock repair and one stall needs a toilet seat. (Urinals have been approved by DHS; and there are enough restrooms to meet the number per children; size is ok for all restrooms)
- Addition of stairs to water fountains (3-4)
- Removal & Relocation of K-5 playground equipment
- Create age-appropriate P4 playground
- Add necessary fencing around P4 playground

### *Technology*

The school currently has Promethium or Smart Boards in each room. These are essential for the Pre-K classes and the implementation of the district curriculum and student engagement. In addition, each classroom should have two computers available for student use, a computer hooked to the Promethium or Smart Board, and a teacher computer in the teacher office. There are many computers in the school currently which can be maintained to have the necessary technology in the classrooms.

### *Safety for Staff and Students*

The current Pre-K area has CCTV in each area. In speaking with Safety & Security, there are many cameras in the K-5 area, and once we determine the precise layout, we will determine if any additional cameras are needed. The current Early Childhood wing has cameras throughout.

The school currently has one security guard; one will be added to provide security at each entrance.

### *DHS Licensing*

Upon approval and determination of specific plans, DHS will be notified and requested to measure spaces for licensing. As the site is currently licensed for some spaces, the additional spaces would be added to the current license.

*Current Site Items*

The movable partitions, rolling storage units, and tables that can be lowered to P3 and P4 range will be maintained. Additional chairs and tables will be needed to replace student desks and larger chairs.

It is recommended to provide lower cafeteria tables, but they must be lower overall as well as have lower seats, so that they are size appropriate as required in quality ratings.

*Items needed*

Pre-K classroom set ups must be ordered for each classroom, minus the existing P3 and P4 classes at Rockefeller. A total of 15-17 new class set ups would be needed as well as curriculum.

Portable stairs/risers are needed to create a shared/common area in the current Media Center.

*Initial Timeline*

Task	Anticipated Completion	Person(s) Responsible
Notify Rockefeller staff of changes	April 15	District
Notify families of change to Rockefeller	April 15	District
Hold Logistics Meeting	Week of April 20	Dr. James & District staff
Establish a Family/Community Advisory Committee	April-June	Dr. James
Selection of Principal	April/May	District
DHS Licensure	May	Dr. James
Advertise/Notify families of changes to Infant Toddler for Summer	April	Dr. James, District, Student Registration
Plan Additional Enrollment Period for Rockefeller	TBD	Dr. James & SRO
Inventory furniture and items in school; begin process of removing items for surplus	April/May	Early Childhood & Procurement
Any displaced teachers will attend the Displaced Teacher Meeting to select position	TBD by HR	Human Resources
Ordering Class Materials	May/June	Early Childhood and Procurement
Boxes provided to closing Pre-K classrooms (at selected schools) and K-5 classrooms at Rockefeller	May/June	Procurement
Inventory Carver P4 classroom to determine what replacement items are needed	Early June (before items are boxed)	Procurement/Early Childhood
Move Carver P4 Classroom to Rockefeller	Mid June (after school is out)	Procurement



Move K-5 classroom from Rockefeller to designated areas	June/July	Procurement
Move P4 classes in Rockefeller to new P4 areas	June/July	Procurement & Staff
Staff building	June/July	Principal & Interview team
Move District EC Offices to Rockefeller	July	EC Department & Plant Services
Complete Playground Changes	July	Plant Services
Order additional necessary outdoor equipment	July	Dr. James and Procurement
Replace lunchroom tables	July/Early August	Child Nutrition
Update paint (restrooms, halls)	July	Plant Services
Update signage outside	July	Dr. James and Plant Services
Receive new classroom materials & assemble	July	Procurement
Teachers return 2 weeks early to set up and also complete at least 2 required ABC trainings	July	Dr. James, HR, EC Department to set up

***Initial Conversion Items***

- Update Painting
- Warm water in two shared restrooms
- Sheetrock repair in boy's restroom
- Replacement Lunch Tables
- Stairs for Water Fountains
- Removal & relocation of K-5 Playground Equipment
- Additional P3-P4 Playground Equipment
- Additional Outdoor Play Equipment
- New Classroom Set ups for 17 classrooms
- Classroom Curriculum for 17 classrooms
- Portable Stairs/Risers (shared Area in Media Center)
- Shorter/lower media carts for Media Center
- Additional Books for younger children for Media Center
- Update Parent Center with Pre-K Materials/Take home items
- Creation of Café (for cooking, learning social skills)
- Update Signage
- Office Furniture for EC Office
- General School Start Up Supplies

***Recurring Budget***

Center will operate in the same way as other LRSD Early Childhood Centers.

