

# Chalkboard

By

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“It takes many brush strokes to paint the portrait of a child.” For the fourth and final week I continue with the *Chalkboard* to develop the theme adopted by our school district for 2003-04. Last week I listed what I pictured as the various symbols of the analogy. I wrote, “The portrait, or painting, has of course represented the life’s education, academic and otherwise, of a child. The young child is the blank canvas. The painters or artists are the adults who interact in the life of that child. The brush strokes are the interactions between the child and the adults who populate that child’s world. The paint itself would be the things used by the child and adults in their interactions. The brush could well be the methodology used to drive the things in the interactions.” Finally I labeled the school board as being the curators of the art gallery and promised to share what I believe the role of the board member is.

To provide a textbook, or better, a law book definition is easy. Arkansas Code Annotated 6-13-620 lists the duties of Arkansas school board members as: “(1) Have the care and custody of the schoolhouse, grounds, and other property belonging to the district and shall keep it in good repair and in sanitary and sightly condition; (2) Lease sixteenth section lands located in the school district...; (3) Purchase buildings or rent schoolhouses and sites therefor and sell, rent, or exchange the sites or schoolhouses; (4)(A) Employ teachers and other employees necessary for the proper conduct of the public schools of the district and make written contracts with teachers and all other employees in the form prescribed by the State Board of Education. (5) See that all subjects for study prescribed by the state board or by law for all grades of schools in their district are taught; (6) Visit classrooms frequently, but no less than annually, in the schools in their district while children are present, see to the welfare of the pupils, encourage them in their studies, and assist the teachers in the work so far as they can; (7) Prepare and publish the district's budget for the ensuing year, in accordance with § 6-13-622; (8) Issue warrants ... for the payment of salaries due teachers and other employees and for any other lawful purposes; (9) Obtain from the county collector and county treasurer information from time to time as to the state of finances of their school district and keep their expenditures safely within the means of the district; (10)(A) Buy and pay for out of district school

funds supplies such as fuel, crayons, charts, globes, dictionaries, etc. which may be necessary for the efficient operation of the schools ...; (11)(A) If in any school district it should be apparent that the schools cannot be operated for the remainder of the school year without incurring more indebtedness than that represented by outstanding bonds and those that may be issued for buildings, equipment for the school buildings, purchasing sites, and repairing school buildings or the improvement of sites, it shall be the duty of the school board to close the school and cease paying the teachers for the remainder of that fiscal year....”

Obviously I respect and embrace all of the above. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines “Curator” as “one that has the care and superintendence of something; *especially* : one in charge of a museum, zoo, or other place of exhibit.” I believe that definition matches the law above describing board member’s powers and duties.

But the expectations I have for the people, who are my “bosses”, when they assemble together as a school board, are simpler. My list of 11 items, to match the number above, is straightforward. 1. Put what is best for students first. 2. Treat friend and foe alike. 3. Enforce existing policies or change them. 4. Accept that every rule has an exception. 5. Seek win-win solutions. 6. Make decisions based on facts not feelings. 7. Respect the insignificant. 8. Honor the experience of others. 9. Make every mistake different from the last. 10. Have pure motives. 11. Understand that stuff happens and the world still spins.

I presume these are fair expectations for me to have for board members; they are ones I seek to meet myself.