

Student walk-outs underscore need for Governor, State Board to partner with Little Rock educators, community to ensure quality public schools for all kids.

Hundreds of students from across the Little Rock School District (LRSD) walked out of their classrooms today to show support for the teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, instructional aides, and other educators who strive to provide them with an education that sets high expectations and inspires their curiosity, imagination, and love of learning.

The Little Rock Education Association (LREA) had no role in planning today's demonstrations. The students acted independently. However, today's protests underscore the importance of why Governor Hutchinson and his appointed State Board of Education must partner with educators, parents, local leaders and other public education stakeholders to make sure all students get the quality public education they deserve.

The following statement can be attributed to LRSD Lifelong Educator and Library Media Specialist currently serving as LREA President, Teresa Knapp Gordon:

"The LREA was not involved in organizing today's demonstrations. However, our students are sending the Governor and his State Board of Education a clear message—it is time they pay attention to the vision this community holds for public education. All students, regardless of their zip code, deserve access to quality public schools.

"The governor and his appointed state board must partner with this community to bring about the changes our district needs to ensure opportunity for all students. Our most vulnerable students need public schools that offer support services, including nutritious meal programs and health care and after schools programs.

"Our children, and this entire community, need and deserve one locally elected school board with full decision-making authority to ensure the voices of students, parents, and educators will be heard when we come together to advocate for policies and practices to move the district forward.

"We need to make sure all educators—including our public school support staff—can do an outstanding job for our students. This means ensuring kids come to school with what they need to succeed and our public school support staff have the preparation, resources, and support to nurture their kids' success.

"For more than 65-years, the LREA has stood in the gap for children—against those policies and education schemes designed to dismantle our public schools and drain them of the resources our students need to be successful. If the governor and his state board members think that they can silence our advocacy for children by devaluing the work educators do every day in our schools, they are wrong. The educators of this district are prepared to do whatever it takes to ensure all students get the quality educational experiences they deserve, including class sizes small enough for one-on-one attention, modern textbooks, technology, and a well-rounded curriculum."