

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to the law as it existed prior to this session of the General Assembly.

1 State of Arkansas  
2 84th General Assembly  
3 Regular Session, 2003  
4

As Engrossed: H4/2/03

# A Bill

Act 1777 of 2003  
HOUSE BILL 2657

5 By: Representatives C. Johnson, White  
6  
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## For An Act To Be Entitled

9 AN ACT TO CREATE THE "COMMITTEE ON CLOSING THE  
10 ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN ARKANSAS"; AND FOR  
11 OTHER PURPOSES.  
12  
13

## Subtitle

15 AN ACT TO CREATE THE COMMITTEE ON  
16 CLOSING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN  
17 ARKANSAS.  
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20 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:  
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22 SECTION 1. (a) There is established a committee to be known as the  
23 "The Committee on Closing the Achievement Gap in Arkansas".

24 (b) The committee shall consist of twelve (12) members as follows:

25 (1)(A) Four (4) persons appointed by the Governor;

26 (B) One (1) of the Governor's appointees shall be a member  
27 of the faculty of a historically black college in the state who has  
28 demonstrated an interest and commitment to working with disadvantaged youth;

29 (C) One (1) of the Governor's appointees shall be a  
30 Hispanic who has demonstrated a commitment to education;

31 (D) One (1) of the Governor's appointees shall be a  
32 representative of business and industry in Arkansas;

33 (E) One (1) of the Governor's appointees may be  
34 representative of health and human services or a public school teacher.

35 (2)(A) Four (4) persons appointed the President Pro Tempore of  
36 the Senate;



1 (B) One (1) of the President Pro Tempore's appointees  
2 shall be a member of the faculty of a historically black college in the  
3 state; and

4 (C) One (1) of the President Pro Tempore's appointees  
5 shall be a minority who has demonstrated a commitment to education;

6 (3)(A) Four (4) persons appointed by the Speaker of the House of  
7 Representatives;

8 (B) One (1) of the Speaker of the House of  
9 Representatives' appointees shall be a person who has experience with working  
10 with children from low income families; and

11 (C) One (1) of the Speaker of the House of  
12 Representatives' appointees shall be a minority who has demonstrated a  
13 commitment to education.

14 (c)(1) Upon taking office, the members shall draw lots to determine  
15 the length of their terms.

16 (2) The initial terms of office shall be staggered terms such  
17 that:

18 (A) One (1) member appointed by each officer shall have an  
19 initial term that expires in 2005;

20 (B) One (1) member appointed by each officer shall have an  
21 initial term that expires in 2006; and

22 (C) One (1) member appointed by each officer shall have an  
23 initial term that expires in 2007.

24 (3) Subsequent appointments shall be for a term of four (4)  
25 years.

26 (d)(1) If a vacancy occurs in an appointed position, for any reason,  
27 the vacancy shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

28 (2) The new appointee shall serve for the remainder of the  
29 unexpired term.

30 (e) The Governor shall designate one (1) of his appointees to serve as  
31 chairperson for the first year. Thereafter, the committee shall annually  
32 elect a chairperson from among themselves.

33 (f)(1) The committee shall meet at times and places the chairperson  
34 deems necessary, but no less than four (4) times per calendar year.

35 (2) No meetings shall be held outside of the State of Arkansas.

36 (3) A majority of the members of the committee shall constitute

1 a quorum for the purpose of transacting business.

2 (4) All action of the committee shall be by a majority vote of  
3 the full membership of the committee.

4 (g) The committee shall:

5 (1) Develop a plan for the state designed to enable all public  
6 school students to meet the state's student academic achievement standards  
7 while working toward the goal of narrowing the achievement gaps in public  
8 schools for the following subgroups:

9 (A) Economically disadvantaged students; and

10 (B) Students from major racial and ethnic groups; and

11 (2)(A) Monitor the Department of Education efforts to comply  
12 with federal guidelines on improving the academic achievement of the  
13 disadvantaged, specifically including, but not limited to, the No Child Left  
14 Behind Act.

15 (B) Monitor the Department of Education identification of  
16 population groups to be motivated in closing the achievement gap efforts.

17 (C) The committee may expand the role and scope of the  
18 committee to cover specific population groups as identified by the Department  
19 of Education as target groups for closing the achievement gaps; and

20 (3) File a report with the chairpersons of the House and Senate  
21 Interim Committees on Education, the Governor and the State Board of  
22 Education no later than November 1 of each year.

23 (h) The committee may studied and address topics, including but not  
24 limited to :

25 (1) Understanding children of poverty;

26 (2) Successful strategies with students of poverty;

27 (3) Teacher preparation of student diversity;

28 (4) Response to language diversity;

29 (5) Methods of hiding the achievement gap;

30 (6) Success stories;

31 (7) Obstacles to overcome in closing the gap;

32 (8) Alternative intervention strategies for closing the gap;

33 (9) Leadership challenges in closing the gap;

34 (10) Role of parents, families and caregivers on closing the  
35 achievement gap;

36 (11) Parental and community diversity;

(12) Relationship of school of environment and student;

(13) Role of school and class size on the achievement;

(14) Conditional barriers to student access for additional learning opportunities; and

(15) The profile of underachieving students.

(h)(1) The Department of Education shall provide meeting space and clerical support as needed by the committee.

(2)(A) Members of the committee shall serve without pay.

(B) Members of the committee may receive expense reimbursement in accordance with Arkansas Code § 25-16-902, to be paid by the Department of Education to the extent money is available.

SECTION 2. Students who have been placed at risk of academic failure; Personal education plans.

(a)(1) Local school districts shall identify students in all grades who have been placed at risk for academic failure and shall implement a personal education plan for academic improvement with focused intervention and performance benchmarks.

(2) Identification shall occur as early as can reasonably be done and can be based on grades, observations, and other factors that teachers and administrators consider appropriate, without having to await the results of end-of-grade or end-of-course tests.

(b)(1) At the beginning of the school year a personal education plan shall be developed for any student not performing at least at grade level, as identified by the state end-of-grade test.

(2) If a student's performance appears to be falling below state proficiency standards at any time during the school year, a personal education plan shall be developed.

(c) Focused intervention and acceleration activities may include, among other things, summer school, Saturday school, and extended days.

(d) Local school districts shall provide the activities identified in subdivision (c) of this section, and transportation, free of charge to students.

SECTION 3. Establishment of Local Task Forces on Closing the Achievement Gap.

1       (a)(1) The State Board of Education shall adopt a policy for local  
2 school district to establish local task forces on closing the achievement  
3 gap.

4       (2) The purpose of each task force is to advise and work with  
5 its local board of directors and administration on closing the gap in  
6 academic achievement and on developing a collaborative plan for achieving  
7 that goal.

8       (b) The policy shall include the following:

9           (1) Each task force shall report to its local board of  
10 directors;

11           (2) Each task force shall include key stakeholders in the  
12 community who are committed to improving the education of all children,  
13 especially those who are underachieving, and who agree to attend, on a  
14 regular basis, task force meetings, take an active role in discussions and  
15 activities, listen to the ideas, suggestions, and comments of other task  
16 force members as well as community members, inform other members of the  
17 school and community of the work of the task force, participate in any  
18 training for the task force members such as consensus building, problem-  
19 solving, and group dynamics, and seek actively data-driven solutions to  
20 improving the achievement of all students; and

21           (3) Task force members shall be representative of community  
22 demographics, race, ethnic, gender, and socio-economic diversity, and it is  
23 strongly recommended that they include:

24           (A)(i) Three (3) parents, as selected by the local school  
25 district's parent organization.

26           (ii) One (1) parent who has a child at an elementary  
27 school, one (1) who has a child at a junior high or middle school, and one  
28 (1) who has a child at a high school;

29           (B) School administrators, teachers, instructional support  
30 personnel, exceptional children personnel, and second language specialists,  
31 each of whom shall be selected by the superintendent;

32           (C) One (1) member of the local board of education, as  
33 selected by that board;

34           (D) One (1) representative of the local department of  
35 social services;

36           (E) At least one (1) juvenile court counselor;

1 (F) At least one (1) representative of local law  
2 enforcement;

3 (G) One (1) representative of the local Communities in  
4 Schools program, if present in the local school district, as selected by the  
5 executive director of that program;

6 (H) At least one (1) representative of local businesses,  
7 as selected by the local chamber of commerce;

8 (I) Representatives from community-based organizations, as  
9 selected by the superintendent upon recommendation from those organizations;

10 (J) At least one (1) representative of a university school  
11 of education, if there is one in the area, as selected by the chairperson of  
12 the local board of education;

13 (K) Two (2) high school students, as recommended by their  
14 student councils and elected by the chairperson of the local board of  
15 education; and

16 (L) Any other community representatives, as selected by  
17 the superintendent.

18 (c) The superintendent shall name the chair of the task force, who  
19 shall call the first meeting of the task force.

20 (d) Each task force shall:

21 (1) Decide on training that it may need;

22 (2) Determine what information and data the task force will  
23 need, plan and schedule presentations on the information and data, which  
24 shall be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status.  
25 Examples may include state test data, discipline statistics, teacher-student  
26 ratio, student and teacher attendance data, faculty composition by race,  
27 gender, and ethnicity, and professional preparation of educators;

28 (3) Define the communication process and person responsible for  
29 disseminating information to the public. Communication shall include the  
30 posting of information on a website and shall provide appropriate  
31 translations, as needed;

32 (4) Establish a policy statement on closing the achievement gap  
33 for the local school administrative unit. This statement shall address why  
34 closing the achievement gap is important to the entire community;

35 (5)(A) Set aside specific meetings to analyze and synthesize  
36 data and information.

