

MEETING SUMMARY
JOINT MEETING
OF THE
HOUSE AND SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION

Monday, January 11, 2016
1:30 P.M.
Committee Room A, MAC Building
Little Rock, Arkansas

Representative Bruce Cozart, the Chair of the House Interim Committee on Education, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS OF THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Jane English, Chair; Senator Uvalde Lindsey, Vice Chair; Senator Eddie Cheatham; Senator Alan Clark; Senator Blake Johnson; Senator Bobby J. Pierce; and Senator Eddie Joe Williams.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Representative Bruce Cozart, Chair; Representative Sheilla Lampkin, Vice Chair; Representative Charles L. Armstrong; Representative Scott Baltz; Representative Gary Deffenbaugh; Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas; Representative Jon Eubanks; Representative Jeremy Gillam; Representative Bill Gossage; Representative Michael John Gray; Representative Grant Hodges; Representative Greg Leding; Representative Mark Lowery; Representative Mark McElroy; Representative James Ratliff; and Representative John W. Walker.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Jonathan Dismang; Senator Joyce Elliott; Representative Charles Blake; Representative Jim Dotson; Representative Joe Jett; Representative Stephen Meeks; Representative Micah S Neal; Representative Betty Overbey; Representative Mathew Pitsch; Representative Chris Richey; Representative James Sorvillo; and Representative Brent Talley.

Minutes:

Without objection, the minutes of December 14, 2015, and December 15, 2015, were approved as written.

Exhibits:

Exhibit C1 – 12/14/2015 Minutes

Exhibit C2 – 12/15/2015 Minutes

Reports from Members Who Attended Recent Meetings Concerning Public or Higher Education

The Honorable Charlotte Vining Douglas, State Representative, District 75, was recognized, and announced that a meeting pertinent to education would be held in the conference room between MAC-A and MAC-B following the joint meeting of the Committees on Tuesday, January 12, 2016.

The Honorable Mark Lowery, State Representative, District 39, was recognized. Representative Lowery said the Legislative Task Force to Study the Realignment of Higher Education meets each month, with the next meeting taking place at 1:30 p.m. on January 20, 2016.

Update on the Activities of the Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science, Inc.

Presenter:

Dr. Ken James, President, Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science, Inc., was recognized. Dr. James highlighted the success of the Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science, Inc. (AAIMS) program since its inception, as well as discussing the Spring 2015 results. He said AAIMS will work with fifty-five (55) schools in 2015-2016. He noted five (5) new schools joined Cohort 7 this past fall, and six (6) to eight (8) new schools are expected to join in the fall of 2016. Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, he discussed the increase in qualifying scores and the increase in students taking a Math, Science, and English (MSE) Advanced Placement (AP) exam while in the program for Cohorts 4 (9 schools), 5 (7 schools), and 6 (8 schools). He additionally discussed state rankings for increases in passing scores and in qualifying scores from 2008 – 2015. His presentation included pie charts illustrating the increase in the number of students taking AP math, science, and English classes, the increase in the number of qualifying scores on AP math, science, and English exams, and the increase in minority students in the state taking AP courses and achieving qualifying scores. Dr. James said that AAIMS is making a difference in the state by changing expectations and achievement.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- testing and qualifying scores,
- colleges and acceptance of credit hours,
- defining a “traditionally underserved student,”
- independent program evaluation and report,
- equitability regarding AP courses,
- motivating high poverty students to participate in the program, and
- requesting data for all cohorts.

PowerPoint Presentation:

AAIMS AP Training and Incentive Program

Handouts:

AAIMS AP Training and Incentive Program, PowerPoint
AAIMS AP Training and Incentive Program, All Cohorts, PowerPoint
AAIMS Background and Executive Summary
Arkansas Research Center (ARC) Executive Summary 2009 AAIMS Report

Representative Cozart made an announcement concerning rules of procedure for the Tuesday, January 12, 2016 meeting of the House and Senate Interim Committees on Education, in which there would be a discussion of written testimony submitted by various education advocacy organizations regarding their concerns about the state’s current system of funding for public education.

Update on the Status of School Districts Under State Control

Mr. Johnny Key, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Mr. Key introduced discussions concerning the four (4) school districts under state control. The content of the discussions included school-specific issues relating to Community Advisory Boards (CAB), new appointments to CABs, fiscal status, state board action(s), and meeting improvement plan objectives, as well as updates on litigation issues, academic issues, and operational and fiscal issues. Prior to each discussion, an introductory presentation was made by each district superintendent:

Mr. John Hoy, Superintendent, Helena-West Helena School District, (*Fiscal Distress – Year 5*)

Dr. Jerry Guess, Superintendent, Pulaski County Special School District, (*Fiscal Distress – Year 5*)

Mr. Baker Kurrus, Superintendent, Little Rock School District, (*Academic Distress – Year 1*)

Ms. Barbara Warren, Superintendent, Dollarway School District, (*Academic Distress – December, 2015*)

Contributors to the Discussion:

Ms. Kendra Clay, Attorney Specialist, Legal Services, Arkansas Department of Education
Mr. Greg Rogers, Director, Agency Finance, Arkansas Department of Education
Ms. Cindy Smith, Coordinator, Fiscal Services and Support, Arkansas Department of Education
Mr. Andrew Tolbert, Director, Office of Intensive Support, Arkansas Department of Education
Dr. Richard Wilde, Program Director, School Improvement Unit, Arkansas Department of Education

Issues Included in the Discussion:

Helena-West Helena School District:

- definition of “material” as it relates to audit findings,
- criteria used to make distress determination,
- percentage required for ending school district balances in Arkansas,
- having the General Assembly legislatively establish ending balance requirements,
- movement in student scores while under state control,
- reworking the audit findings component of the definition of *fiscal distress*,
- repeated audit findings while under state control,
- following business procedures during state takeover,
- inability to waive *fair dismissal* as one of the tools available to turn a district around, and
- assistance from the Office of Intensive Support.

Pulaski County Special School District (PCSSD):

- resolving fiscal distress and meeting the desegregation settlement agreement,
- practices and procedures which are currently not in place and causing PCSSD to remain in fiscal distress,
- Objective 37 (*identify cost reduction possibilities in the event state desegregation funding is eliminated*) is the only objective in the fiscal distress plan that has not been accomplished,
- detachment of Jacksonville and a millage election,
- understanding how is the state not complicit in allowing action to happen that would help keep PCSSD in fiscal distress by agreeing to the action of detaching Jacksonville School District,
- putting monetary impact on audit violations; addressing the monetary impact on a school district in the definition of fiscal distress,
- ability of PCSSD to function with loss of \$20.8 million per year figure in Objective 37, and \$40 million per year loss resulting from detachment of Jacksonville School District,
- reducing the operating expenses equal to the loss of revenue,
- meeting the state mandate to detach Jacksonville, resulting in a declining fund balance, and
- addressing facilities for students in an equitable way.

Little Rock School District (LRSD):

- whether improvements were realized in student achievement following meetings between the Office of Intensive Support and principals and school improvement specialists (SISs) in three (3) high schools,
- importance of having a broad-based, community-based school district,
- annexing the LRSD with Cabot, Bryant, and Benton,
- effect on the superintendent’s effectiveness if the eStem Public Charter School proposal comes to fruition, putting changes in place and making the funding work for the LRSD going forward; millage increase for the LRSD,
- allowing the LRSD to name its own SISs,
- necessity of having individual improvement plans for each of the three (3) high schools in academic distress,
- statutory obligation regarding threshold needed to be reached in order to be removed from the academic distress designation, and
- impact of proposed new middle school in West Little Rock and school attendance zones on race.

Dollarway School District:

- ≡ Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) providing support to the district for transcript audits for senior students,
- ≡ issues in the district going well beyond academic distress,
- ≡ putting academic and fiscal systems in place that were not in place prior to the state takeover,
- ≡ state previously taking over the district because of standards violations,
- ≡ dismal facilities in the district,
- ≡ combining school districts when failing schools are adjacent to other failing schools, and the impact on race, and
- ≡ recommendations for the position of the SISs in the district.

Commissioner Key hoped the updates provided legislators with beneficial information.

PowerPoint Presentation and Handout:

ADE Update on Districts in State Takeover

Commissioner Key invited legislators to attend a work session meeting of the State Board of Education at Mills High School regarding PCSSD on January 14, 2016. He said the meeting would include time for public comment.

Next Scheduled Meeting:

Tuesday, January 12, 2016, at 9:00 a.m. in Room 171, State Capitol, Little Rock

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

Approved: 02/08/16