

MEETING SUMMARY

JOINT AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
ARKANSAS COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS  
of the  
HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
and the  
SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Monday, February 3, 2014

1:30 P.M.

Room 171, State Capitol  
Little Rock, Arkansas

Senator Joyce Elliott, the Senate Chair of the Joint Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plans, called the initial meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS OF THE JOINT AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE ON ARKANSAS COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS IN ATTENDANCE:** Senator Joyce Elliott, Chair; and Representative Bruce Cozart.

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE:** Senator Eddie Cheatham; Senator Uvalde Lindsey; Senator Bruce Maloch; Senator Larry Teague; Representative Charles L. Armstrong; Representative David Branscum; Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas; Representative Bill Gossage; and Representative Homer Lenderman.

Remarks by the Chairs

Senator Elliott said the Subcommittee would have discussions regarding the Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (ACSIP) and would make recommendations for consideration by the full Committees.

Overview of the ACSIP Process

Presenter & Synopsis:

**Mr. Elbert Harvey**, Public School Program Manager, Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (ACSIP), Division of Learning Services, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Mr. Harvey related a history of ACSIP from the perspective of both a teacher and an administrator. He discussed the previous model used for district and school improvement plans, the Comprehensive Outcomes Evaluation (COE). He reviewed legislation that had transformed the process, including the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, a part of which gave states the option of doing a consolidated application for federal funds. He said prior to that time, each federal funding source had to have a separate application which created a lot of redundancy. He noted that, when working on ACSIP, reference is made to both a *comprehensive* plan (state statute) and a *consolidated* plan (federal requirements). Mr. Harvey stated that in essence they are same thing. He noted that in 2004 the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) partnered with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) to design and build a Web-based system to enable districts and schools to meet state and federal school improvement planning requirements. He discussed how schools and school districts establish their needs and direction, and the steps taken to develop a school improvement plan. He said the Web-based ACSIP system supports the development, submission, review, and approval of the plans. He said that the resulting plan meets the requirements of NCLB for a school improvement plan, the state requirements for a school improvement plan, the requirements for applying for federal funds, and the requirements for use of state categorical funds. Mr. Harvey commented that the ACSIP process has been audited by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) and has

had findings related to the application process. The DOE has said that ACSIP does not have a true application for consolidated funds, and wants revisions made. He stated this may provide a perfect opportunity for a comprehensive review of the ACSIP process. Mr. Harvey detailed how the ACSIP cycle works in a step-by-step explanation. He included responsibility, accountability, deadlines, and variables.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ≡ scrutinizing the use of language in state requirements and not focusing on what's best for the child,
- ≡ clarification of the timeline for the process to get an approved plan,
- ≡ flow of funds and reimbursement,
- ≡ clarification of the process for an amendment to a plan, and
- ≡ additional things that have been "rolled into" ACSIP.

Handouts:

ACSIP Responses  
Act 807 of 2007  
Arkansas Code Related to School Improvement  
Education Week School Reform Article

Discussion with Educators about the Strengths and Weaknesses of ACSIP Plans as Currently Structured

Presenter & Synopsis:

**Ms. Sandra Mills**, Supervisor of Federal Programs, Forrest City School District, and was recognized. Ms. Mills said she has worked on ACSIP both at the state level and at the district level. As a result of her experience, she has found

- that the ACSIP software requires significant technical assistance just to operate;
- that working on ACSIP at the district level was very time consuming;
- that over the years ACSIP has become a compliance document; and
- that the school improvement plan is all about an administrative structure for funding and not about the creation of a school improvement process that leads to improved student achievement.

Presenter & Synopsis:

**Mr. Jerry Langston**, Principal, Strong High School, Strong-Huttig School District, was recognized. Mr. Langston said that Strong High School is a priority school under the Priority Improvement Plan (PIP) which is part of the ACSIP plan. He said their school now uses the ACSIP document differently than it had been used in the past. He said it used to be a compliance document, but now that it's under the PIP, the leadership team visits the document each week. It has become more of a living document used to plan all aspects of running the school. He said the whole document should look at the needs of the students instead of looking at budgetary restraints.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ≈ handling improvement plans differently so as to satisfy both compliance and the needs of children,
- ≈ relevance of ACSIP plans,
- ≈ Interim Measurable Objectives (IMOs),
- ≈ differences and similarities of district ACSIP plans and building ACSIP plans,
- ≈ prioritizing the strategies that are most beneficial to improve student success,
- ≈ implementing an improvement plan with fidelity,
- ≈ school improvement plans "going on the shelf," and
- ≈ problems working through plans because of software issues.

*Next Scheduled Meeting:*

Monday, March 10, 2014, at 1:30 p.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol in Little Rock

*Adjournment:*

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

*Approved: 04/14/14*