

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

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 2741

4
5 By: Representatives Pickett, Cleveland
6
7

For An Act To Be Entitled

8
9 AN ACT TO CREATE THE "COMMISSION ON CLOSING THE
10 ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN ARKANSAS"; AND FOR
11 OTHER PURPOSES.
12

Subtitle

13
14 AN ACT TO CREATE THE "COMMISSION ON
15 CLOSING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN
16 ARKANSAS".
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18

19 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
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21 SECTION 1. (a) There is established a commission to be known as the
22 "The Commission on Closing the Achievement Gap in Arkansas".

23 (b) The commission shall consist of twelve (12) members as follows:

24 (1) Four (4) persons appointed by the Governor;

25 (2) Four (4) persons appointed the President Pro Tempore of the
26 Senate;

27 (3) Four (4) persons appointed by the Speaker of the House of
28 Representatives;

29 (c) The appointed commission members shall be residents of the State
30 of Arkansas at the time of appointment and throughout their terms.

31 (d)(1) In 2003, four (4) members shall be appointed by the Speaker of
32 the House of Representatives as follows:

33 (A) One (1) for a term to expire June 30, 2005;

34 (B) One (1) for a term to expire June 30, 2006;

35 (C) One (1) for a term to expire June 30, 2007; and

36 (D) One (1) for a term to expire June 30, 2008;



1 (2) In 2003, four (4) members shall be appointed by the
2 President Pro Tempore of the Senate as follows:

- 3 (A) One (1) for a term to expire June 30, 2005;
- 4 (B) One (1) for a term to expire June 30, 2006;
- 5 (C) One (1) for a term to expire June 30, 2007; and
- 6 (D) One (1) for a term to expire June 30, 2008;

7 (3) In 2003, four (4) members shall be appointed by the Governor
8 as follows:

- 9 (A) One (1) for a term to expire June 30, 2005;
- 10 (B) One (1) for a term to expire June 30, 2006;
- 11 (C) One (1) for a term to expire June 30, 2007; and
- 12 (D) One (1) for a term to expire June 30, 2008;

13 (4) Subsequent appointments are for a term of five (5) years.

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

16 (2) The new appointee shall serve for the remainder of the
17 unexpired term.

18 (f) The Governor shall designate one of its appointees to serve as
19 chairperson.

20 (g)(1) The commission shall meet at times and places the chairperson
21 deems necessary, but no less than four (4) times per calendar year.

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

23 (3) A majority of the members of the commission shall constitute
24 a quorum for the purpose of transacting business.

25 (4) All action of the commission shall be by a majority vote of
26 the full membership of the commission.

27 (h) The commission shall:

28 (1) Monitor the Department of Education's single, statewide
29 accountability plan, and make recommended changes to the plan to ensure that
30 all schools and districts make adequate yearly progress in raising the
31 academic achievement of:

- 32 (A) Economically disadvantaged students; and
- 33 (B) Students from major racial and ethnic groups; and

34 (2)(A) Monitor the Department of Education efforts to comply
35 with federal guidelines on improving the academic achievement of the
36 disadvantaged, specifically including but not limited to the No Child Left

1 Behind Act.

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

4 (C) The commission may expand the role and scope of the
 5 commission to cover specific population groups as identified by the
 6 Department of Education as target groups for closing the achievement gaps;
 7 and

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

11 (i)(1) The Department of Education shall provide staff and office
 12 space to the commission.

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

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

17
 18 SECTION 2. Students who have been placed at risk of academic failure;
 19 Personal education plans.

20 (a)(1) Local school districts shall implement an academic improvement
 21 plan with focused intervention and performance benchmarks in accordance with
 22 the rules and regulations developed by the State Board of Education.

23 (2) Identification shall occur as early as can reasonably be
 24 done and can be based on grades, observations, and other factors that
 25 teachers and administrators consider appropriate, without having
 26 to await the results of state-mandated assessments.

27 (b)(1) At the beginning of the school year an academic achievement
 28 plan shall be developed for any student not performing at grade level, as
 29 identified by state-mandated assessments.

30 (2) If a student's performance appears to be falling below state
 31 proficiency standards at any time during the school year, an academic
 32 improvement plan shall be developed.

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

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

1 students.

2

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

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

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

12 (b) The policy shall include the following:

13 (1) Each task force shall report to its local board of
14 directors;

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

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

28 (A)(i) Three (3) parents, as selected by the local school
29 district’s parent organization.

30 (ii) One (1) parent who has a child at an elementary
31 school, one (1) who has a child at a junior high or middle school, and one
32 (1) who has a child at a high school;

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

36 (C) One (1) member of the local board of education, as

1 selected by that board;

2 (D) One (1) representative of the local department of
 3 social services;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 (L) Any other community representatives, as selected by
 21 the superintendent.

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

24 (d) Each task force shall:

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

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

32 (3) Define the communication process and person responsible for
 33 disseminating information to the public. Communication shall include the
 34 posting of information on a website and shall provide appropriate
 35 translations, as needed;

36 (4) Establish a policy statement on closing the achievement gap

1 for the local school administrative unit. This statement shall address why
 2 closing the achievement gap is important to the entire community;

3 (5)(A) Set aside specific meetings to analyze and synthesize
 4 data and information.

5 (B) The task force shall use the data to identify and
 6 prioritize the problems with student achievement;

7 (6) Identify and review current effective programs and
 8 instructional strategies that address student achievement needs, identify
 9 criteria used to determine their effectiveness, determine changes to improve
 10 the effectiveness, identify gaps in services, identify needed information to
 11 determine research-based programs and strategies that are effective in
 12 addressing the gaps; and

13 (7) Develop a report to the school and community that includes
 14 an implementation plan, benchmarks, and the monitoring process.

15 (e)(1) Each task force may establish subcommittees to research answers
 16 to the critical questions.

17 (2) If subcommittees are established, they shall present their
 18 findings to the full task force.

19
 20 SECTION 4. Teachers shall base their student promotion decisions on
 21 multiple measures of student achievement and school success, including, but
 22 not limited to, state-mandated assessments, factors such as classroom work,
 23 grades, and quality of instruction received, and a student's best educational
 24 interests.

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 26 SECTION 5. Reporting Dropout Rates, Suspensions, Expulsions, and
 27 Alternative Placements.

28 (a) The State Board of Education shall report annually to the Joint
 29 Interim Oversight Committee on Education Reform and the Commission on Closing
 30 the Academic Achievement Gap in Arkansas on the numbers of students who have
 31 dropped out of school, been suspended, been expelled, or placed in an
 32 alternative program.

33 (b) The data shall be reported in a disaggregated manner and be
 34 readily available to the public.

35 (c) The state board shall not include students that have been expelled
 36 from school when calculating the dropout rate.

1 (d) The board shall maintain a separate record of the number of
2 students who are expelled from school.

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