

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

ADEQUACY

Tuesday, September 15, 2015  
9:00 A.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 9:00 a.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; 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 Nate Bell; Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas; Representative Bill Gossage; Representative Michael John Gray; Representative Greg Leding; Representative Mark Lowery; Representative Mark McElroy; Representative Reginald Murdock; Representative James Ratliff; Representative Warwick Sabin; and Representative John Walker.

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE:** Senator Joyce Elliott; Senator Jon Woods; Representative Jim Dotson; Representative Kenneth B. Ferguson; Representative David Hillman; Representative Stephen Meeks; Representative Micah Neal; Representative Betty Overbey; Representative James Sorvillo; Representative Nelda Speaks; Representative Clarke Tucker; and Representative DeAnn Vaught.

Remarks by the Chairs

**Mr. Richard Wilson**, Assistant Director, Research Services, Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR), was recognized. Mr. Wilson, at the request of Representative Cozart, introduced **Dr. Chris Diaz** to the Committees. Dr. Diaz is a new staff member in BLR's Policy Analysis and Research Section.

Discussion of the State's Status Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Related Issues

Presenters:

**Dr. Ginny Blankenship**, Legislative Analyst, Policy Analysis and Research Section, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. Dr. Blankenship gave a brief overview of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) legislation and discussed how the law is playing out in Arkansas. She presented a history of the legislation, including its 2002 reauthorization by the U.S. Congress, and its name change to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, commonly known as NCLB. She said the legislation created a new accountability system for states requiring testing of all students in literacy, math, and science, in order to identify achievement gaps between different student subgroups. Dr. Blankenship said the ultimate goal set forth for all states under NCLB was for 100% of students to achieve proficiency in grade-level math and reading by 2014. She stated that, as of 2015, no state has yet met the proficiency goal. She said this does not mean that schools have not been improving and closing achievement gaps; however, many schools have been unable to hit increasingly challenging targets from year to year, even if the schools are otherwise considered high-performing.

Dr. Blankenship stated that, technically, NCLB expired in 2007; however, the U.S. Congress is still working to reconcile a House version and a Senate version of a revamped ESEA that each chamber passed in July 2015. She said many are hopeful that Congress will be able to work out a final reauthorization later this fall. She noted that, in the meantime, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) decided in 2011 that states could apply for waivers for some of the law's provisions. Dr. Blankenship detailed these waivers, commonly referred to as ESEA Flexibility. She then discussed the impact of Arkansas's ESEA Flexibility Plan, first approved in 2012, on schools and what's underway for next year.

Contributors to the Discussion:

**Ms. Annette Barnes**, Assistant Commissioner, Public School Accountability, Arkansas Department of Education  
**Dr. Richard Wilde**, Public School Program Manager, Public School Accountability, Arkansas Department of Education

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- clarification of school rating designations,
- reaching established Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for a school to maintain status,
- addressing student achievement in schools with large racial minority populations,
- correctly identifying students in poverty in order to specifically work with that subpopulation,
- qualifications for a school district to utilize when selecting a locally-hired school improvement specialist,
- Arkansas's input on cut-off scores in Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments,
- correlation between Arkansas School Recognition Program and ESEA designations,
- turning around a failing population of students; looking at what success means,
- accountability measures in place for interventionists,
- turning a school around and sustaining the turnaround by including the community,
- creating a tool to assess the dynamics in a community, which will have the effect of both turning a school around, and sustaining the turnaround,
- Geoffrey Canada and the Harlem Children's Zone (HZC), and
- number of consultants school districts can hire in Arkansas, and criteria for their hire.

Handouts:

Adequacy Study Statutory Responsibilities  
Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Arkansas Flexibility Plan, Bureau Brief

Representative Cozart announced that there would be a deviation from the agenda, and the Committees would next take up Item E.

Discussion of Issues Related to NSL (Poverty) Funding

Presenter:

**Ms. Nell Smith**, Administrator, Policy Analysis and Research Section, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. Ms. Smith presented a BLR Research Report, *National School Lunch State Categorical Funding and Expenditures*. She stated that National School Lunch (NSL) funding is state money that is provided to school districts based on the number of low-income students in each district. She said NSL is one of four (4) categorical funding programs provided by the General Assembly; and the purpose of this particular program is to help provide additional instructional activities and support for low-income students. Ms. Smith walked the Committees through the report, detailing background, trends, other types of NSL funding, allowable uses and expenditures, NSL fund balances, poverty funding in other states, federal funding for low-income student populations, student achievement, and other reports on NSL funding use and closing the achievement gap.

Contributor to the Discussion:

**Mr. Johnny Key**, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ≡ relationship between a district's NSL percentage and it's student achievement,
- ≡ concern about too many allowable uses for NSL funds,
- ≡ school resource officers and assisting in improving achievement of students "at risk,"
- ≡ utilizing funding responsibly in the Matrix,
- ≡ relationship between monies spent and improving proficiency of students identified as NSL,
- ≡ reasons for growth in the number of students in the NSL program since the recession ended,
- ≡ effect of the shift of student population from high-income bracket to low-income bracket (10 percentage point differential) on test scores,
- ≡ conclusion from data in charts that Arkansas has not addressed remediating the poverty gap,
- ≡ review process for determining the use of NSL funds by a particular district,
- ≡ excessive fund balances and penalties,
- ≡ modeling the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), on the DOE website,
- ≡ research to back up allowable expenditures of NSL funds,
- ≡ qualifications for NSL funds nationwide,
- ≡ source of NSL funds,
- ≡ allotment of flexibility to NSL funds without prescriptive direction from the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE),
- ≡ seriousness of the achievement gap,
- ≡ delicate balance in allowing local control,
- ≡ addressing capacity issues of ADE when taking over a school district,
- ≡ communities needing more than a focus on education,
- ≡ local control and the role of the State Board of Education,
- ≡ original use of NSL funds was for three (3) research-based items, and
- ≡ court's ruling that, in the absence of successful local control, it becomes the state's responsibility, not that of the ADE.

Handout:

National School Lunch State Categorical Funding and Expenditures, Research Report

Review of the Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (ACSIP) Process

Presenter:

**Dr. Brent Benda**, Senior Research Specialist, Policy Analysis and Research Section, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. Dr. Benda, utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, reviewed a BLR Research Report, *Changes to ACSIP: Providing School Improvement Resources Where the Need is Greatest*. He discussed Background, Arkansas ESEA Flexibility: Changes to School and District Accountability and Assistance, Use of Differentiated Accountability, Recognition and Tiered Support System (DARTSS) for ACSIP, Use of Indistar for Comprehensive School Improvement Planning, Brief Survey of Federal and District Coordinators Regarding Indistar, and ACSIP Issues Addressed by ADE.

Contributors to the Discussion:

**Mr. Johnny Key**, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education

**Dr. Richard Wilde**, Public School Program Manager, Public School Accountability, Arkansas Department of Education

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ∴ management by wandering around (MBWA),
- ∴ addressing the concern coming from cooperatives that ACSIP is doing the least amount of good, is taking the greatest amount of time, and is costing the most amount of money,
- ∴ availability of research defining what is meant by an “effective teacher,” and
- ∴ availability of indicators which show ACSIP is driving improvement.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Continuous School Improvement Plan

Handouts:

Changes to ACSIP: Providing School Improvement Resources Where the Need is Greatest, Research Report  
Continuous School Improvement Plan

Other Handout:

Opportunities and Options: Making Career Preparation Work for Students, Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

Next Scheduled Meetings:

Tuesday, September 5, 2015, at 1:30 p.m. in Room 138 of the State Capitol, Little Rock, K-12 and Vocational-Technical Institutions Subcommittee of the House Interim Committee on Education

Monday, October 5, 2015, at 11:30 a.m. at the Cabot School District Freshman Academy, Cabot, Arkansas

Tuesday, October 6, 2015, at 9:00 a.m. in Committee Room A, MAC Building, Little Rock

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 12:16 p.m.

*Approved: 10/05/2015*