

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

ADEQUACY

Tuesday, January 12, 2016

9:00 A.M.

Room 171, State Capitol

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; Senator Blake Johnson; 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 Bill Gossage; Representative Michael John Gray; Representative Grant Hodges; Representative Greg Leding; Representative Mark Lowery; Representative Mark McElroy; Representative Reginald Murdock; Representative James Ratliff; Representative Warwick Sabin; and Representative John W. Walker.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Joyce Elliott; Representative Ron McNair; Representative Mathew Pitsch; Representative Nelda Speaks; and Representative Marshall Wright.

Remarks by the Chairs

Representative Cozart reviewed rules of procedure for the meeting. He said each of eight (8) organizations would have fifteen minutes to present information on what needs to be done for education in Arkansas, followed by a fifteen-minute period for questions. He stated that Committee members would have priority over non-members during the questioning period. He said questions would be limited to one per legislator whose name would then go to the bottom of the list for any additional questions. He mentioned questions could also be forwarded to **Mr. Mark Hudson**, Committee Staff. Representative Cozart noted that a 111-page document containing today's testimony was in each member's packet.

Discussion of Written Testimony Submitted by Various Education Advocacy Organizations Regarding their Concerns about the State's Current System of Funding for Public Education

Presenter:

Ms. Kathryn Hazelett, Education Policy Director, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF), was recognized. Ms. Hazelett testified about allocating dollars to ensure all children are given the opportunity to achieve. She discussed: 1) fully funding our quality early childhood education program, 2) ensuring that the funding for the students who need it the most is correlated to programs that increase their achievement, 3) making sure kids are in school, 4) after-school and summer programs, and 5) highly-qualified teachers and the wealth gap.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- source of “Two-thirds of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth results from unequal access to summer learning opportunities” on page 3 of the AACF testimony,
- funding for programs, deemed to be the most productive by the Lawrence O. Picus and Associates report, be mandated to a school district,
- calculations regarding per-pupil funding that include teacher salaries district by district around the state, and
- naming The Positive Youth Development Act in statute as an example of a positive program in summer school, so it can be developed and funded by the Adequacy Report.

Handout:

AACF Written Adequacy Testimony

Presenter:

Dr. Richard Abernathy, Executive Director, Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA), was recognized. Dr. Abernathy presented comprehensive written testimony that was summarized in a PowerPoint presentation. His discussion included: Good News About Arkansas Education, Breaking the Curve Report 2015, Graduation Rates, Matrix Item – COLA, Transportation, Teacher Salaries, Health Insurance, Technology (Bandwidth), Categorical NSL Funds, Categorical ELL Funding, Categorical – PD Funds, Matrix – As An Expenditure Model, Matrix – Staffing, Career & Technical Education, Outside the Matrix – Academic Facilities, Fund Balances, Pre-K Education, Remediation, and Unfunded Mandates.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- developing categorical high-cost transportation funding,
- funding for catastrophic special education,
- expecting high standards from school districts, and getting poor outcomes because of insufficient legislative inputs and care of staff,
- addressing accountability before sending funds to a district,
- National School Lunch Act (NSLA) money and smoothing, and
- effect of School Choice legislation on efficiency in operating schools.

PowerPoint Presentation and Handout:

AAEA Adequacy Testimony, January 12, 2016

Handouts:

AAEA Combined Testimony and PowerPoint
A Review of Adequacy in Financing Public Education in Arkansas 2016

Presenter:

Ms. Tracey Ann Nelson, Executive Director, Arkansas Education Association (AEA), was recognized. Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Nelson discussed recommendations to increase student educational outcomes. Ms. Nelson’s discussion included Overall Graduation Rates, Facilities, Educator Recruitment and Retention, the Teacher Effectiveness Support System (TESS), National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT), Teacher Salary Funding and the Minimum Teacher Compensation Schedule, and Declining Enrollment Funding and Expenditures.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- data on those who are qualified to be teachers, yet choosing *not* to be in the profession, and
- conditions that are causing people to leave the teaching profession.

PowerPoint Presentation and Handout:
AEA 2015 Written Adequacy Testimony

Handout:
AEA 2015 Written Adequacy Testimony

Presenter:

Mr. Scott Smith, Executive Director, Arkansas Public School Resource Center (APSRC), was recognized. In his presentation, Mr. Smith commented on academic adequacy and equity issues facing Arkansas. He included a discussion of Student Focused Education, Facilities Funding for Open-Enrollment Public Charter Schools, and Use of Former School District Facilities. He urged consideration of open-enrollment public charter schools as part of the Adequacy review. He requested that the written testimony of the APSRC be considered in helping the state provide an adequate education for all of its public school students.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ≈ funding for charter schools and waivers,
- ≈ funding for transportation for charter schools,
- ≈ number of school districts taking advantage of the waiver option,
- ≈ whether a review of the current and future delivery of public education is required, and
- ≈ struggling with facilities for public schools and balancing adequacy.

Handout:
APSRC Written Adequacy Testimony

Presenter:

Dr. Tony Prothro, Executive Director, Arkansas School Boards Association (ASBA), was recognized. Dr. Prothro presented observations, concerns, and recommendations regarding the adequate and equitable funding of the public education system in Arkansas. He discussed issues and made recommendations for class size, teacher staffing, transportation, professional development, National School Lunch Act (NSLA) funding, facilities, and Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ≡ school districts assessing and replacing programs that are out of date,
- ≡ training school board members to understand their role, and
- ≡ pitting time for professional development against time for teacher preparation.

PowerPoint Presentation and Handout:
Thoughts, Concerns and Recommendations Regarding Funding Public Education in Arkansas

Presenter:

Dr. Michele Linch, Executive Director, Arkansas State Teachers Association (ASTA), was recognized. Dr. Linch discussed ASTA members' perceptions and insights into the state's current funding for its public education system. She said three (3) things are clear from member feedback: 1) serious discrepancies related to funding issues still exist, 2) teachers and other education professionals must have a stronger voice with regard to adequacy decisions, and 3) Arkansas has serious leadership capacity and implementation issues that warrant a deep exploration of exactly how districts are aligning resources, spending funds, and staffing leadership, instructional coach, and interventionist positions.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- * response rate for the ASTA member survey,
- * need for conducting a rigorous study into how districts spend and align resources in order to identify effective practices; taking a systematic approach to create uniformity among districts, and
- * need for overall coordination at the state level which filters down to the school level to address teacher needs.

Handout:

ASTA Written Adequacy Testimony

The Honorable Charlotte Vining Douglas, State Representative, District 75, was recognized, and, at the request of Representative Cozart, reminded members that a meeting would be held in Room 130 of the State Capitol upon adjournment of this meeting. She said a guest speaker from Seattle would be at the meeting to discuss issues pertinent to education.

Presenter:

Ms. Kathy Smith, Senior Program Officer, Arkansas Education Reform Initiative, The Walton Family Foundation (WFF), was recognized. Ms. Smith said the topic of her testimony is to propose the Committees consider both inputs and outcomes when thinking about resourcing for adequacy. Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Smith discussed tables showing trend data of inputs (funding) to assure adequate and equitable resources have been strong in the state. She discussed a separate table showing that, while inputs have been strong, they have not been matched by academic outcomes in regard to closing the achievement gap. Ms. Smith explained a WFF recommendation regarding performance funding, and provided a rationale for that recommendation.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- concern that the WFF report is only a summary and does not detail unmet needs,
- taking into account the work of the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Achievement Gap in arriving at the WFF analysis,
- “Coleman Report” (*Equality of Educational Opportunity*, 1966),
- the real problems of people, and factors relating to ethnicity, which result in a higher per-pupil cost of operating a disadvantaged school,
- need for more effective utilization of resources to close the achievement gap,
- progress in closing the achievement gap, as indicated by data on the summaries of Tables 18 and 19, had been made up until 2012-13 and 2013-14; data for these last two years is misaligned due to changes starting to be made in curriculum and in assessments, and
- targeting effective interventions to drive performance of students.

PowerPoint Presentation and Handout:

WFF Adequacy Testimony

The Honorable Alan Clark, State Senator, District 13, was recognized. Senator Clark announced that the next meeting of the General Assembly’s Education Caucus has been scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on February 8, 2016, in Room 138 of the State Capitol. He stated the topic for the meeting will be NSLA funding.

Presenter:

Dr. Sherece Y. West-Scantlebury, President and CEO, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (WRF), was recognized. Dr. West-Scantlebury shared the WRF perspective on the need to ensure that all Arkansas schools provide an adequate education and the need to expect excellence for all schools. She discussed several recommendations: 1) making a commitment to a common vision for a stronger education system, 2) investing early to ensure all students start school ready to succeed, and 3) addressing barriers that prevent opportunity for all students. In her presentation, Dr. West-Scantlebury included a discussion of the ForwARd Arkansas vision and a brief summarization of recommendations contained in the 2015 report, *ForwARd Arkansas: A New Vision for Arkansas Education*.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ∴ effectively using all taxes within the state, including millages,
- ∴ creating a superfund for equitability,
- ∴ going beyond aggregated data to look at a local situation,
- ∴ need for understanding the local level to inform the processing of information about school districts, and
- ∴ making a commitment to adequate and equitable funding of school districts.

Handout:

WRF Written Adequacy Testimony, January 12, 2016

Additional Handout:

Combined Adequacy Testimony

Senator English thanked the presenters and the Committee members.

Next Scheduled Meetings:

Monday, February 8, 2016, at 1:30 p.m. in Committee Room A, MAC Building, Little Rock

Tuesday, February 9, 2016, at 9:00 a.m. in Committee Room A, MAC Building, Little Rock

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

Approved: 02/08/16