

MINUTES
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
House Committee on Education
Meeting Jointly
Tuesday, January 9, 2024
9:00 AM
Room A, MAC
Little Rock, Arkansas

Committee members present: Senators Jane English, Chair; Joshua Bryant, Breanne Davis, Jim Dotson, Kim Hammer, and Greg Leding; Representatives Brian S. Evans, Chair; Keith Brooks, Vice Chair; Rick Beck, Bruce Cozart, Hope Duke, Charlene Fite, Lanny Fite, Denise Garner, Ron McNair, Stephen Meeks, DeAnn Vaught, Steven Walker, and Carlton Wing

Other members present: Senators Fredrick Love and Dan Sullivan; Representatives Howard Beaty, Joey Carr, Denise Ennett, Jon Eubanks, Kenneth Ferguson, Jack Fortner, Mike Holcomb, Roger Lynch, Tippi McCullough, Aaron Pilkington, David Ray, Jay Richardson, Jamie Scott, Joy Springer, and Jeff Wardlaw

Representative Evans called the meeting to order.

Adequacy Study: Presentation of Lake View Measures [Exhibits B1-B2]

Julie Holt, Administrator, Policy Analysis and Research Section, Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR), presented information on state assessments, standardized test scores, the national report card, and ACT scores. She also discussed teacher salaries in comparison to other states.

Adequacy Study: Presentation of Student Achievement [Exhibits C1-C2]

Adrienne Beck, Legislative Analyst, Policy Analysis and Research Section, BLR, presented information on student achievement in Arkansas in comparison to national averages which were broken down by ethnicity, gender, school type, instruction method, students with disabilities, and English language learners.

Discussion of Public School Land Purchasing and Donation [Exhibits D1-D5]

Dr. Debbie Jones, Superintendent, Bentonville Public Schools, Marshall Ney, Litigation Partner, Friday, Eldredge & Clark, Kelly Carlson, President, Bentonville Schools Board of Education, and Jeff Webster, CEO, Excellerate Foundation discussed their desire to utilize of the Bentonville High School property to build low income housing for the faculty and staff of the school. They also discussed rental and mortgage prices in Northwest Arkansas.

Ryan Owsley, Deputy Attorney General, Opinions Division, Office of Attorney General, expressed that there could be constitutional concern for property to be donated and that it must have a public benefit.

Andres Rhodes, Chief Legal Counsel, Arkansas Department of Education, and Tyrel Pace, Assistant Director of the Arkansas Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation, discussed how facilities are classified as underutilized.

Additionally, the committee heard public testimony from local Benton County residents.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.