

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

ADEQUACY

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

9:00 A.M.

Room A, MAC

Little Rock, Arkansas

Senator Jane English, the Chair of the Senate Interim Committee on Education, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**MEMBERS OF THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE:** *Senators:* Jane English, Chair; Joyce Elliott, Vice Chair; Eddie Cheatham, Linda Chesterfield, Lance Eads, Jim Hendren and Mark Johnson

**MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE:** *Representatives:* Bruce Cozart, Chair; Fred Allen, Rick Beck, LeAnne Burch, Jana Della Rosa, Jim Dotson, Jon S. Eubanks, Brian S. Evans, Denise Garner, Mark Lowery, Richard McGrew, Stephen Meeks, Nelda Speaks, Joy Springer and DeAnn Vaught

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE:** *Senators:* Ronald Caldwell and Breanne Davis. *Representatives:* Bruce Coleman, Marsh Davis, Les Eaves, Denise Ennett, Megan Godfrey, Jack Ladyman, Tippy McCullough, Mark Perry, Marcus E. Richmond, Johnny Rye and Carlton Wing

Discussion on Implementation/Status of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in Public Schools

Presenters:

**Ms. Kelecia Glover**, Principal, Mabelvale Elementary, Little Rock School District, was recognized. Ms. Glover talked about the school success after receiving the PLC grant, and how effective it's been since its inception within the school. The PLC grant has allowed the school to provide an intervention that assists students to receive school-wide support to ensure that they're receiving extra time for learning. The grant has, also, allowed for the school's special education team to travel to Seattle, WA, for the "Yes We Can" Conference, and another trip to Fayetteville, AR, with the school's guidance coalition team. The Specialist Team, which is comprised of several of arts, music, PE, media, and special education teachers; all who work together in a collaborative effort to implement house rules. Their efforts were to improve the schools disciplinary referrals for the school year, which were exceeded by only receiving 32 of the targeted 60 disciplinary referrals for the school year.

**Ms. Candance Johnson**, Teacher, Bragg Elementary School, West Memphis Public Schools, was recognized. Ms. Johnson shared her experiences as well as what she's gained from the PLC program, and how it's deepened her knowledge as an educator. She, emphasized the collaborative efforts her and other teachers have engaged in throughout the PLC process. She expressed that PLC has empowered her knowledge as a teacher, which has overall strengthened her knowledge of content, collaboration, and best practices.

**Ms. Lori Griffin**, Principal, Ballman Elementary, Fort Smith Public Schools, was recognized. Ms. Griffin, talked about the effective changes that the PLC has provided in Ozark and Ballman Elementary. She stated PLC has provided stabilization within the schools, and making them model schools. Ballman elementary went from a C to 1/100<sup>th</sup> of a point of an A. This process has made changes within teacher retention in both rural and urban areas. The collaborative efforts have yielded results from teachers that are resistant to change, who are now appreciative of the program and the changes it provides. This program allows teachers to apply learned skills to kids as early as kindergarten, because that is the beginning years for success. The entire school only had 2 referrals for resource and none for speech for the entire school year.

**Mr. Joshua Ray**, Principal, East Pointe Elementary, Greenwood Public Schools, was recognized. Mr. Ray expressed how appreciative they are of the program, and how it's used to tackle adult behaviors and a belief system to recognize unknown bias behavior. The Greenwood School District is adopting this program into

## EXHIBIT C2

multiple schools as well as in four other school districts. The Greenwood school is primarily an A or B school, but the district was failing kids due to poverty, and special education. Only 4% of third grade kids were proficient in reading; now up to 36%, and fourth grade students were reading at a 7% proficiency level; now up to 39%. Prior to this program, and based upon assessment testing, kids of poverty were 24% behind their peers, which is no longer the case according to recent data.

**Ms. Robyn Dawson**, Principal, Spradling Elementary, Fort Smith Public Schools, was recognized. Spradling is 54% Hispanic, 19% African American, 16% Caucasian, and 10% Asia/other. Spradling ranks number one in poverty out of 26 schools at a 98.6% poverty level. Ms. Dawson shared the challenges that Spradling Elementary kids face on a day to day basis, such as meeting their basic necessities and needs. Once a level D school, Ms. Dawson is happy to say that Spradling is now a level B school. The school offers a strong sense of intervention, and a staff that has the skills and resources needed to meet their school's curricular needs.

**Ms. Julie Wallace**, Principle, Quitman Elementary, Quitman Public Schools, was recognized. She emphasized the importance of the program being a learning community and not a learning program, which focus on helping people. The amount of special education is on a steady rise due to teacher retention, which in turn creates a shortage of teachers in an area that is already lacking the needed resources for kids to be successful.

**Mr. George McGill**, Mayor, Fort Smith, was recognized. Mr. McGill, talked about the success of the PLC program and how effective the program was in its efforts in turning the Spradling Elementary school into a success story. His efforts in leading a mentoring, leadership program at the schools for both boys and girls, have shadowed an exemplary example of how well one can achieve if one tries. Both Spradling and Ballman Elementary schools are winners, and have been highlighted across the city of Fort Smith for their achievements that has changed the culture of the schools. The program has also been inclusive in including businesses that offer students the opportunity for partnerships outside of the school. Mr. McGill mentioned, that they've partnered with the Osteopathy school to train kids through virtual learning on how to show compassion and express kindness towards people, and to hopefully attract kids as young as the fifth grade to become doctors.

### Issues Included in the Discussions:

- ✓ Retention rates of teachers in special education
- ✓ Rise in special education students
- ✓ Challenges in retaining good special education teachers
- ✓ Bias and diversity issues within the schools between black/brown kids

### Presenter

**Ms. Ivy Pfeffer**, Deputy Commissioner of Division of Elementary & Secondary Education, Department of Education, was recognized. Ms. Pfeffer provided a synopsis of what changes were made to Act 757 of 2019, a cleanup which included the repeal of grade inflation reporting requirements. She explained that Act 930 of 2017 repealed Arkansas's ACTAAP assessment program. She provided an overview of the transition and explained because the state has transitioned to a new testing program under Every Student Succeeds Act, the repeal of the grade inflation reporting requirement was necessary.

**Ms. Courtney Salas-Ford**, Legal Counsel, Department of Education, was recognized. She echoed Ms. Pfeffer thoughts on Act 757 of 2019, which included to identify sections that were overlooked as part of the repeal of the former accountability process and to make the necessary changes needed for the cleanup process for Act 757 of 2019.

### Issues Included in the Discussions:

- ✓ Grade inflations
- ✓ Remediation expenses & rates
- ✓ Higher Education preparation and training

Representative Cozart, asked that members review the worksheet and make any recommendations and changes for the: Continued Discussion of Adequacy Issues and Potential Recommendations for the 2020 Adequacy Report

### Next Scheduled Meetings:

Tuesday, September 29, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. in MAC A.

### Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.