

MINUTES**HOUSE AND SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION
MEETING JOINTLY****Monday, October 5, 2020****1:30 P.M.****Room A, MAC****Little Rock, Arkansas**

Committee Members in Attendance: Senators Jane English, Chair; Joyce Elliot, Vice Chair; Eddie Cheatham, Linda Chesterfield, Lance Eads, and Mark Johnson Representatives Bruce Cozart, Chair; Fred Allen, Rick Beck, LeAnne Burch, Frances Cavenaugh, Gary Deffenbaugh, Jana Della Rosa, Jim Dotson, Jon S. Eubanks, Brian Evans, Denise Garner, Mark Lowery, Richard McGrew, Stephen Meeks, Nelda Speaks, and DeAnn Vaught,

Other Members in Attendance: Senators Alan Clark Representatives Denise Jones Ennett, Kenneth Ferguson, Megan Godfrey, Tippi McCullough, Jamie Scott, Stu Smith, and Danny Watson

Senator English called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes of September 8 and September 9, 2020, Meetings [Exhibits C1&C2]

Without objection, the Minutes from September 8 and September 9, 2020, meetings were approved.

Case Studies Discussion [Exhibits E1&E2]

Ms. Michaela Tonking, Associate, APA Consulting, presented a report on school case studies and how they were selected. Schools were selected based on their outperformance of APA Consulting's expectations and on three criteria: a letter grade of A, B, or C, if there was improvement from 2018 to 2019, and if there was a higher than average lower-income student percentage or a higher than average English learner student percentage. The team conducted interviews with schools based on eight main topics to decide what contributed to their success. The interview topics included: school staffing, school schedule, curriculum/instructional programs, assessments/data, support strategies for struggling students, professional development, additional monetary and non-monetary supports, and school culture and leadership.

Educator Panels Discussion [Exhibits F1&F2]

Ms. Amanda Brown, Senior Associate, APA Consulting, discussed educator panels and the selection process. The selection process for the educator panels was based on a series of nominations from superintendents, administrators, and professional association leaders with 125 educators selected from all regions in the state. The panels discussed college and career readiness, the impacts of economically disadvantaged students, the ability of schools and districts to attract and retain staff, resources in the funding matrix, and additional funding outside of the matrix for specific purposes. Some of the main concerns were salaries and the need for special education educators in the state.

The study team conducted a stakeholder survey online with a total of 3,025 participants from over 170 districts/charters. They received feedback in five key areas: college and career readiness, staff attraction and retention, perspectives on the funding system, areas of concern related to education resources and funding, and needed resources areas in the matrix. APA Consulting noted that educator results were mainly from the larger Central region and with high participation in less than 10 districts within the community responses. The study team will analyze the results in the final report to determine if responses varied by locale.

Discussion of School Size Policies [Exhibits H1&H2]

Mr. Justin Silverstein, Co-CEO, APA Consulting, discussed the school size policy. Policies from four states were noted: Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, and Kentucky. Each of these states have different policies based on their desired outcomes for school sizes. Mr. Silverstein also discussed the already existing class size rules. While many of the respondents did not have already existing class size policies, those that did stated that they followed the state rule for class sizes. The case load policies were considered in the survey with most respondents indicating there were policies already in place for the number of students they were allowed to serve.

Discussion of Capital Needs [Exhibits I1&I2]

Mr. Silverstein talked about the Capital Funding Programs, examining the types of capital programs states use nationally and district survey responses on capital funding. The team determined that while most states provide some support for capital funding, the level of support varies: support for qualified projects, district bonded indebtedness, or a flat amount of funding provided per student. They also noted three main variables within a state's capital funding system: the level of support given to districts, how states determine which projects to fund, and the level of support provided by the state. Mr. Silverstein also reviewed the Academic Facilities Partnership Program that funds projects that are part of a district's facilities master plan. These projects typically fell into one of four categories with the highest ranking projects more likely to be funded. In the District/Charter survey, districts reported not being able to afford capital projects as their buildings age with some districts reporting that they did not qualify for Partnership funding or they struggled to raise the required match.

Representative Cozart asked that members be prepared to discuss the Funding Matrix to be finalized at the next meeting.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.