

MEETING SUMMARY

JOINT MEETING
OF THE
HOUSE AND SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION

Monday, January 22, 2018
1:30 P.M.
Room 171, State Capitol
Little Rock, Arkansas

Senator Jane English, the Chair of the Senate Interim Committee on Education, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS OF THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Jane English, Chair; Senator Joyce Elliott, Vice Chair; Senator Alan Clark; Senator Jim Hendren; Senator Blake Johnson; and Senator Uvalde Lindsey.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Representative Bruce Cozart, Chair; Representative Charlotte V. Douglas, Vice Chair; Representative Sonia Eubanks Barker; Representative Rick Beck; Representative Gary Deffenbaugh; Representative Jana Della Rosa; Representative Mickey Gates; Representative Grant Hodges; Representative Mark Lowery; Representative Mark D. McElroy; Representative George B. McGill; Representative Stephen Meeks; Representative Nelda Speaks; Representative James Sturch; Representative Dan Sullivan; and Representative DeAnn Vaught.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Eddie Cheatham; Senator Jonathan Dismang; Senator Stephanie Flowers; Senator Trent Garner; Senator Jimmy Hickey, Jr.; Senator Bryan King; Representative Fred Allen; Representative Charles Blake; Representative Jim Dotson; Representative Trevor Drown; Representative Kenneth B. Ferguson; Representative Charlene Fite; Representative Vivian Flowers; Representative Jeremy Gillam; Representative Michael John Gray; Representative Ken Henderson; Representative David Hillman; Representative Roger Lynch; Representative Ron McNair; Representative Reginald Murdock; Representative Aaron Pilkington; Representative Matthew J. Shepherd; Representative Brandt Smith; Representative James Sorvillo; Representative Les Warren; and Representative Carlton Wing.

Minutes:

Without objection, the minutes of December 18, 2017, and December 19, 2017, were approved as written.

Exhibits:

Exhibit C1 – 12/18/2017 Minutes

Exhibit C2 – 12/19/2017 Minutes

Reports from Members Who Attended Recent Meetings Concerning Public or Higher Education

The Honorable James Sturch, State Representative, District 63, was recognized. Prompted by a presentation related to sexual assault on college campuses at the January 18, 2018, meeting of the ALC-Higher Education Subcommittee, Representative Sturch announced that “I am Emily Doe,” a play on this topic, would be performed at the CALS Ron Robinson Theater on Thursday, January 25, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. He noted the play is being hosted by the Arkansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and is germane to Act 563 of the 2017 Regular Session. He said he received this information from Dr. Brett Powell, former director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, who highly recommends the play.

The Honorable Bruce Cozart, State Representative, District 24, and Chair of the House Interim Committee on Education, was recognized. Representative Cozart announced that Committee members were invited to a luncheon sponsored by EdChoice on January 23, 2018, from 11:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. at the Association of Arkansas Counties Building.

Consideration and Adoption of Interim Study Proposal (ISP) 2017-106 by Representative Lowery, REQUESTING THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION CONDUCT A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE EFFECT OF CLASS SIZE ON STUDENTS IN KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE THREE (K-3) BECOMING PROFICIENT IN READING.

Presenter:

The Honorable Mark Lowery, State Representative, District 39, was recognized. Representative Lowery provided reasons for the consideration of this topic.

Relevant Action:

Representative Lowery made a motion to adopt the ISP. The motion was seconded by Representative Mark McElroy.

Pursuant to the motion by Representative Lowery, the motion was carried on a voice vote.

Exhibit:

Exhibit E – ISP 2017-106

Discussion of Virtual Reality (VR) Classrooms in the Horatio School District

Presenters:

Ms. Jena Ford, Math/Coding Teacher/TechStart Coordinator, Horatio School District, was recognized. Ms. Ford explained that schools in the Horatio School District are Schools of Innovation. She said she is the lead technology instructor and an advocate for technology in the classroom. Ms. Ford discussed the district's participation in the Arkansas & Facebook, Inc. TechStart Partnership program. She said Facebook, Inc. provides technology and resources for students to access an education in computer science and virtual reality, and to generate interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) careers. She said each student in K-12 has many opportunities to be creative in the classroom. She commented on the drone and the robotics programs, and the Flexible Modular schedule.

Mr. Payton Allen, Student, Horatio School District (Robotics and Virtual Reality), was recognized, and discussed his experiences working with virtual reality and video games in the classroom.

Other Students Present:

Sydney Casteel, Student, Horatio School District (VR)

Bryan Gutierrez, Student, Horatio School District (VR)

Laci Stancil, Student, Horatio School District (VR)

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- number of schools participating in Arkansas TechStart,
- need for administrative and community support for a school district to become a School of Innovation,
- job openings for computer coders in the future,
- whether a gender gap exists in the computer coding program; closing the gap,
- whether participation in technology programs improves students' scores in Math and Science,
- how a student can become an innovator,
- incentivizing and motivating students,

- whether there is an early assessment which helps determine a student's interest and achievement,
- whether soft skills are considered in technology education, and
- ways VR can be applied.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Horatio Schools Virtual Reality

Handout:

Horatio Schools Virtual Reality

Representative Cozart announced that the next item to be taken up does not appear on the agenda.

Presenter:

Mr. Johnny Key, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Commissioner Key stated that the Arkansas Department of Education issued a press release today on the No Limits campaign to increase awareness of the ACT[®] college entrance exam and pertinent resources available to students, parents, and educators. He said data indicates that students taking the ACT[®] multiple times score five points higher than those taking it one time, increasing educational opportunities available to them after high school. He showed a short student-produced video on the importance of taking the ACT[®], resources available for test preparation, and benefits provided by taking the ACT[®] multiple times.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- cost for state to provide a second opportunity for juniors to take the ACT[®],
- importance of a "superscore,"
- research available on taking the ACT[®] earlier to discover roadblocks, and
- speed reading as a component of preparing to take the ACT[®].

Video:

No Limits

Discussion of Digital Discount Programs

Presenters:

Mr. David Anderson, Executive Director, Education Policy (Higher Education and PreK-12), Association of American Publishers, was recognized. Mr. Anderson stated that the Association of American Publishers (AAP) values the dialogue that has taken place in its multi-year relationship with Arkansas. He opened the discussion with an overview of digital discount programs, inclusive-access partnerships which are designed to create bulk sales of digital materials to students at sharply reduced prices compared to hardbound textbooks. He explained the development of digital discount programs began several years ago; but pushed into high gear at the end of 2015, when the U. S. Department of Education promulgated regulations on how these programs should be set up. He said the most common component of these programs requires that: 1) prices offered to students must be below competitive market rates; 2) the student must have these materials in a timely fashion; and 3) the student must have the right to opt out and see if a lower price can be found elsewhere. Mr. Anderson said the AAP has been working to increase awareness about these programs and how they can provide an important tool for reducing college costs and improving student performance. He said the AAP has developed the University Dialogue series, a roundtable event with legislators, local policymakers, university administrators, faculty, and publishers to discuss the shift from print to digital, setting up inclusive-access programs, and benefits of the programs. He said the AAP has held such an event in Arkansas, as well as in other states.

Mr. Jesse Gutierrez, Vice President, Government Affairs, McGraw Hill Education, was recognized. Mr. Gutierrez discussed effects of the shift from print to digital on McGraw Hill Education, commenting on the necessity to hire approximately 700 software engineers in the last three years. Mr. Gutierrez said the shift to digital has not only expanded the way teachers teach; but has also expanded corporate interaction with institutions. He additionally discussed the benefits of students having first day access to materials and affordability of the new model.

Ms. Laura Vogel, Executive Director, Strategic Partnerships, Pearson, was recognized. Ms. Vogel discussed the distribution model for course materials.

Ms. Liz Tomc, Business Development Manager, Wiley, was recognized. Ms. Tomc shared success stories of inclusive-access partnerships.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- duration of auto access to digital course materials in the model,
- charges involved when dropping a course,
- options for downloading digital course materials,
- opportunity to manipulate data in digital books; security measures to avoid tampering/piracy,
- students opting out and purchasing content elsewhere,
- completely digital environment in inclusive-action programs,
- personalized learning,
- partnership agreements between institutions and vendors,
- institutions of higher education waiting for a two-week period to start instruction,
- clarification of relationship between today's presenters,
- whether any state law or regulation hinders the ability to bring digital products to higher education students,
- Arkansas's position behind other states in embracing inclusive-access programs,
- shift from editions of books to versions of software to update information, and
- working course materials that are not suitable for a transition into digital into the partnership.

Handout:

Association of American Publishers Information Packet

Presentation Concerning the Benefits of More Educational Choice to the American Educational System

Presenter:

Dr. Michael Q. McShane, Director of National Research, EdChoice, was recognized. Dr. McShane noted this is the first day of National School Choice Week, and invited the Committees to lunch the next day at the Association of Arkansas Counties Building. Dr. McShane stated that EdChoice believes all families, regardless of income, should be able to choose the learning environment that meets their children's needs. He made a short case for School Choice with a four-part argument: 1) democratizing School Choice works to level the playing field; 2) expanding School Choice promotes pluralism; 3) School Choice can help us be gardeners and not engineers; 4) increased educational choice promotes innovation and does so ethically.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ✓ developing partnerships among various kinds of schools, and
- ✓ supporting parental ability to choose where their children go to school, *within reason*; not glossing over the use of public dollars to sanction a method of what some school board members have referred to as segregation.

Presentation Concerning the Excel Center at Goodwill

Presenters:

Mr. Brian Marsh, President and CEO, Goodwill Industries of Arkansas, Inc., was recognized. Mr. Marsh recognized Dr. Margaret Ellibee, chancellor of the University of Arkansas-Pulaski Technical College, and board chair of the Goodwill Excel Center. Mr. Marsh updated the Committees on the Excel Center, the first adult education charter high school in the State of Arkansas. Mr. Marsh stated that Act 1200 of the 2015 Regular Session provided an avenue for adults without a high school diploma to achieve a high school diploma in Arkansas and move on with their dream. He said the school started in October, 2017, with a capacity for 125 students; 116 students were enrolled. He said the first session ended prior to the end of 2017, and the school is currently in its second session with 84 students enrolled. He said students are between the ages of 19 and 60, with the median age being 37. Mr. Marsh said the idea for the school began in 2008 in Indianapolis, Indiana where the first school was opened in 2010; Arkansas has the 18th Excel School in the country; there have been nearly 3,000 graduates through these Excel Centers. He stated the Excel Center has a flexible, year-round schedule, is free to students, and offers support, such as free child care and transportation assistance. Mr. Marsh said the process to achieving a high school diploma at the Excel Center is built on three things: relationships, extended class periods, and rigor; and provides for an individualized learning plan. He noted there are accelerated eight-week sessions in which students get opportunities for multiple credits. He commented that students are also given the opportunity to achieve concurrent college credit and/or stackable credentials recognized by industry and business in the region.

Ms. Cindy Varner, Vice President of Workforce Development, Goodwill Industries of Arkansas, Inc., was recognized. Ms. Varner discussed the profile of the average student; and said the focus of the Excel Center is not only on gaining a diploma, but what comes after a diploma is received.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- greater earnings potential with a high school diploma,
- skills programs in place,
- opportunities to achieve certificates and/or licenses,
- Goodwill is sole funder for the Excel Center; looking for other funding opportunities, and
- recapturing part of the 300,000 Arkansas citizens over the age of 25 without a high school diploma.

Handout:

Excel Center 2017-2018 Annual Report to the Public

Next Scheduled Meetings:

Tuesday, January 23, 2018, at 9:00 a.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol, Little Rock (*Joint Education/Adequacy*)

Tuesday, January 23, 2018, at 1:30 p.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol, Little Rock (*Academic Facilities Oversight Committee*)

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 3:33 p.m.

Approved: 03/26/2018