

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

**Monday, November 4, 2013**  
**10:00 A.M.**  
**Room 171, State Capitol**  
**Little Rock, Arkansas**

Representative James McLean, the Chair of the House Interim Committee on Education, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**MEMBERS OF THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE:** Senator Johnny Key, Chair; Senator Joyce Elliott, Vice Chair; Senator Uvalde Lindsey; and Senator Jason Rapert.

**MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE:** Representative James McLean, Chair; Representative Charles Armstrong; Representative Les Carnine; Representative John Catlett; Representative Robert Dale; Representative Gary Deffenbaugh; Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas; Representative Debra Hobbs; Representative Karen Hopper; Representative Sheilla Lampkin; Representative Homer Lenderman; Representative Mark Lowery; Representative James Ratliff; and Representative Brent Talley.

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE:** Representative Randy Alexander; Representative Harold Copenhaver; Representative Jim Dotson; Representative Stephen Meeks; and Representative Jeff Wardlaw.

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE:** Senator Linda Chesterfield; Senator Missy Irvin; Senator Eddie Joe Williams; Representative Bob Ballinger; Representative Scott Baltz; Representative Dan Douglas; Representative Jeremy Gillam; Representative John Hutchison; Representative Joe Jett; Representative Kelley Linck; Representative Walls McCrary; Representative Mark McElroy; Representative Betty Overbey; Representative Sue Scott; and Representative Nate Steel.

Minutes:

Without objection, the minutes of October 14, 2013 and October 15, 2013, were approved as written.

Exhibits:

Exhibit C1 – 10/14/13 Minutes

Exhibit C2 – 10/15/13 Minutes

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

Representative McLean said he and Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas toured KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) facilities in Helena, Arkansas on November 1 and visited extensively with administrators and students. He said it was an excellent, eye-opening trip.

**The Honorable Charlotte Vining Douglas**, State Representative, District 75, was recognized. Representative Douglas followed up with a report on the KIPP tour. She commented that the structure of the administration and the provision for rigor in the curriculum was impressive.

**The Honorable Joyce Elliott**, State Senator, District 31, was recognized. Senator Elliott reported on the Vision 2025 Legislative Commission on the Future of Higher Education. She invited members to the second meeting of

the Commission on November 8.

Senator Elliott also mentioned that the upcoming Fall Forum of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) in Washington D.C. will include a plenary session of real importance. She said the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which evaluates education systems worldwide every three years, will have a team member participating in the discussion. Senator Elliott noted the discussion will include PISA's report on results from its 2012 data collection coming out on December 3.

#### Discussion of Issues Related to the Public School Curriculum and the Teaching of Geography

##### Presenters & Synopses:

The following persons participated in a PowerPoint presentation:

**Mr. Ben Lykins**, Student, University of Central Arkansas, and Member, Arkansas Geographic Alliance, was recognized. Mr. Lykins discussed how his studies of geography and public administration gelled into a goal of becoming an urban planner. He said his education in geography reinforced his love of Arkansas and that he hopes to practice in the state in the future. He also mentioned a personal hero and a man educated in geography, Mr. Brad Lacy, CEO of the Conway Development Corporation, and read a statement prepared by Mr. Lacy on the benefits of an education in geography.

**Mr. Paul Gray**, Visiting Lecturer in Geography, Arkansas Tech University, was recognized. Mr. Gray stated that geography is economics, geography is culture. He said jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are going to be geographically based. He discussed areas in which it is necessary to possess knowledge and skills in geography: national security, economic security, water and environmental issues, agriculture, food security, natural hazards and emergency preparedness, urban planning, and cultural understanding and connections. He said an education in geography is about attaining and mastering skills to compete globally.

**Dr. Jeff Allender**, Assistant Professor and Interim Chair, Department of Geography, University of Central Arkansas, was recognized. Dr. Allender stated that anything you can locate, anything you can map, such as the environment, water, business, economics, or tourism, can be studied geographically. He said the average graduate in geography from the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) will get a job in Arkansas. He noted the Department of Geography tries to get students into the working world, and is able to secure paid internships for students who have had three to four Geography Information Systems (GIS) courses. Dr. Allender stated UCA is moving human geography into the freshman general education core. He said that starting next year, high school students who take AP human geography and do well on the national exam, will have it count as one of their freshman general education courses. Dr. Allender commented that maybe this will keep a few more students in Arkansas.

**Ms. Karen Davis**, Teacher, St. Joseph High School, Conway, AR, and Member, Arkansas Geographic Alliance, was recognized. Ms. Davis related her experiences with teaching geography to 7<sup>th</sup> grade students through to teaching world history to seniors. She talked about how she has seen skills that students learn in geography in 7<sup>th</sup> grade go on to help them throughout their high school career. She said geography helps them in civics class, in economics class, in U.S. history class, and in world history class. She talked about students learning spatial awareness, learning human environment interaction, learning multicultural perspectives, religions, political systems, and economic systems. She stated that geography is multidisciplinary and links us educationally. She discussed modifications to the state curriculum to include geography as a standalone course which would greatly benefit students in high school and prepare them for competition on a global scale.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ≈ reasons that geography is not taught as a standalone course in public schools anymore,
- ≈ geography and the Common Core State Standards Initiative,
- ≈ lack of testing in geography,
- ≈ federal funding for teaching geography,
- ≈ need for revisiting past legislative decisions,
- ≈ academic credit for human geography,
- ≈ thinking about an extended learning time,
- ≈ geographic dispersion of the members of the Arkansas Geographic Alliance,
- ≈ need for a conversation with the State Board of Education,
- ≈ teaching other subjects through geography,
- ≈ offering an educational “buffet” in high school,
- ≈ loss of pre-AP geography and its teachers in the middle and junior high levels when geography was taken out of the curriculum,
- ≈ geography as an embedded strand within world history,
- ≈ effect of the increased emphasis on testing,
- ≈ Teaching Geography is Fundamental Act,
- ≈ curriculum and the mandate for meeting Adequacy,
- ≈ recalibration to accommodate 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills,
- ≈ advent of Common Core and its effect on testing,
- ≈ blocked scheduling, and
- ≈ willingness of local administrators and boards to work with Alliance members.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Arkansas Geographic Alliance, Geography & Geographic Skills

Handout:

Arkansas Geographic Alliance, Geography & Geographic Skills

Preliminary Review of the Number of Student Transfers Under the Provisions of Act 1227 of 2013, the "Public School Choice Act of 2013"

Presenter & Synopsis:

**Mr. Cody Decker**, Director, Information Systems, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Mr. Decker explained the Arkansas Public School Choice Data Tracking System and its data reporting capabilities. He said the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) is required by law to collect data from school districts on the number of school choice transfers and to report its findings to the House and Senate Education Committees by October 1 of each year. He said the system launched September 18, 2013 under ADE Commissioners Memo COM-14-020, and tracks individual student-level data that is accessible from the ADE website, and is used by every public school district. He said entering data into the system is a six-step process having the capability of a final review in an aggregate or student by student format. He commented that an online tutorial and legal assistance are available. Mr. Decker briefly detailed a report of all schools that participated in the survey and reviewed two slides of survey results: the Top (20) Districts with Most Net Gain in Students and the Top (20) Districts with Most Net Loss in Students. He additionally commented on assisting districts and improving data quality going forward.

Contributor to the Discussion:

**Mr. Jeremy Lasiter**, General Counsel, Arkansas Department of Education

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- school choice in Hot Springs School District and in other Garland County school districts,
- reconciliation of data with that in APSCN (Arkansas Public School Computer Network),
- availability of data on schools in distress because of school choice transfers,
- availability of data on districts to which students transfer,
- total number of students participating in school choice,
- cost of transportation to take school choice students to another school,
- being informed by trends going forward,
- collecting information from patterns created by students who are mobile,
- collecting data from districts not represented in the survey.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Arkansas Public School Choice Data Tracking System

Exhibits:

Exhibit F1 – Act 1227 of 2013

Exhibit F2 – Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing Act 1227

Exhibit F3 – School Choice Exemptions

Exhibit F4 – Public School Choice Transfer Report

Handout:

Arkansas Public School Choice Data Tracking System

Next Scheduled Meeting:

Tuesday, November 5, 2013, at 9:00 a.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol in Little Rock

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

*Approved: 12/16/13*