

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

Monday, February 3, 2014
10:00 A.M.
Room 171, State Capitol
Little Rock, Arkansas

Senator Joyce Elliott, the Vice Chair of the Senate 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 Joyce Elliott, Vice Chair; Senator Eddie Cheatham; Senator Uvalde Lindsey; and Senator Jason Rapert.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Representative Ann Clemmer, Vice Chair; Representative Charles L. Armstrong; Representative John Catlett; Representative Bruce Cozart; Representative Gary Deffenbaugh; Representative Jody Dickinson; Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas; Representative Jon Eubanks; Representative Sheilla Lampkin; Representative Homer Lenderman; Representative Mark Lowery; and Representative Brent Talley.

NON-VOTING MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Representative Stephen Meeks.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Jonathan Dismang; Senator Jane English; Senator Bobby Pierce; Senator Bill Sample; Senator Eddie Joe Williams; Representative Nate Bell; Representative John Burris; Representative Bill Gossage; Representative Kim Hammer; Representative Joe Jett; Representative Stephanie Malone; Representative Walls McCrary; Representative Mark McElroy; Representative Mary Slinkard; Representative Frederick Smith; and Representative Nate Steel.

Minutes:

Without objection, the minutes of January 7, 2014 and January 13, 2014, were approved as written.

Exhibits:

Exhibit C1 – 01/07/14 Minutes

Exhibit C2 – 01/13/14 Minutes

Senator Elliott introduced the new executive director of the Arkansas Education Association, and requested that he say a few words to the members.

Mr. Tom Dooher, Executive Director, Arkansas Education Association, was recognized. Mr. Dooher described his background as a longtime Minnesota teacher and leader, and included his experience with education policy. He said Arkansas provides a great challenge and a great opportunity to enable every child to reach their academic potential. He said he looked forward to working with the Committees and taking education in Arkansas to a higher level.

Senator Elliott requested that Dr. Tom Kimbrell come to the microphone and address the members.

Dr. Tom Kimbrell, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Dr. Kimbrell stated that he had informed the Fayetteville School District the previous night that he was no longer interested in becoming superintendent of the Fayetteville School District. He said that he would remain in the position of Commissioner at the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) for the foreseeable future and would continue working for the benefit of children's education in Arkansas.

Senator Elliott commented that his decision was really appreciated as he had been doing a great job.

Update on the Activities of the Joint Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plans

Presenter & Synopsis:

Senator Joyce Elliott, Senate Chair, Joint Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plans, was recognized. Senator Elliott stated that the Joint Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plans had been set up to consider making changes to the Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (ACSIP). She announced that the first formal Subcommittee meeting would be this afternoon at 1:30 p.m. She noted that prior to this first meeting, she and Representative Les Carnine, the House Chair of the Subcommittee, had been meeting with the ADE to get a deeper conceptual understanding of the ACSIP process, to get a perspective on how ACSIP plans are being developed and enforced, and to determine if any pitfalls can be foreseen. She said some of the evidence that has come to light so far indicates that a very different approach to doing the ACSIP plans may be advisable.

Discussion of Collegiate Honors Education

Presenter & Synopsis:

Dr. Rick Scott, Dean, Norbert O. Schedler Honors College University of Central Arkansas, was recognized. Dr. Scott described the history and growth of collegiate honors education. He said that National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) defines a university-wide honors college or program as the "academic unit...responsible for devising and delivering in-class and extracurricular academic experiences that provide a distinctive learning environment for selected students." Dr. Scott explained that two features which are hallmarks of a collegiate honors education are delving more deeply and thinking more broadly than elsewhere in an institution. He said the mission of the Schedler Honors College at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) includes producing graduates who can not only think creatively, work in teams, and communicate effectively, but who are also happy and healthy humans. He stated the value added by honors programs includes greater rates of retention and graduation and prevention of "brain-drain." Dr. Scott concluded by posing a challenge to honors educators to build articulation pathways from two-year to four-year institutions.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- qualifications for acceptance into an honors college,
- demographics of UCA's honors college,
- clarification of "accelerated learning,"
- trends in topics of student interest and the needs of business,
- challenges to incoming students to be successful,
- finding points of access for non-traditional students,
- number of honors college graduates who stay in Arkansas,
- percentage of honors college enrollees who come from public schools, private schools, charter schools, or home schools,
- admissions pathways of students,

- number of applicants per year,
- issues of student adjustment to rigors of program,
- involvement of honors students in other academic programs,
- toleration of ambiguity, and
- preparing students for citizenship.

Handout:

Presentation on Collegiate Honors Education, Dr. Scott

Discussion of the Arkansas Department of Education's Office of Intensive Support

Dr. Tom Kimbrell, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized, and explained that the Office of Intensive Support (OIS) was formed to provide leadership services and oversight to school districts for which the ADE is the governing body, or to those districts that are operating in fiscal, academic, or facilities distress. He said a leader for the OIS was chosen who had an understanding of the type of school districts the ADE was working with and the student population in those districts, and who also had a good, well-rounded knowledge of how a struggling school works. Dr. Kimbrell said that Mr. Andrew Tolbert had come out of retirement and accepted this leadership position, and that he would report to the ADE and the State Board of Education. Dr. Kimbrell requested that Mr. Tolbert give an overview of the work he and his staff are doing.

Presenter & Synopsis:

Mr. Andrew Tolbert, State Superintendent, Office of Intensive Support, Southeast Arkansas Education Cooperative, was recognized. Mr. Tolbert discussed his thirty-nine (39) years of experience in education. He introduced his staff, **Ms. Janice Streeter**, Director of Learning Services and **Mr. Jeff Martello**, Director of Fiscal Services and gave an overview of their experience. He said his primary responsibility as state superintendent is to provide leadership and to build capacity and sustainability in developing strong leadership planning and organizational skills and assisting leaders in drafting a strategic plan of action to enable their districts to be removed from a distressed classification or state control. He also described the responsibilities of the staff. He said the team would be meeting with district leaders and staff on a regular basis to address districts' needs. Mr. Tolbert described setting the foundation for the work of the OIS, including visiting with superintendents to build a professional relationship of trust and respect, getting an understanding of a district's climate and culture, creating a sense of urgency about getting the work done, meeting with the ADE, and meeting with external providers that service the districts. He said that between the last week of October, 2013, and December 22, 2013, his team collectively spent over 850 hours visiting school sites and working with district leaders and personnel. Mr. Tolbert said this office has a tremendous task and responsibility, but it also has the opportunity to help districts move forward in order to provide the best education possible for all students.

Contributor to the Discussion:

Dr. Megan Witonski, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Learning Services, Arkansas Department of Education

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- reasons for state takeover of a school district,
- thresholds of concern that would precipitate the takeover of a school district,
- expectations for accomplishments in schools in academic distress,
- providing a rescue operation for kids falling through the cracks,
- issues created by cultural attributes of a school district,
- dealing with borderline schools,
- attitudes of superintendents and principals,
- authority in the case of a state takeover and preventing the recurrence of distress,
- mentoring superintendents of districts in distress,

- taking a narrower view of superintendents reaching state certification but not performing,
- respecting local control of school districts,
- trouble in a school district reflecting possible trouble in its community,
- ensuring that external providers' priority improvement plans are effective,
- tracking the costs of getting a school district back into fiscal responsibility,
- master plan used as a template for school districts,
- scholastic audits of schools in academic distress,
- common threads of leadership at the building level of schools in distress,
- expanding professional development (PD) at the building level, and
- criteria for identifying external providers.

Update on Early Childhood Education

Presenter & Synopsis:

Ms. Tonya Williams, Division Director, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Arkansas Department of Human Services, was recognized. Ms. Williams reviewed the handout, *Arkansas Better Chance Fast Facts*, containing information about the program, teacher qualifications, classroom quality, funding sources, and kindergarten entry assessments. She stated that Arkansas has been recognized for the past eleven years for the quality of its pre-K program. Ms. Williams reviewed a second handout containing a graph of the assessment tool that is used in the pre-K program prior to a child going into kindergarten. She noted that the tool looks at all components of child development, not just language and math. She said that data on pre-K children fed into the system enables their tracking, not just through K-12, but through higher education and career. Ms. Williams commented that children who attend Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) are performing at a higher academic level as they enter Kindergarten and move through that system than their counterparts who do not have that experience.

Presenter & Synopsis:

Ms. Sarah Argue, Department of Human Services Project Director, Arkansas Research Center (ARC), was recognized. Ms. Argue described what ARC can do with pre-K data and what improvements can be made for children in Arkansas. Ms. Argue referenced several slides and the ARC website, Quick Looks, in her presentation.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- * "fade-out" phenomenon,
- * comparing effectiveness of ABC with Head Start,
- * eligible children not reached because of lack of funding,
- * ABC liability insurance requirement and public school districts,
- * move of ABC program out of the private sector into public schools,
- * allocation of ABC slots,
- * "recompete" list for providers, and
- * estimated cost per child for liability insurance.

PowerPoint Presentations:

Arkansas Better Chance Update
Arkansas Better Chance Slides, Ms. Argue

Handouts:

Arkansas Better Chance Fast Facts
Arkansas Better Chance Update
Liability Insurance Requirement and Public School Districts, Memo

Next Scheduled Meetings:

Monday, February 3, 2014, at 1:30 p.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol in Little Rock (*Joint Ad Hoc Subcommittee on ACSIP*)

Tuesday, February 4, 2014, at 9:00 a.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol in Little Rock (*Joint Education/Adequacy*)

Tuesday, February 4, 2014, at 1:30 p.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol in Little Rock (*State and Public School Life and Health Insurance Program Legislative Task Force*)

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 12:14 p.m.

Approved: 04/14/14