

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

**Monday, May 12, 2014**  
**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 Eddie Cheatham; Senator Jim Hendren; Senator Uvalde Lindsey; and Senator Jason Rapert.

**MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE:** Representative James McLean, Chair; Representative Ann Clemmer, Vice Chair; Representative Charles L. Armstrong; Representative Les Carnine; Representative John Catlett; Representative Bruce Cozart; Representative Robert Dale; Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas; Representative Karen Hopper; 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 Harold Copenhaver; Representative Stephen Meeks; Representative Reginald Murdock; and Representative Jeff Wardlaw.

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE:** Senator Linda Chesterfield; Senator Jonathan Dismang; Senator Jimmy Hickey; Representative Duncan Baird; Representative Scott Baltz; Representative Nate Bell; Representative Jeremy Gillam; Representative Kelley Linck; Representative Micah Neal; and Representative Betty Overbey.

**Morning Session/Joint Education**

**The Honorable Eddie Cheatham**, State Senator, District 26, was recognized. Senator Cheatham introduced a special guest, **Mr. Cole Howie**, of Crossett, Arkansas, who is a student majoring in telecommunications at the University of Alabama and has an interest in politics.

Reports from Members Who Attended Recent Meetings Concerning Public or Higher Education  
*There were no reports.*

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

**Presenter:**

**Senator Joyce Elliott**, Senate Chair, Joint Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (ACSIP), was recognized. Senator Elliott stated this report is the culmination of the Subcommittee's work to develop a recommendation for how to proceed with ACSIP. She discussed steps taken, including meeting with the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and field representatives, receiving public

testimony from school districts, and listening to formal and informal commentary from education groups. She said that an agreed outcome of that work is a year-long pilot project. She commented that **Dr. Megan Witonski**, Assistant Commissioner of Learning Services, Arkansas Department of Education, gave an extensive presentation on the *Arkansas Department of Education Proposal for ACSIP Pilot Program* at the April 14, 2014, meeting of the Subcommittee. She noted the proposal includes instructions and a timeline for school districts to use as they begin writing next year's improvement plans.

Issue Included in the Discussion:

- implementing and monitoring the pilot program.

Handout:

Arkansas Department of Education Proposal for ACSIP Pilot Program

Discussion of University of Arkansas System eVersity

Presenter:

**Dr. Donald Bobbitt**, President, University of Arkansas System, was recognized. Dr. Bobbitt discussed plans for a new online university and a new emphasis at the University of Arkansas System. He thanked legislators for their support of higher education in very difficult economic times over the past several years. He said higher education provides the opportunity for advancement and for improving one's economic status in society that leads to social stability. He said one of the ways to assure that economic advancement can occur is to have a robust system of K-12 education followed by a robust system of postsecondary education that combines both quality and access for citizens. He commented that his lament is that, nationally, the conversation, particularly at the federal level, is that higher education is becoming a benefit of the individual rather than of society. He discussed the work of Dr. Steve Murdock, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology at Rice University, and a former Director of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. He explained that Dr. Murdock's studies have shown that it's the general educational attainment of the least in the average population that drives the success of a community. Dr. Bobbitt mentioned two concerns of higher education: 1) the cumulative student debt which nationally approaches \$1 trillion, and 2) the poor college success completion rates of 25- to 34-year-olds. He said that to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy, the Governor has issued a challenge to generate more degreed and credentialed Arkansans. He mentioned two startling statistics: 1) half the jobs that will exist in the next decade don't exist at the moment; and 2) 60% to 75% of the jobs that will exist will require some post-high school credential in order to be competent in the new economy. Dr. Bobbitt said that as a result of research conducted by the University of Arkansas System, it has concluded that the best way to serve the higher education needs of Arkansans is to take degree programs to them. He said the outcome is the creation of eVersity, a 100% online university that will offer degrees and credentials in a format that meets the needs of learners who are non-traditional students and are unable to attend a traditional face-to-face campus. Dr. Bobbitt discussed the advice given to higher education in a book, "Generation on a Tightrope," by Dr. Arthur Levine with Ms. Diane R. Dean, about reaching a generation of students who are part of a digital culture. He stated that Dr. Levine and Ms. Dean are very clear – either click, concentrate on students that are solely click, or brick, concentrate on students that are solely brick. If an institution tries to be both brick and click, their conclusion is that the institution will fail both clientele. Dr. Bobbitt discussed changing business practices, changing the education model, and building eVersity from the ground up.

Contributor to the Discussion:

**Dr. Michael Moore**, Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Arkansas System

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- flexibility of self-paced courses,
- attracting students to eVersity from outside of Arkansas,
- measuring the competency of eVersity graduates,
- types of degrees to be offered,

- issuing entity for degrees,
- reliance on internal funding during formative stages; reliance on tuition in the future,
- engaging with the VISION 2025 Commission to reach the goal of doubling the number of college graduates in Arkansas by 2025,
- looking at models for the initiative in other states,
- assessing the total cost of degree programs for “click” vs. “brick,”
- pricing model and cash flow,
- working with faculty to build courses and using open educational resource (OER) materials in the formative process,
- eVersity degree having the quality of a traditional degree and carrying the same weight, and
- broadening the scope of potential employers to include the public sector.

Handout:  
eVersity

Discussion of the Activities of the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Achievement Gap

Presenter:

**Dr. Dawn Tirado Simpson**, Chair, Arkansas Commission on Closing the Achievement Gap, was recognized. Dr. Tirado Simpson introduced the Commission members, including an ex-officio designee, in attendance. She explained that the mission of the Commission is to work with key educators across the state in examining the academic disparity in public schools, particularly with regard to disadvantaged groups. She presented the 2013 Annual Report, which contains five key issues that the Commission is charged with reviewing pursuant to Act 1314 of 2009. Dr. Tirado Simpson mentioned the need for an operating budget in order to achieve goals and to enable the Commission to be a role model for other state commissions.

Contributors to the Discussion:

**Dr. Vera Lang Brown**, Commissioner, 2013 Academic Achievement Gap Commission  
**Mr. Jonathan Fulkerson**, Commissioner, 2013 Academic Achievement Gap Commission  
**Rev. Charles Killion**, Commissioner, 2013 Academic Achievement Gap Commission  
**Ms. Kathy Powers**, Commissioner, 2013 Academic Achievement Gap Commission  
**Ms. Lillian Williams**, Ex-Officio Designee, Arkansas Department of Higher Education

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ◆ studying areas related to parental involvement,
- ◆ Common Core and shift in English Language Arts standards for public school students,
- ◆ identifying programs that are working and those that are not,
- ◆ eliminating stigmas from elementary school students who are on nutrition programs,
- ◆ breakdown of informational reading vs. literacy in middle school,
- ◆ impact of programs, such as the Arkadelphia Promise and the El Dorado Promise, that prepare students for college,
- ◆ creating an environment of “high expectations” for students,
- ◆ strengthening partnerships between K-12 and higher education,
- ◆ incorporating work on closing the achievement gap into the Whole Child Whole Community program,
- ◆ getting a better buy-in from parents in the public schools,
- ◆ expectations about thinking mathematically,
- ◆ Common Core and closing the achievement gap, and
- ◆ having students take charge of their education to prepare for success in the future world.

Handout:

Moving Forward on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap, 2013 Annual Report

Senator Key requested a pause in the proceedings to recognize **Mr. Randy Laverty**, former State Senator, District 2, and to congratulate him on his retirement from state government. Senator Key thanked Mr. Laverty for his service to the state.

Discussion of School Report Cards and Other Methodologies for Public Engagement Concerning K-12 Education

Presenter:

**Dr. Gary Ritter**, Director, Office for Education Policy, University of Arkansas, was recognized. Following a brief presentation on the resources and goals of the Office for Education Policy (OEP), Dr. Ritter spoke on improving the current system of rating school districts. He discussed consideration of the idea of mixing school report cards with letter grades with district-wide surveys of constituents, including parents, students, and teachers. He described several sources of data, the precedent for such a report card, and comparisons with other states. Dr. Ritter described key components of an OEP prototype report card, and presented a proposed report card draft.

Contributor to the Discussion:

**Dr. Tom Kimbrell**, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- pairing the report card with some other form of feedback to understand school performance,
- depth of OEP's collaboration with the ADE,
- ADE proposal to the School Boards Association, and
- review of rule by the Committees prior to it going to Rules and Regulations.

PowerPoint Presentation:

District Report Cards: A Useful Tool for Parents?

Handouts:

2013-14 District Report Card, Example

District Report Cards: A Useful Tool for Parents

Recess:

The meeting recessed for lunch at 12:10 p.m.

**Afternoon Session/Adequacy**

Senator Key reconvened the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Discussion of Written Testimony Submitted by Various Organizations Regarding their Concerns about the State's Current System of Funding for Public Education

**Presenter:**

**Ms. Jerri Derlikowski**, Director of Education Policy and Finance, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, was recognized. Ms. Derlikowski stated Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF) focuses on the needs of low-income families and children as it participates in the Adequacy process. She said AACF partners with the Opportunity to Learn Campaign and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation to address these needs. She introduced two (2) parents in attendance to bolster their understanding of the Adequacy process: **Ms. Trina Walls** of Star City and **Ms. Alyce Love** of Dumas. Ms. Derlikowski said that several things are needed to close the achievement gap for low-income children:

- ✓ more after-school and summer program options,
- ✓ more and better teachers as well as stronger building-level and district leadership,
- ✓ first class facilities for all our children including Broadband access,
- ✓ proven strategies that benefit low-income students such as Pre-K, and
- ✓ better use of National School Lunch Act (NSLA) funds, particularly in schools that are classified as needs improvement, including priority and focus schools.

**Issues Included in the Discussion:**

- examples of school districts with resources in place which may be improving and those which may not show improvement,
- organizations and groups helping connect the dots with the rest of the community to address Adequacy,
- school districts using extended learning time to yield good results,
- thinking about education as Pre-K through post-secondary,
- providing Broadband access to low-income homes in both inner city and rural areas,
- funding usage in school districts,
- the concept of "smoothing" as it pertains to NSLA (Poverty) Funds
- distinguishing between "free and reduced" and totally "free" with regard to NSLA (Poverty) funding.

**Handout:**

Summary of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families Recommendations for Adequacy

**Presenter:**

**Dr. Sherece Y. West-Scantlebury**, President and CEO, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, was recognized. Dr. West-Scantlebury stated that the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (WRF) has been and continues to be a champion for a public education system that supports all Arkansas children. She discussed three recommendations that emerge from the WRF's grantmaking and research: 1) invest early, 2) invest in opportunity for all students, and 3) invest in effectiveness through high-quality academic standards. Dr. West Scantlebury said that strategic investments in education today are key to the long-term future of Arkansas.

**Issues Included in the Discussion:**

- ascertaining what is "effective implementation" in Arkansas,
- dealing with parity and equity in the state through implementation of Common Core,
- return on investment for foundations,
- "evidence-based" home visitations, and
- WRF involvement in fairer systems of discipline.

Senator Key noted that comments submitted by Ms. Kathy Smith of the Walton Family Foundation were also included in the packet. He said the testimony on Adequacy would continue at tomorrow's meeting.

*Other Handouts:*

Charter School Funding: Inequity Expands

Testimony from Various Organizations Concerning the Adequacy of the Public Education System in Arkansas

*Next Scheduled Meeting:*

Tuesday, May 13, 2014, at 9:00 a.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol in Little Rock

*Adjournment:*

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

*Approved: 07/14/14*