

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

Monday, June 8, 2015
1:30 P.M.
Committee Room A, MAC Building
Little Rock, Arkansas

Representative Bruce Cozart, the Chair of the House 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 Uvalde Lindsey, Vice Chair; Senator Alan Clark; and Senator Eddie Joe Williams.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Representative Bruce Cozart, Chair; Representative Sheilla Lampkin, Vice Chair; Representative Scott Baltz; Representative Nate Bell; Representative Gary Deffenbaugh; Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas; Representative Jon Eubanks; Representative Jeremy Gillam; Representative Bill Gossage; Representative Michael John Gray; Representative Justin Harris; Representative Grant Hodges; Representative Greg Leding; Representative Mark Lowery; Representative Mark McElroy; Representative Reginald Murdock; Representative James Ratliff; Representative Warwick Sabin; and Representative John Walker.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator John Cooper; Senator Joyce Elliott; Senator Jeremy Hutchinson; Representative Mary Bentley; Representative Andy Davis; Representative Jim Dotson; Representative David Fielding; Representative Fredrick Love; Representative Micah Neal; Representative Sue Scott; Representative James Sorvillo; and Representative James Sturch.

Minutes:

Without objection, the minutes of the December 17, 2014 meetings were approved as written.

Exhibits:

Exhibit C1 – 12/17/14, 10:00 a.m. Minutes

Exhibit C2 – 12/17/14, 01:00 p.m. Minutes

Remarks by the Chairs

Senator Jane English, the Chair of the Senate Interim Committee on Education, commented that moving Joint Education committee meetings to the larger MAC-A facility provides additional space for speakers and the public. She announced that interim meetings would focus both on Adequacy and on workforce education issues, including looking at all related programs available throughout the state.

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

Representative Cozart commented briefly on attending a National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) meeting on evaluations of principals and teachers in Colorado Springs.

Discussion of Interim Meeting Dates for the Committees

Representative Cozart referred to a list of scheduled committee meetings in members' packets, and said some dates are still under discussion and may be changed.

Exhibit:

Exhibit E - Revised Schedule of Committee Meetings for 2015 and 2016, Memo

Update on the Activities of the Governor's Council on Common Core Review

The Honorable Tim Griffin, Lieutenant Governor, State of Arkansas, and Chair, Governor's Council on Common Core Review, was recognized. Lieutenant Governor Griffin discussed the work that the Council has been doing, including holding five (5) days of hearings and nine (9) planned listening/tour sessions. He said six (6) listening/tour sessions had been completed and three (3) remained. He stated once the listening/tour sessions have all been completed, the Council will provide findings and recommendations to Governor Asa Hutchinson. Lieutenant Governor Griffin explained that the Governor, in his press conference, had requested the Council to provide initial recommendations in the early part of summer and final recommendations in the fall. He said the Council deviated from that timeline on the question of testing. He explained that because of practical time restraints with regard to testing and contracting for next year's test, and to be helpful to the Governor and to the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), the Council informally voted for an initial recommendation on testing alone, and made that recommendation to the Governor. He stated that as soon as the three (3) listening/tour sessions are over, the Council will reach agreement on the final recommendations for the Common Core State Standards. Lieutenant Governor Griffin discussed the varying criticisms being made about the Common Core State Standards, and said these can be divided into two categories: 1) those which actually relate to the standards, and 2) those which relate to what people *think* are the standards. He said a lot of misinformation exists and discussed examples, primarily related to Common Core Math, and including Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) Math, which is aligned to the standards. Lieutenant Governor Griffin noted differences among school districts as to the implementation of the standards, and as to what is used to teach math. He said Arkansas has to do better with consistency of implementation throughout the state. He also discussed issues related to testing and the fact that American College Testing (ACT) will now be used instead of Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). He said much of the frustration associated with the Common Core State Standards is because of the PARCC test, inconsistent implementation, and CGI-only teaching, among other things. Lieutenant Governor Griffin said he was extremely optimistic that these and other problems associated with the Common Core State Standards in Arkansas can be fixed.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- consistency of implementation vs. local control,
- a recommendation already made without the work being finished,
- freedom to change, or just to make additions, to the standards,
- driving factors of decision process regarding PARCC and ACT,
- collecting individual data in testing programs, and
- separating the assessment from the standards.

Senator English requested **Dr. Charles Stein**, Director, Arkansas Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation, to come forward. Senator English and Representative Cozart each read and presented citations from their respective legislative branch to Dr. Stein on the occasion of his retirement.

Update on Public School Employee Health Insurance Costs and Rates

Mr. Bob Alexander, Director, Employee Benefits Division (EBD), Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration (DF&A), was recognized. Mr. Alexander reviewed financials for the Public School Employee (PSE) plan, comparing numbers from January 1, 2015 through May 31, 2015 with those from January 1, 2014 through May 31, 2014. He pointed out that the plan has a \$56million surplus so far; however, he said, this is misleading. He noted that all plans have deductibles, and, as individuals start hitting their deductible, claims will start mounting up. He stated, however, that at the last EBD Board meeting, the actuary said preliminary indicators point to funds being sufficiently available so that rates and benefits would not have to be changed. He said the Board will make its final decision on the 2016 rates and benefits at its July meeting. Mr. Alexander explained that this update has been given because of a statutory provision to deliver a report, if requested.

Handout:

PSE Financials, January 1, 2015 through May 31, 2015 and January 1, 2014 through May 31, 2014

Update on the Activities of the Arkansas Department of Career Education

Dr. Charisse Childers, Director, Arkansas Department of Career Education, was recognized. Dr. Childers reiterated her vision for the Arkansas Department of Career Education (ACE). She continued with a discussion of focusing anew on salary savings, on reorganization of departments and processes, and on cost centers for all three (3) divisions of ACE. She mentioned having created the Office of Skills Development without any additional salaries by eliminating two positions in order to create the Director's position. Dr. Childers said ACE is assessing current programs along with policies and procedures to better serve clients and to be more efficient. She said increasing communication and partnerships with state agencies has also been explored. She stated she is most proud of having increased employee morale.

Dr. Childers discussed activities at the three (3) divisions of ACE:

Adult Education

- retirement of **Mr. Jim Smith**, Deputy Director, Adult Education Division,
- a recent ceremony honoring the top twenty-five (25) General Education Development (GED) graduates in Arkansas,
- the new GED test,
- an increase in the appropriation for Adult Education last session to be used to create literacy councils in the state and to add two (2) additional centers, and
- Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE), a job readiness training program.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)

- retirements of **Ms. Sandra Porter**, Interim Deputy Director, and **Mr. Dave Fisher**, Program Coordinator,
- progress of Regional Advisory Councils,
- expansion of the Microsoft IT Academy,
- winners of the 2015 Microsoft Office Specialist State Championship who will represent Arkansas in Florida in June,
- coordinating student organizations, and
- putting out an Request for Proposal (RFP) for a contract for a career and assessment planning tool.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS)

- retirement of **Mr. Jim Moreland**, Associate Director, Special Programs, and
- Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI), Hot Springs.

Contributor to the Discussion:

Mr. Alan McClain, Commissioner, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, was recognized. Mr. McClain discussed highlights of new programs and Project Search and Retaining A Valued Employee (RAVE).

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- efforts made to help persons on unemployment insurance without a high school education get, at minimum, a GED,
- recordkeeping for those eligible for workforce services,
- looking at all people and programs together, rather than in isolation,
- Goodwill Industries programs,
- educational programs for those who are incarcerated, and
- Smarter Sentencing Program.

Update on the Activities of the Arkansas Department of Education

Mr. Johnny Key, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Commissioner Key discussed changes in personnel at ADE. He introduced **Dr. Mark Gotcher**, who will be joining ADE as the new Deputy Commissioner. He said **Dr. Mike Hernandez** is leaving to assume the role of Superintendent of the Hot Springs School District. Commissioner Key noted other changes including:

Dr. Cody Decker, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Research and Technology, moving to a position at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR),

Dr. Eric Saunders, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Fiscal and Administrative Services, moving to the role of Assistant Commissioner, Division of Research and Technology,

Mr. Greg Rogers, Agency Finance Director and Chief Fiscal Officer (CFO), promoted to Assistant Commissioner, in addition to continuing in the role of CFO,

Mr. Jeremy Lasiter, General Counsel, leaving ADE to assume a role in the administration of Dr. Tom Kimbrell in the Bryant School District, and

Director, Arkansas Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation, will soon be identified.

Commissioner Key explained what ADE is doing as a result of Acts that were passed in the 2015 General Session. He stated ninety-nine (99) different education-related Acts are being reviewed and implemented. He said those Acts will require the drafting or revising of a total of thirty-six (36) administrative rules.

Commissioner Key stated that with the new rules-making process, it is anticipated that each rule will require six (6) to seven (7) months to make it through the entire process. He discussed each step of the process.

Commissioner Key included in his presentation a discussion of the implementation of Act 187 on computer science courses through the Virtual Arkansas program; establishment of a Praxis Exam for Computer Science; working on Act 560, the new School Choice Act; and working on Act 1178, the Succeed Scholarship Program. Commissioner Key continued with a detailed update of other general issues across all divisions of ADE.

Contributors to the Discussion:

Dr. T. Mark Gotcher, Incoming Deputy Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education

Dr. Mike Hernandez, Outgoing Deputy Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education

Dr. Ivy Pfeffer, Assistant Commissioner of Human Resources/Licensure, Human Resources & Licensure, Arkansas Department of Education

Ms. Cheryl Reinhardt, Director, Human Resources & Licensure, Arkansas Department of Education

Representative Cozart expressed concerns made by Committee members over two proposed changes in the Special Education licensure rules. He stated he wanted to ask leadership whether the Committees could possibly review them and make a recommendation before it goes before the Rules and Regulations Committee. He

requested members to refrain from asking questions on these changes. An extensive discussion ensued among Committee members and representatives from ADE on possibilities and ramifications of a delay in the rules process.

Other Issues Included in the Discussion:

- * Common Core Review Committee's recommendation of ACT Aspire, and
- * authority for not going through an RFP process.

Handout:

Announcement Regarding Assessments, Press Release

Representative Cozart announced that Item J on the agenda, Update on the Activities of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, would be taken up at a future meeting.

Consideration and Adoption of Interim Study Proposals (ISPs)

The Honorable Uvalde Lindsey, State Senator, District 4, was recognized, and made a motion to adopt for study ISPs K1 through K23, as presented, and K24 as amended. The motion was seconded by Representative Sheilla Lampkin.

Without objection, the motion to adopt the ISPs for study was approved.

Exhibits:

Exhibits K1 through K24, Interim Study Proposals

Additional Handout:

Getting to Zero, Cost Effective Methods of Achieving Net-Zero Ready Building Design, PowerPoint

Next Scheduled Meeting:

Monday, June 15, 2015, at 1:30 p.m. in Committee Room A, MAC Building, Little Rock

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Approved: 07/13/15