

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

**Monday, August 10, 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 Eddie Cheatham; Senator Alan Clark; Senator Jim Hendren; Senator Blake Johnson; Senator Bobby Pierce; 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 Charles L. Armstrong; Representative Scott Baltz; Representative Nate Bell; Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas; Representative Jon Eubanks; Representative Jeremy Gillam; Representative Bill Gossage; Representative Michael John Gray; Representative Grant Hodges; Representative Greg Leding; Representative Mark Lowery; Representative Mark McElroy; Representative Reginald Murdock; Representative James Ratliff; and Representative John Walker.

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE:** Senator Linda Chesterfield; Senator Joyce Elliott; Senator Bryan King; Representative Mary Bentley; Representative Andy Davis; Representative Lance Eads; Representative Kenneth Ferguson; Representative David Fielding; Representative Charlene Fite; Representative David Hillman; Representative Monte Hodges; Representative Lane Jean; Representative George McGill; Representative Stephen Meeks; Representative Sue Scott; and Representative Marshall Wright.

Minutes:

Without objection, the minutes of July 13, 2015, were approved as written.

Exhibit:

Exhibit C1 – 07/13/15 Minutes

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

**The Honorable Blake Johnson**, State Senator, District 20, was recognized, and reported on the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) conference held in Park City, Utah. He commented that three days of meetings stimulated interest in prioritizing things to be accomplished when returning to Arkansas. He said he would like to see the professional development (PD) process reviewed in order to target curriculum needs and better serve teachers. He noted it was said at the conference that Arkansas teacher preparation for middle school and high school was the best in the nation.

**The Honorable Charles L. Armstrong**, State Representative, District 30, was recognized. Representative Armstrong stated he had attended both the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) conference in Naples, Florida and a NCSL conference in Seattle, at which there was a great discussion on early childhood education.

**The Honorable Joyce Elliott**, State Senator, District 31, was recognized. Senator Elliott continued the report on the program of workshops and sessions at the NCSL conference held in Seattle. She said the three (3) most

outstanding presentations were about: 1) the Tennessee model and specifics of what that state is doing concerning two-year schools and performance-based funding for colleges and universities; 2) what the highest-performing countries are doing educationally based on the use of nine (9) principles, and Kentucky's use of that model to measure its own standards; and 3) brain development, including pre-K programs of the Bezos Family Foundation and the State of Washington.

Update on the Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS)

Presenters:

**Ms. Ivy Pfeffer**, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Educator Effectiveness and Licensure, Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), was recognized. Ms. Pfeffer stated that the ADE had the opportunity to work with the SREB to gather information about the implementation of the TESS and LEADS programs. She stated that ADE wants to make sure it is able to learn from this first year and look at ways to improve the system to better support educators' growth. She said high-performing educators will lead to improved opportunities for students.

**Dr. Andy Baxter**, Vice President for Educator Effectiveness, Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), was recognized. Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Baxter shared with legislators some of the findings from focus groups conducted to gather feedback from Arkansas teachers, principals, and central office staff on the design and the implementation of TESS and LEADS. He said there were twenty-nine (29) focus groups conducted in eight (8) Arkansas locations in the spring of 2015. He discussed participants in the focus groups, questions that were asked, and seven (7) key findings learned from participant feedback. Dr. Baxter commented that more time is needed to work through the bugs and inconsistencies in TESS, and to get used to the system. He stated it's a good system overall.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- impact of underrepresentation of teachers with less than five (5) years experience in focus groups,
- addressing diversity of tenure as well as considering diversity and inclusivity in choices of meeting locations for focus groups,
- concerns in rural districts over full implementation of the framework,
- plans to follow up on the focus groups with additional visits to schools,
- collaboration between principals and teachers,
- coordinating aggregate data on leader performance to ascertain improvements in student growth and achievement,
- availability of studies correlating an objective measurement of the qualities of a good principal with student achievement,
- providing reading materials on the focus groups project to enable independent assessments to be made,
- number of school districts implementing tests,
- rationale for the focus group sites, and
- recommendations for additional follow-up in the future.

PowerPoint Presentation:

SREB Focus Group Report on TESS and LEADS Implementation

Handout:

SREB Arkansas TESS & LEADS Focus Group Report, July 2015

## Discussion of the STEM IMPACT Program

**The Honorable Jim Hendren**, State Senator, District 2, was recognized, and introduced a former U.S. Congressman from Tennessee, Mr. Zach Wamp, to share what is being done in other states with regard to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.

### Presenter:

**Mr. Zach Wamp**, Chair, Advisory Board, Learning Blade, and President, Zach Wamp Consulting, Chattanooga, TN, was recognized. Mr. Wamp discussed the America Competes Act, a piece of federal legislation that allowed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funds to be used for STEM education. He stated that in the last six years most of the \$2 billion of funding for STEM education was spent on branding, advertising, and organization-building, and that almost none of it made its way to the classroom. He discussed his decision, after leaving Congress, to partner with Dane and Sheila Boyington, founders of KeyTrain, to develop a curriculum for STEM education. Mr. Wamp described Learning Blade as an online, supplemental, game-based curriculum for STEM education targeting middle school, and specifically focused on women and minorities. He said it is a perfect program to increase middle school students' awareness of STEM technologies and careers. He said Learning Blade is an optional curriculum that can be taught to an educator in one hour. He next presented an overview of Learning Blade, and urged that it be adopted by Arkansas.

### Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ◆ setting a precedent with this presentation,
- ◆ data showing that Learning Blade increases education and opportunities for those who have completed the program,
- ◆ motivating children at an earlier age,
- ◆ choice of place and time in which to implement the program,
- ◆ pricing a pilot program, and
- ◆ infrastructure problems in implementing Learning Blade.

Senator Hendren stated other countries are way ahead of the United States with regard to STEM education. He said this program represents one option for better preparing students for the workforce and for helping Arkansas move forward.

### Handout:

Learning Blade, Improving the STEM Workforce for Arkansas  
Learning Blade Program

## Update on the Arkansas Teacher Corps

### Presenters:

**Dr. Gary Ritter**, Professor and Endowed Chair in Education Policy, College of Education & Health Professions, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, was recognized. Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Ritter described the Arkansas Teacher Corps (ATC) as a program that is helpful in addressing teacher shortages across the State of Arkansas, and, particularly, in economically depressed districts. He said the program is a variant of the Teach for America (TFA) model. He noted its mission motto is "All Arkansas students will have extraordinary lives through exceptional education." He discussed the need for the program, why ATC is a good model for Arkansas, how ATC is doing today, and what to expect moving forward.

**Mr. Benton M. Brown**, Executive Director, Arkansas Teacher Corps, was recognized, and continued the presentation with a discussion of where ATC teachers are working and what they are doing. He said currently there are forty-eight (48) teachers teaching in nineteen (19) districts and twenty-two (22) schools across Arkansas. He noted the type of school served averages 70% Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) and 69% minority enrollment. He said subject areas include Math and Science and English/Literature in the core areas, and high-need subject

areas including Spanish, Elementary, Social Studies, and Business. He said most teachers are in the middle school and high school levels. He spoke of the types of individuals being recruited to the field and those who join the ATC. He concluded with a discussion of the success of the program and plans for the future.

**Mr. Randy Massenelli**, Vice Chancellor for Governmental Relations, University of Arkansas, was recognized, and spoke of efforts made toward getting more teachers and finding additional funding.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- projections for the number of teachers to be recruited for the ATC program,
- objective evaluation of TFA for effectiveness in delivering student achievement outcomes,
- popularity *vs.* pre-determined objective criteria that are measurable for teachers of the year,
- trusting test results,
- teachers in front of the students *vs.* virtual teaching,
- encouraging long-term residency of teachers in areas in which they teach, and serving as role models in the community,
- training of teachers,
- meeting the law of getting high-quality, equitably-trained teachers for kids in high-needs areas,
- potential for partners from the business community,
- compensation for teachers,
- years of commitment a teacher must make to the ATC program, and
- subsidizing teachers for going to distressed areas.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Arkansas Teacher Corps. Commit. Serve. Teach.

Handout:

Arkansas Teacher Corps. Commit. Serve. Teach.

Update on the Implementation of Act 950 of 2015, the 2015 School Safety Act

Presenter:

**Mr. Ted Mullenix**, Chief Executive Officer, Mullenix and Associates, was recognized. Mr. Mullenix reported on the new Rave Panic Button for Arkansas's K-12 schools, and gave an update on the statewide Smart 911 system. He discussed partnerships and the implementation that is underway to make this effort become a reality and operational for the coming school year.

Representative Cozart announced there would be a press conference concerning this initiative in school safety on Tuesday, August 11, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. in the Rotunda of the Arkansas State Capitol.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- training for teachers, and
- number of panic buttons in schools, and those designated to have one.

Exhibit:

EX H – Act 950 of 2015

Handout:

Panic Button Report, Committee Update Memo

Next Scheduled Meetings:

Tuesday, August 11, 2015, at 9:00 a.m. in Committee Room A, MAC Building, Little Rock

Monday, August 24, 2015, at 1:30 p.m. in Centennial Hall, Carl R. Reng Student Union, Arkansas State University (ASU), 101 North Caraway Road, State University, AR 72467

Tuesday, August 25, 2015, at 9:00 a.m. in the Larry N. Williams Student/Community Center, Merchants and Planters Bank Community Room, ASU-Newport, 7648 Victory Boulevard, Newport, AR 72112

Tuesday, August 25, 2015, at 1:00 p.m. in the Wal-Mart/Regions Room, First Floor, Student Center, ASU-Beebe, 1000 Iowa Street, Beebe, AR 72012

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 3:47 p.m.

*Approved: 09/14/15*