

MINUTES

JOINT ADEQUACY EVALUATION OVERSIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE

10:00 A.M.
Tuesday, April 27, 2010
Room 171, State Capitol
Little Rock, Arkansas

Representative Bill Abernathy, the House Co-Chair of the Joint Adequacy Evaluation Oversight Subcommittee, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF THE JOINT ADEQUACY EVALUATION OVERSIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE IN

ATTENDANCE: Representative Bill Abernathy, House Co-Chair; Senator Jimmy Jeffress, Senate Vice-Chair; Senator Shane Broadway; Senator Joyce Elliott; Senator Kim Hendren; Senator Johnny Key; Senator Mary Anne Salmon; Representative Monty Betts; Representative Les Carnine; Representative David Rainey; and Representative Charolette Wagner.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Paul Bookout; Senator Steve Faris; Senator Randy Laverty; Senator David Wyatt; Representative Tommy Lee Baker; Representative Nancy Blount; Representative Ann Clemmer; Representative David Cook; Representative Robert Dale; Representative Monty Davenport; Representative Jane English; Representative Curren Everett; Representative Nathan George; Representative Debra Hobbs; Representative Donna Hutchinson; Representative Ray Kidd; Representative Mark Martin; Representative Mike Patterson; Representative Randy Stewart; Representative Tim Summers; and Representative Jon Woods.

Without objection, the minutes of April 6, 2010, were approved as written.

Representative Abernathy announced that a new item would be added to the published agenda. A one-page interim resolution, COMMENDING DR. DIANA JULIAN ON HER YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE CHILDREN OF THE STATE AND THEIR EDUCATION AND ON HER RETIREMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION., was distributed to the Subcommittee. Representative Abernathy requested that the Subcommittee adopt the resolution, which would be presented to Dr. Julian.

Without objection, the motion to adopt the Interim Resolution was carried.

Representative Abernathy announced that the Subcommittee would now take up Agenda Item C.

Presentation Concerning the THEA Foundation

Senator Joyce Elliott and **Senator Jimmy Jeffress** were recognized for introductory remarks.

Mr. Paul Leopoulos, Founder/Executive Director, THEA Foundation, was recognized. Mr. Leopoulos, using two handouts, shared with the Subcommittee the history, mission, and the programs of the THEA Foundation. In addition to supporting an arts-infused delivery system of instruction for the school curriculum, its programs include awarding scholarships, holding art exhibits, furnishing art supplies to schools, giving workshops to students, and engaging in other activities that are designed to help young people believe in themselves.

In his handouts, Mr. Leopoulos discussed:

- o Improving All Arkansas Public Schools
- o 20% of the students in a typical classroom perform above average with today's style of curriculum delivery

- o Why Aren't All Students Ready to Learn
- o Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
- o Infusing the Arts into the Curriculum of ALL Arkansas schools
- o Examples of Arts Infusion Instruction
- o Hugh Goodwin Benchmark Since Implementation of Infusing the Arts in 2005
- o Local Statistics

Mr. Leopoulos said that only a few schools in El Dorado, Paragould, and Little Rock have taken the arts infusion program seriously and implemented it. He noted that where it has been implemented, it has enhanced the overall academic performance of the school.

In the discussion that followed Mr. Leopoulos' presentation, the members of the Subcommittee discussed the following issues:

- The importance of the arts in channeling students' creativity in a positive direction
- The importance of the arts in meeting the need of the whole child
- The importance of incorporating the arts into teacher preparation programs
- The importance of the arts in helping some students see the intrinsic value of learning

Representative Abernathy thanked Mr. Leopoulos for his presentation.

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

Representative Abernathy expressed the Subcommittee's appreciation for the preparation of testimony concerning adequacy by the state's four (4) major education associations, the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA), the Arkansas Education Association (AEA), the Arkansas Rural Education Association (AREA), and the Arkansas School Boards Association (ASBA).

1. Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators

Dr. Richard Abernathy, Incoming Executive Director, Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, and **Mr. Mike Mertens**, Interim Executive Director, Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, were recognized. Dr. Abernathy thanked the Subcommittee for the opportunity to present the AAEA's concerns regarding Adequacy, noting that the presentation would focus on funding issues. Mr. Mertens, using a PowerPoint presentation, gave a report, "A Review of Adequacy in Financing Public Education in Arkansas." He said that from a historical perspective, there should be no surprise when AAEA presents testimony that certain parts of the Funding Matrix are not adequate. He continued with AAEA recommendations for adjustments to the Matrix in the following sections:

- COLA – Cost of Living Adjustment
- Staffing – School Level Personnel
- School-Level Salaries
- School Level Resources – Instructional Materials
- School Level Resources – Substitutes
- Carry-Forward – Operations and Maintenance
- Carry-Forward – Transportation
- Categorical Funding
- Educational Excellence Trust Fund
- Fund Balances

Dr. Abernathy discussed the operational and instructional costs of the state's accountability program with the Subcommittee. He said that there needs to be reasonableness to some of the tests and some of the rules in order to coincide with the goal of accountability. He also discussed issues associated with school district fund balances with the Subcommittee.

Representative Abernathy thanked Dr. Abernathy and Mr. Mertens for their testimony.

2. Arkansas Education Association

Mr. Rich Nagel, Executive Director, Arkansas Education Association, and **Mr. Richard Hutchinson**, Director of Government Relations, Arkansas Education Association, were recognized. Mr. Hutchinson thanked the Subcommittee for the opportunity to share the AEA's concerns regarding various aspects of Adequacy. Mr. Hutchinson discussed what he characterized as critical issues that need to be addressed by the Subcommittee. These issues included:

- Focusing on teacher quality, teacher effectiveness, and the system within which the teacher operates
- Creating effective schools where the principal and teachers collaborate as a part of a learning community and utilize both individualized and team strategies to enhance and improve expertise in the classroom
- Recognizing the instructional importance of National Board certification for teachers and expanding access to National Board certification opportunities for Arkansas's teachers
- Recognizing that professional development is an essential ingredient for providing quality education to all children
- Closing the student achievement gap and the disparities in class size among school districts
- Focusing on ways to address the five (5) categories of issues that influence underperformance of students: self confidence, health, language development, literacy development, and housing

Mr. Nagel was recognized and discussed the following issues related to Arkansas's 2008-2009 average teacher salaries:

- Arkansas ranks 4th in average teacher pay (\$45,156) in a group of states including Arkansas and the surrounding states
- Arkansas ranks 13th in average teacher pay (\$45,156) in a group of 16 states belonging to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)
- Arkansas ranks 41st in average teacher pay (\$45,156) out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia

Mr. Nagel went on to discuss other issues that should be reviewed by the Subcommittee:

- Public school employee health insurance
- Adequacy of school support staffing and salaries provided in the Matrix
- The need for a comprehensive survey of teaching and learning conditions in all of Arkansas's public schools
- Focus on making teacher salaries in Delta and rural schools competitive
- Determining whether pupil support services are adequate to meet the needs of children in poverty and children with special needs

Representative Abernathy thanked Mr. Nagel and Mr. Hutchinson for their presentation.

3. Arkansas Rural Education Association

Mr. Don Sharp, President-elect, Arkansas Rural Education Association, and **Ms. Karen Smith**, Secretary/Treasurer, Arkansas Rural Education Association, were recognized. Mr. Sharp advised the Subcommittee that Mr. Gerald Cooper, the President of the AREA, sent his apologies for not being able to appear before the Subcommittee due to unforeseen circumstances.

Mr. Sharp stated that AREA fully concurs with the written testimony submitted by the AAEA. In addition to that testimony, and via written testimony from AREA, Mr. Sharp addressed two areas of concern to the AREA: 1) Miscellaneous Funds, and 2) Excessive Transportation Costs.

Representative Abernathy thanked Mr. Sharp and Ms. Smith for their presentation.

4. Arkansas School Boards Association

Mr. Dan Farley, Executive Director, Arkansas School Boards Association, and **Mr. Ron Harder**, Policy Service and Advocacy Director, Arkansas School Boards Association, were recognized. Mr. Farley stated his concurrence with much of the previously presented testimony. He went on to discuss the cultural shift in decision-making regarding education policy in Arkansas and its impact. Mr. Harder was recognized and presented a report, "Thoughts on Adequate Funding of Public Education in Arkansas." He discussed the need to monitor and adjust the Matrix and the definition of Adequacy. Mr. Harder reviewed with the Subcommittee the following issues:

- Teacher Staffing
- Data Collection
- ADE Funding
- Instructional Facilitators
- Technology
- Librarians
- Professional Development
- Recess
- Instructional Materials
- Gifted and Talented Programs
- Coordinated School Health
- Unknowns – Reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Race To the Top (RTTT), and Common Core Standards

He also addressed two issues that are not actually in Adequacy, but are very important: 1) culture, and 2) professional development.

Representative Abernathy thanked Mr. Farley and Mr. Harder for the testimony.

A question and answer session involving all the education association representatives ensued. Among the topics discussed were:

- ❖ Funding Matrix and school staffing
- ❖ Increasing efficiency in spending funds
- ❖ Reviewing the assessment system
- ❖ Reasons for teachers leaving the teaching profession
- ❖ Adequate number of applicants for teaching positions
- ❖ Teacher attraction, retention, and preparation
- ❖ Incentives for teachers who work where salary is low
- ❖ Source of funding for all programs
- ❖ Allocated costs of transportation in Matrix vs. actual total costs state-wide
- ❖ Providing assistance to encourage teachers to pursue National Board certification
- ❖ Treatment of recess vs. instructional time
- ❖ Comparability of inflationary measures with actual inflationary costs
- ❖ Possible statistical methodologies to address concerns regarding the alignment of inflationary measures

Representative Abernathy thanked everyone for their attendance and participation.

Representative Abernathy announced that at 1:45 p.m. that afternoon, April 27, 2010, the Joint Subcommittee on Grade Inflation would be meeting in Room 171 of the State Capitol.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:07 p.m.