

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

ADEQUACY

Tuesday, April 10, 2012

9:00 A.M.

Room 171, State Capitol
Little Rock, Arkansas

Senator Jimmy Jeffress, the Chair of the Senate Interim Committee on Education, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Jimmy Jeffress, Chair; Senator Mary Anne Salmon, Vice Chair; Senator Gilbert Baker; Senator Kim Hendren; and Senator Johnny Key.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Representative Eddie Cheatham, Chair; Representative Johnnie Roebuck, Vice Chair; Representative Duncan Baird; Representative Toni Bradford; Representative Jerry Brown; Representative Les Carmine; Representative Ann Clemmer; Representative Robert Dale; Representative Jane English; Representative Debra Hobbs; Representative Karen Hopper; Representative Donna Hutchinson; Representative Tracy Steele; Representative Randy Stewart; and Representative Tommy Wren.

NON-VOTING MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Representative John Catlett; Representative Jeremy Gillam; Representative Andrea Lea; Representative Homer Lenderman; Representative Kelley Linck; and Representative Tiffany Rogers.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Linda Chesterfield; Senator Mike Fletcher; Senator Jeremy Hutchinson; Senator Randy Laverty; Representative Denny Altes; Representative Tommy Lee Baker; Representative Nate Bell; Representative Lori Benedict; Representative David Branscum; Representative Jon Eubanks; Representative Billy Gaskill; Representative Sheilla Lampkin; Representative Uvalde Lindsey; Representative Buddy Lovell; Representative Mike Patterson; Representative Tracy Pennartz; Representative David "Bubba" Powers; Representative Tommy Thompson; Representative Charolette Wagner; Representative Jeff Wardlaw; and Representative Marshall Wright.

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

Mr. Dan Farley, Executive Director, Arkansas School Boards Association, was recognized. Mr. Farley spoke from a written report, *Thoughts on Adequate Funding of Public Education in Arkansas*, and

commented that he was grateful to have the opportunity to discuss an adequate and equitable education for all students who attend the state's system of public schools. He stated that because of the diligence of the General Assembly, Arkansas's public school system has seen giant improvements over the past several years. The state's progress has been underscored by the number of other states looking toward Arkansas as an emerging leader in public education. Mr. Farley said a reexamination of adequacy is crucial to this ongoing success. He delivered his report on selected issues and concerns in light of the current environment in which the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are being implemented and the requirements for teacher evaluations are greatly expanded. He said these are both very important, fundamentally game-changing opportunities which taken together, or separately, require a reevaluation of the Matrix. The fact that they are currently set to come on line at the same time greatly complicates their successful implementation.

Mr. Farley discussed the position of the Arkansas School Boards Association (ASBA) on issues and concerns, including:

- ≈ the overextended school day and year,
- ≈ the current K-12 curriculum not being aligned with colleges' curricula,
- ≈ the critical role of instructional facilitators in cross-curricular collaboration among teachers,
- ≈ the successful implementation of CCSS and teacher evaluations in relation to the Matrix,
- ≈ the need for significantly larger amounts of bandwidth than is currently available in many areas of the state,
- ≈ the concern about the present Matrix funding of two-and-a-half (2.5) instructional facilitators,
- ≈ the principal serving as the instructional leader,
- ≈ the necessary position of assistant principal,
- ≈ the need for more than a half-time technology position in the Matrix; the necessity of one full-time technology position for a school of 500,
- ≈ the belief that focused, targeted, embedded, and collaborative professional development is crucial to improve student learning; opposing any attempt to decrease the number of hours of professional development, and
- ≈ the traditional school year as a contributor to the student achievement gap; changing the duration of the school year.

Mr. Farley concluded by saying that to the extent that adequacy is about student achievement, it begs the question of whether achievement has to be tied to a student's time spent sitting in the classroom. A student's knowledge of a subject and the ability to apply what he or she has learned to the real world should be the goal. He said the assessments being discussed as part of the CCSS would seem to lend themselves to allowing education to be about learning and not just about seat time.

A discussion ensued following Mr. Farley's presentation. Topics included:

- evaluation of the current Matrix relative to its maintenance of adequacy,
- importance of Distance Learning in meeting adequacy,
- alternative to or new requirements for professional development,
- variances in professional development requirements among school districts,
- ASBA and a model policy with the goal of "prescriptive" professional development,
- changing the Matrix to reflect funding of four (4.0) instructional facilitators,
- consideration of children with disabilities in the professional development mix,
- providing additional funds outside of the Matrix, and

- standards by which to judge if a school is doing a good job.

Senator Jeffress thanked Mr. Farley for his presentation.

Senator Jeffress announced that there would be a deviation from the agenda so that Mr. Jim Boardman could discuss questions on graduation rates brought up during testimony at the April 9th meeting.

Mr. Jim Boardman, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Research and Technology, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized, and commented on cohorts that had been used and that are now being used to calculate graduation rates. He said, in general, the graduation rate is calculated by looking at 9th graders and following them to see how many graduate on time four year later. He said, a few years ago, the calculation rate was based on a completion rate by which dropout rates were used for those four years to come up with a graduation rate. He explained that since the data system is larger now, and since the United States Department of Education (USDOE) now requires a different method to make calculations, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) has moved to a cohort graduation rate by which students from the 9th grade through the 12th grade are tracked to see how many graduate on time. He said it still deals with the 9th grade through the 12th grade, but the information and methodology are different. He noted that coding on the Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN) is used to track students to determine if they graduate on time.

A brief discussion followed Mr. Boardman's comments. Topics included counting students who drop out of school and go on to get a GED, and concerns about accuracy of data.

Senator Jeffress asked the Committees to take a moment to recognize Mr. Boardman for his leadership in technology efforts to benefit education at the ADE.

Senator Jeffress thanked Mr. Boardman for his remarks.

Dr. Richard Abernathy, Executive Director, Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, was recognized. Dr. Abernathy said he appreciated the opportunity to recap last month's report, *A Review of Adequacy in Financing Public Education in Arkansas*, and spoke from a condensed PowerPoint presentation. In his commentary, he summarized key points of concern: adding a cost of living (COLA) mechanism to the Matrix, Broadband availability, the Educational Excellence Trust Fund (EETF), fund balances, high-cost transportation and fairness, teacher and administrator evaluations, and professional development.

Topics in the discussion that followed the presentation included:

- areas of educational policy and performance measured in the "Quality Counts" Report 2012,
- putting a school on fiscal distress because of a decreasing fund balance,
- extending the teacher mentoring program,
- ranking of improvement in student achievement lagging behind that for improvements in laws and policies in Arkansas,
- restructuring professional development,
- instructional facilitators in the Matrix,
- reviewing and resetting standards for proficiency,

- comparison of test scores in states that require a longer school year,
- reviewing leadership training around the state,
- role of institutions of higher education in K-12 reform efforts, including effectiveness of teacher preparation programs,
- looking for a better rotation in reevaluating adequacy requirements, and
- clarifying loss of instructional minutes and prioritization of time.

Senator Jeffress thanked Dr. Abernathy for the report.

Mr. Rich Nagel, Executive Director, Arkansas Education Association, was recognized. Mr. Nagel spoke from a written presentation, *Arkansas Education Association Presentation to the House and Senate Education Committees*. Mr. Nagel noted the testimony from the Arkansas Education Association (AEA) was divided into three broad areas: 1) Educator Quality, Recruitment, and Retention, 2) Student Learning, Closing the Achievement Gap, and Class Size, and 3) Salaries, Health Insurance, and Retirement. He said supplemental information had been provided to the report on expansion of Arkansas's Early Childhood Education Program, on consideration of providing additional state resources to schools that will be designated as "Priority" (persistently low-performing) and "Focus" (low-performing) in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Flexibility Waiver request, and taking a look at the problems versus advantages of the EETF.

Mr. Nagel first made comments on professional development. He included the following:

- empowering teachers to impact the type and quality of professional development received,
- ensuring professional development is relevant and meaningful for teachers in practice,
- duration and methodology of professional development offered, and
- stresses resulting from CCSS and the new teacher evaluation system.

Mr. Nagel then took up Educator Quality, Recruitment, and Retention in the report. He discussed the components of the National Education Association (NEA) policy statement, "Leading the Profession: NEA's Three-Point Plan for Reform." He said the new teacher evaluation program that the state has adopted is working well in pilot schools and has been receiving positive and encouraging feedback from teachers and administrators. He noted that Charlotte Danielson's book, "Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching," has provided a focus for the conversation about and information regarding teacher evaluation, and also sets forth categories and a rubric for performance levels. He said the Arkansas Education Association (AEA) thinks this will be one of the better things Arkansas has done for focusing on improved professional practice and improved student learning.

Mr. Nagel included the following highlights in his presentation:

- a study by the Arkansas Partnership for Teacher Quality, its results, and the five (5) recommendations to state policymakers made in its report, "An Emerging Understanding of the Arkansas Teacher Pipeline,"
- a series of summits sponsored by the NEA partnering with the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and held around the nation in which it was found that working conditions were the most important factor in teachers staying in the profession,

- the 2009 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, in which one of the key findings was that two-thirds of the teachers and three-fourths of the principals believed that greater collaboration between teachers and school leaders would improve student learning, and
- evaluation as an ongoing process; reexamining the Matrix.

In the second area, Student Learning, Closing the Achievement Gap, and Class Size, Mr. Nagel discussed Arkansas's biggest challenge, and one deserving the state's attention and resources, as closing the achievement gap. He said, in dealing with priority schools, more focus should be placed on research-driven elements that lead to permanent, systemic change: leveraging community assets, improving staff capacity and effectiveness, developing family and community partnerships, improving district and local association capacity and collaboration, and improving student achievement and learning. He cited the work done by Dr. Gary Orfield, Director of the Civil Rights Project at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), which says a condition of education that on the face of it appears to be unequal can't be accepted. He noted that one of the outcomes of the Lakeview decision was that a student's education should not depend on where the student was born and that everyone should have the opportunity to achieve the same level of education. He discussed three (3) recommendations in the 2008 report, "Closing the Achievement Gap in Arkansas," by Jay Barth and Keith Nitta, which the AEA recommends should be included in the Adequacy Report.

With regard to Salaries, Health Insurance, and Retirement, Mr. Nagel said the AEA was pleased with the level and the quality of the retirement program of the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System (ATRS). He said it's an important component in attracting and retaining high-quality educators into the profession. He also made favorable comments on the health insurance program for public school employees. He noted that in SY2010-2011, the NEA ranked Arkansas 43rd out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia with its average teacher salary of \$46,500. He discussed goals to establish a minimum starting salary of \$40,000 for Arkansas teachers, an important step for elevating the teaching profession in the state.

In conclusion, Mr. Nagel said the AEA continues to support the CCSS initiative.

In an ongoing discussion during Mr. Nagel's presentation, topics included:

- variation among districts in professional development,
- evaluations of professional development,
- flexibility of choice regarding professional development,
- ADE's policy on professional development,
- "prescriptive" professional development between the teacher and the administrator,
- number of states participating in the CCSS,
- health insurance plans and rates for teachers,
- things identified in the Matrix or education policy that are unnecessary or need attention,
- original intent, efficiency, and subsequent modifications to the EETF,
- inclusion of community sectors in teacher and administrator training programs for licensure, and
- solving the disconnect between leaders and the level of teacher empowerment and support in order to improve student achievement.

Senator Mary Anne Salmon assumed the Chair.

Senator Salmon thanked Mr. Nagel for his report.

Mr. Bill Abernathy, Executive Director, Arkansas Rural Education Association, was recognized. Mr. Abernathy discussed two issues:

1. Broadband. Having a team of legislators on a committee taking the lead through adequacy to determine the capacity currently in the schools and what is needed.
2. Abandoned buildings. Providing a solution for the real issue for concerned parents which is the length of time a child spends on a school bus.

Following Mr. Abernathy's report, a brief discussion took place on:

- ✓ the availability of data on the detriment to student achievement created by time spent on a school bus, and the number of students affected,
- ✓ the electric cooperatives as a model for bringing Broadband into rural areas, and
- ✓ empowering legislators to review policies and flesh out solutions.

Senator Salmon thanked Mr. Abernathy for his report.

Senator Salmon announced that there would be a change in the agenda because of time constrictions, and the Discussion of Issues Related to Teacher Salaries, scheduled to be presented by Ms. Heather Tackett, Legislative Analyst, Policy Analysis and Research Service, Bureau of Legislative Research, would be taken up at a future meeting.

Senator Salmon announced that the next joint meetings of the Senate Interim Committee on Education and the House Interim Committee on Education would be at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, May 7, 2012 in Room 171 of the State Capitol in Little Rock, and at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, May 8, 2012, in Room 171 of the State Capitol in Little Rock. The meeting on Tuesday will be limited to discussion on issues related to adequacy.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

Approved: 05/08/12