

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

ADEQUACY

Tuesday, March 15, 2016

9:00 A.M.

Room 171, State Capitol
Little Rock, Arkansas

Representative Bruce Cozart, the Chair of the House 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 Jane English, Chair; Senator Uvalde Lindsey, Vice Chair; Senator Eddie Cheatham; Senator Alan Clark; and Senator Blake Johnson.

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 Charlotte Vining Douglas; Representative Jon S. Eubanks; Representative Bill Gossage; Representative Michael John Gray; Representative Mark Lowery; Representative Reginald Murdock; Representative James Ratliff; and Representative John W. Walker.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Jonathan Dismang; Senator Scott Flippo; Senator Bart Hester; Representative Bob Ballinger; Representative Charlene Fite; Representative David Hillman; Representative Douglas House; Representative Jack Ladyman; Representative Marcus Richmond; and Representative Sue Scott.

Mr. Johnny Key, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Commissioner Key announced that **Ms. Stacy Smith**, formerly the Interim Assistant Commissioner, is the new Assistant Commissioner, Division of Learning Services, Arkansas Department of Education (ADE).

Discussion of Issues Related to Alternative Learning Environment (ALE) Categorical Funding

Presenter:

Ms. Nell Smith, Administrator, Policy Analysis and Research Section, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. Ms. Smith stated that two (2) of the four (4) categorical funds would be discussed in this meeting: Alternative Learning Environment (ALE) and Professional Development (PD). She said reports on the other two (2) categoricals, National School Lunch (NSL) and English Language Learners (ELL), were presented in September and October of 2015. Ms. Smith commented that the Adequacy Study statute does not specifically call for review of ALE and PD categorical funds; but, since they are a critical part of funding Adequacy, they have been included in the Study. Ms. Smith reminded members about the purpose of categorical funds. She said three (3) of the four (4) categorical funds were established to help provide additional resources to schools to help them provide additional services for particular students who may need extra help. She remarked all four (4) categorical funds are considered "restricted funding," meaning districts can only spend that money for specified purposes. Ms. Smith stated ALEs are programs for students who have had difficulty learning in the traditional classroom. She said ALE programs are intended for districts' hardest-to-reach students, students who may be struggling with academic, emotional, or behavioral problems, and students who are at risk of dropping out of school. She

remarked that Arkansas statute gives the ADE the responsibility for defining what ALE is and should be; and state law authorizes the State Board of Education to specify through rule the criteria used to determine a student's candidacy for alternative education. She indicated a list on page 2 of the report shows twelve (12) student characteristics districts can use to identify a student for an ALE program; a student must exhibit at least two of the characteristics to qualify for an ALE program. Ms. Smith said students cannot be placed in ALE for academic programs alone, and Arkansas statute specifies that ALE must not be used as a punishment. She stated students can only be placed in an ALE program by a school's Alternative Education Placement Team. Ms. Smith went on to discuss what an ALE program looks like, and said programs vary considerably from one district to another based on the needs of the students served. She said ALE programs are characterized by small class sizes: lower grades are capped at twelve (12) students, and upper grades at eighteen (18) students. Referring to charts and graphs, Ms. Smith gave a brief overview of how Arkansas developed ALE as one of the four (4) categorical funds, and discussed pertinent Student Demographics, ALE Funding, ALE Expenditures, Fund Balances, ALE Program Accountability, and Outcome Measures.

Contributors to the Discussion:

Mr. Johnny Key, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education

Ms. Lori Lamb, Director of Alternative Education, Division of Learning Services, Arkansas Department of Education

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- clarification of eligibility criteria,
- quality of student learning when involuntarily placed in an ALE,
- standards monitoring of ALEs,
- ability for students to opt out of going to an ALE,
- administrative support system for ALEs,
- curriculum in ALEs,
- tracking success/failure of students in ALEs,
- staffing required to accommodate a special education student in an ALE, and
- ADE's plans to prevent ALEs from being pathways to the criminal justice system.

Mr. Johnny Key, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Commissioner Key discussed the ALE Task Force that is evaluating all aspects of ALE in Arkansas, and providing recommendations for improvements to programs.

Ms. Lori Lamb, Director of Alternative Education, Division of Learning Services, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Ms. Lamb, in addressing concerns raised in the discussion, presented an extensive overview of the assistance ALEs provide to students in Arkansas.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- establishing moral standards at home and at church,
- solving administrative problems in ALEs, and
- auditing desegregation funds.

Handouts:

Adequacy Study Statutory Responsibilities

State Categorical Funding Review, Alternative Learning Environments (ALE)

Discussion of Issues Related to Professional Development (PD) Categorical Funding

Presenter:

Dr. Brent Benda, Senior Research Specialist, Policy Analysis and Research Section, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. In his introduction, Dr. Benda quoted from the ADE Rules Governing Professional Development: “The purpose of professional development (PD) is to improve knowledge and skills in order to facilitate individual, team, school-wide, and district-wide improvement designed to ensure that all students demonstrate proficiency on the state academic standards.” Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Benda walked members through the report and discussed ADE’s PD requirements, effectiveness of PD, history of PD funding, distribution of PD revenue, PD expenditures, and PD responses from teachers in a survey conducted by the Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR).

Presenter:

Ms. Nell Smith, Administrator, Policy Analysis and Research Section, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. Ms. Smith continued the PowerPoint presentation with a discussion of PD Policy History and PD Funding, including funding for AETN, PD Expenditures by Districts and Charter Schools, and PD Fund Balances. She noted a memo provides an overview of the pattern of transferring categorical funds.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- funding PD at needed levels to help teachers,
- considering student achievement and PD for different student populations, and
- value of online PD training.

PowerPoint Presentation and Handout:

State Categorical Funding Review, Professional Development (PD)

Handout:

Categorical Funds Transferred, Bureau of Legislative Research Memo
Professional Development in Arkansas and Review of National Research

Next Scheduled Meetings:

Friday, April 1, 2016, at 10:30 a.m. in the Administration Offices of the Blytheville School District –
Desegregation Litigation Oversight Subcommittee
Monday, April 11, 2016, at 1:30 p.m. in Committee Room A, MAC Building, Little Rock
Tuesday, April 12, 2016, at 9:00 a.m. in Room 171, State Capitol, Little Rock

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 10:44 a.m.