

MINUTES

(Approved July 6, 2020)

**Senate Committee on Education  
House Committee on Education  
Meeting Jointly**

**Tuesday, June 9, 2020  
9:00 AM  
Room A, MAC  
Little Rock, Arkansas**

**MEMBERS OF THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN**

**ATTENDANCE:** *Senators:* Jane English, Chair; Joyce Elliott, Vice Chair; Eddie Cheatham, Linda Chesterfield, Lance Eads, Mark Johnson and James Sturch

**MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN**

**ATTENDANCE:** *Representatives:* Bruce Cozart, Chair; Rick Beck, LeAnne Burch, Jana Della Rosa, Jim Dotson, Jon S. Eubanks, Brian S. Evans, Denise Garner, Grant Hodges, Mark Lowery, Richard McGrew, Stephen Meeks, Nelda Speaks, Joy Springer, Dan Sullivan and DeAnn Vaught

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE:** *Senators:*

Trent Garner *Representatives:* Les Eaves, Denise Ennett, Kenneth B. Ferguson, Jack Ladyman, Tippi McCullough, and Stu Smith

**Representative Cozart called the meeting to order.**

**Discussion of Report on Teacher Salaries [Exhibit C4]**

Ms. Lori Bowen, Legislative Analyst, Policy Analysis and Research Section, Bureau of Legislative Research was recognized. Ms. Bowen gave an overview of the statutorily required teacher salary issues to study. Issues included in the discussion:

- The National Education Association's (NEA) Rankings of the States 2019 and Estimates of School Statistics 2020 report shows Arkansas's average salary ranking is falling. When adjusting NEA salary amounts for cost of living (COLA) Arkansas's rank improves but it is still a decline of three places from the prior year (COLA) adjusted salary.
- Arkansas's minimum salary ranking is also falling amongst Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states and surrounding states. Arkansas ranks 5th in 2018, 6th in 2019 and Arkansas's 2017 rank was 5th on the SREB Comparison. Amongst surrounding states, Arkansas ranks 5th in 2018, 6th in 2019 and Arkansas's 2017 rank was 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Differences between the district with the highest minimum salary and the district with the lowest minimum salary. The gap between the highest and lowest adopted minimum salaries have ranged from \$13,978 in 2011 to a high of \$17,256 in 2015, and is gradually decreasing but still remains above \$15,000 in 2020.
- Overview of Act 170 of 2019- Teacher Salary Enhancement Act. Updates State mandated minimum salary schedules for school years 2019-20 through 2020-23. Increases the

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minimum salary for a bachelor degree prepared teacher with zero years of experience to \$36,000 by school year 2022-23.

- Overview of Act 877 of 2019- Appropriation & Funding for Educator Compensation Reform Program. Provides a \$60 million appropriation. Provides a \$60 million fund transfer from the Educational Adequacy Fund to a sub-fund within the Public School Fund to be used exclusively for ECRP. Insures all educators receive a minimum annual salary of \$36,000 by school year 2022-23.
- Analysis of 2020 District minimum salaries- District minimum salaries range from the mandated minimum of \$32,000 to \$48,282. There is a concentration of districts at the lowest end of district minimum salaries.
- Analysis 2020 District average salaries- Districts' average salaries are consistently below the salary amount provided in the matrix, and the variance is growing over time. There has been a consistent gap between the highest and lowest average salaries ranging from \$20,956 to \$22,810.
- An overview of adequacy survey results shows that Superintendents ranked "Classroom Teachers" and "Special Education Teachers" 1st and 2nd, respectively, as the matrix resources most in need of additional funding. Teacher salary is viewed as one of the top barriers in recruiting and retaining teachers by principals and superintendents.

### **Discussion of Report on Resource Allocation of Foundation Funding – School-level Resources [Exhibit D3]**

Ms. Julie Holt, Administrator, Policy Analysis and Research Section, Bureau of Legislative Research was recognized. Ms. Holt presented the final resource allocation report on school level resources. She stated that these resources account for 9.2% of the overall funding provided in the matrix. Ms. Holt also provided a chart that shows total expenditure on school-level resources for various categories of school districts and public charter school systems. Issues included in the discussion:

- Technology, has been steadily funded at \$250 per student from 2018-2021. In comparison to the \$250 per student allotted to schools for technology expenditures, school districts and charter systems together spent about 40 cents of every per-pupil matrix dollar they received for technology for that purpose during the 2018-19 school year. A major technology expense has been broadband, those expenses have decreased, largely due to a partnership between DESE and Dept. of Information Systems that started about five years ago.
- Instructional Materials include textbooks, workbooks, worksheets and other consumables, math manipulatives, science supplies, and library materials. The matrix amount devoted to them increased about ½ percent this year but will go up 2 percent next year. School districts and charter systems average about 71 cents of every \$1 in foundation funding meant for per pupil expenditures in instructional materials but spending \$1.34 for every per pupil dollar for instructional materials when all fund sources are considered. Starting in 2017, Arkansas allows teachers to deduct expenses of up to \$250 for classroom supplies they've purchased on their own. In 2018, more than 20,000 teachers claimed an average \$238.
- Extra Duty Funds are used to pay stipends for teachers who coach athletics and those who supervise after-school clubs or other extracurricular activities, such as the newspaper

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or the yearbook. School districts currently spend \$3 for every per pupil \$1 in the matrix. Considering all fund sources, expenditures go up to \$3.40, or \$2.40 cents more than every dollar provided in the matrix.

- Supervisory Aides are the aides hired to monitor school bus loading and unloading before and after school or to watch over lunchrooms. For the last several years, they have been funded in the matrix at \$50 per student. School districts currently spend 35 cents for every \$1 in the matrix from all funds.
- The legislature increased the matrix funding for substitutes each year of the last biennium, but held it steady for this year and next. Schools spend more for substitutes than is in the matrix currently spending \$1.29 for every \$1 of foundation funds and \$1.44 for every \$1 of matrix funds from all funds.
- Matrix funds account for about 9% of expenditures that are not included in the matrix because they are not considered by the legislature as being required for an “adequate” education. Expenses for Instructional aides were \$69.5 million, other instructional supplies and objects were \$33 million and athletic supplies and transportation totaled \$24 million.
- An overview of technology needs in response to Covid-19 highlighted the top 3 barriers as technology in the home, lack of broadband and concerns of parental expertise. On average, about 40 percent of districts/charter systems sent computers home with fewer than half of their students, while just under 20 percent sent computers home with all students. By May 8, districts reported that they had spent \$2.5 million collectively on technology needs created by the pandemic, most of that being on additional equipment. The largest source of funds were foundation funds.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:19 am.