

MEETING SUMMARY

LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON
WORKFORCE EDUCATION EXCELLENCE

Wednesday, November 1, 2017
2:00 P.M.

Gentry School District Career and Technical Education Center, 1121 Swepeco Road
Gentry, Arkansas

Senator Jane English, the Senate Co-Chair of the Legislative Task Force on Workforce Education Excellence, called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON WORKFORCE EDUCATION

EXCELLENCE IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Jane English, Senate Co-Chair; Representative Bruce Cozart, House Co-Chair; Senator Lance Eads; Senator Blake Johnson; and Representative Dan Douglas.

NON-LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON WORKFORCE EDUCATION

EXCELLENCE IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. Kenneth Calhoun; Mr. Randy Henderson; Mr. Stephen Horton; and Mr. David Rook for Mr. Mike Rogers.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Jim Hendren; Senator Eddie Joe Williams; and Representative Austin McCollum.

Remarks by the Chairs

Senator English, and **Representative Bruce Cozart**, House Co-Chair, Legislative Task Force on Workforce Education Excellence (Task Force), welcomed attendees to the meeting at the Gentry School District Career and Technical Education Center (GCTEC), a conversion charter school with training programs in medium/heavy duty trucks and health care. Each legislator commented on the outstanding new facilities in which the meeting was being held, and thanked the hosts for having the meeting pertaining to the growing need for quality secondary vocational training programs.

Welcome and Introductions

Members of the Task Force and the audience, which included representatives from business, industry, local government, state government agencies, school districts, and postsecondary institutions, introduced themselves.

The Honorable Dan Douglas, State Representative, District 91, was recognized. Representative Douglas stated he takes pride in what the Gentry School District has done with GCTEC to prepare young people for life and for good jobs in the future. He commented that the partnership with McKee Foods to establish the diesel program at GCTEC sets an example that can be replicated across the state.

Ms. Terrie Metz, Superintendent, Gentry School District, was recognized. Ms. Metz welcomed the members of the Task Force, and recognized Mr. Randall Bolinger, member of the Gentry School Board, and Mayor Kevin Johnston of Gentry.

Overview of the Programs and Activities Available at the Gentry School District Career and Technical Education Center

Presenter:

Ms. Christie Toland, Assistant Superintendent, Gentry School District, was recognized. Ms. Toland stated she had worked on career and technical program development at the North Little Rock School District (NLRSD) Center of Excellence, before coming to the Gentry School District, where there was an opportunity to build a strong career education program. She said school administrators are excited about what the GCTEC facilities and programs have to offer to students, to the community, and to the workforce in general. From her experience, she stated there are five (5) key ingredients that must be in place for programs such as this to launch and to flourish: visionary leadership, true partnerships, community support, a quality instructor, and a spirit of innovation with responsible implementation. She said all five of these ingredients are incorporated in the career education programs at Gentry Public Schools. She described the GCTEC facility as containing 13, 300 square feet of heated and cooled space with a state of the art laboratory used by the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Personal Care Aide (PCA) programs. She said GCTEC partners with Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) to provide certifications for these programs.

A lengthy discussion among Task Force members and attendees followed Ms. Toland's presentation.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- source of funding for Mr. Tyson Sontag, instructor of Diesel Technology at GCTEC,
- source of funding for equipment, upkeep, and maintenance,
- sunset date for a school millage,
- student enrollment in the school,
- total cost for the facilities and what was included in that cost,
- need and ability to expand programs,
- creating a student pipeline to McKee Foods and other regional industries,
- advantage of aligning a school's instructional schedule to a company's work schedule,
- expanding programs of study to include small business operations, aquaponics, family and consumer sciences, health professions, and other areas,
- partnerships with hospitals in the region,
- benefits provided by waivers to charter schools,
- advantages of being a conversion charter school,
- conversations with parents about a student pursuing a technical education vs. a college education,
- industries within the region,
- need for workforce development in manufacturing,
- importance of having business partnerships to establish workforce programs,
- advantages gained by Simmons Foods from GCTEC training programs,
- use of waivers by non-charter schools,
- lack of available funds to recruit technicians from the field to teach in apprentice programs,
- change driven by legislators at the State Capitol,
- red tape and other stumbling blocks hindering the filling of positions, including those in healthcare, in the State of Arkansas, and
- technical permitting process for licensing instructions in CTE as opposed to seeking waivers from the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) or applying for charter school status.

Handout:

Gentry Career and Technical Education Center, *Building the Workforce of the Future*

Next Scheduled Meetings:

Monday, November 13, 2017, at 1:30 p.m. in the Old Supreme Court, State Capitol, Little Rock
Monday, December 4, 2017, at 1:00 p.m. in Room 207 of the State Capitol, Little Rock

Adjournment:

The meeting recessed at 3:07 p.m. for members to tour the Gentry Career and Technical Education Center.

Approved: 11/13/2017