

MINUTES HOUSE AND SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION

Monday, November 9, 2020

1:00 P.M.

Room A, MAC

Little Rock, Arkansas

MEMBERS OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION IN

ATTENDANCE: *Senators* Jane English, Chair; Joyce Elliott, Vice-Chair; Mark Johnson and Lance Eads *Representatives* Bruce Cozart, Chair; Fred Allen, Rick Beck, Frances Cavanaugh, Gary Deffenbaugh, Jana Della Rosa, Jon Eubanks, Brian Evans, Denise Garner, Mark Lowery, Richard McGrew, Stephen Meeks, Nelda Speaks, Joy Springer and DeAnn Vaught

Other Members Present: *Senator* Allen Clark *Representatives* Rick Beck, Bruce Coleman, Cameron Cooper, Steve Hollowell, Tippy McCullough, Johnny Rye, Keith Slape, Stu Smith and Danny Watson

Representative Bruce Cozart called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes of October 19, 2020 and October 26, 2020 [Exhibit C1 and C2]

Representative Beck made a motion to approve Minutes of October 19, 2020 and October 26, 2020. Senator Eads seconded the motion, and without objection the motion was carried.

Presentation and Discussion of APA Consulting Recommendations [Exhibits D1 and D2]

Mr. Justin Silverstein, Co-CEO, APA Consulting, Augenblick, Palaich and Associates and **Ms. Amanda Brown**, Senior Associate, APA Consulting, Augenblick and Associates, provided the seven recommendations based on various analyses conducted by the study team over the course of the study including:

- Fiscal and performance data analysis using data from ADE and BLR
- District survey of current resource use and practices
- Case studies
- Literature reviews
- Stakeholder engagement
- Additional quantitative and qualitative work

The study team identified the recommendations as well as the related context and supporting evidence also recognizes it is the legislature's role to determine adequacy and that the state does not have unlimited resources. The study team has not been asked to establish adequacy levels. The recommendations do not identify specific resource targets. Recommendations were developed in areas where the body of evidence across all the study teams' work identified the need for specific consideration of an item.

Mr. Silverstein identified recommendations 1, 2, and 3. **Recommendation 1: The state should consider adopting a hybrid approach to reviewing adequacy.** In addition to the current two-year

review cycle, he discussed the approaches that could be implemented, including the study teams suggestion that at least two approaches be used in conjunction with each other. The evidence-based approach can be used to examine the base cost and adjustments for student characteristics, and the professional judgment and/or cost approach could be utilized to examine all aspects of the formula, and the successful schools approach could be utilized to examine the base cost amount. He presented data analysis that showed that student groups, such as economically disadvantaged, ELs, and special education, had lower outcomes than other students in the state. He, also, discussed the challenges that smaller districts face resourcing schools at the current matrix level, having to redirect resources to meet classroom staffing needs or to provide a minimum FTE level. A multi-approach study, he explained, would allow the state to examine the costs for all students with an emphasis on special needs populations and identifying the differences in costs faced by districts due to district size and location.

Recommendation 2: Establish a system to monitor and ensure teacher quality is commensurate across schools. Create an incentive structure to increase the number of highly qualified teachers serving students at high-need schools and small schools. In general, access to qualified teachers varies across the state, but there are some relationships that are of some concern especially in the lower income settings in smaller districts. He discussed “Addressing Teacher Quality”, the differences in teacher quality by school need: as the percentage of students directly certified for free and reduced-price lunch increases, the percentage of teachers: 1) with a master’s degree, and 2) who are fully certified in the subject area they teach both decrease. Mr. Silverstein addressed concerns regarding methods for addressing these disparities in comparison with what other states are doing including, teacher incentives and improving the teacher preparation pipeline.

Recommendation 3: Develop a legislative task force to investigate and address the out-of-school factors that inhibit performance for high need students within the state. This recommendation is a reflection of comments from members and stakeholders and instead of telling the state what to do, the study team recommends what needs to happen is mapping out the full scope of resources students need to come prepared to school, and then making some determinations for what is in the K-12 scope and what sits in other agencies purview. What is being seen in comparison to schools with low concentrations of economically disadvantaged students within the state, schools with the highest concentrations of economically disadvantaged students are: smaller and more remote, graduate fewer students, have lower proficiency rates in English and Math, and serve significantly fewer white students. Also, the difference in students’ performance levels is not indicative of students’ abilities, but rather suggest differences in instructional needs and required supports, as well as external factors, such as general poverty and systemic issues like racism and classism. The task force could be led by members of the Education Committees, but also include: legislators on the relevant committees, teachers, administrative, and non-certified representatives, ADE staff, stakeholders from organizations involved in providing wrap-around services for students/families.

Ms. Brown identified recommendations 4 and 5. **Recommendation 4: The state should adopt a career readiness definition that includes: 1) core academic knowledge and skills, 2) capabilities, 3) behavior skills and dispositions, and 4) postsecondary preparation and planning. The study team recommends that the definition be focused on career readiness for all students, as college is just one of several pathways to a career.** She provided the Career Readiness definition: upon

graduation, Arkansas students should demonstrate career readiness; each student should leave high school ready to take the next steps towards a career regardless of whether that is college (2 or 4 years), a technical program, military service, or an entry-level career position. She stated that they've both incorporated and expanded on the definition, and what they're proposing is an actual definition as recommended including specific knowledge skills and traits that they are expected to have. Also, this definition would place Arkansas among the 15 others states that include capabilities, behavior skills, and college and career preparation knowledge and skills in their definitions.

Recommendation 5: The committees should reconsider current matrix resource levels in the areas where the body of evidence is most consistent. The study team included recommendations for the matrix areas with the most consistent evidence regarding resource levels from various study resources:

- Recommendation 5a: K-3 Teacher Ratios
- Recommendation 5b: Non-Core Teacher Percentage at High School
- Recommendation 5c: Secretary
- Recommendation 5d: Librarian/Media Specialist
- Recommendation 5e: Assistant Principal
- Recommendation 5f: Student Mental Health and School Safety/Security
- Recommendation 5g: Instructional Materials

Mr. Silverstein identified recommendations 6 and 7. **Recommendation 6: The state should smooth its ESA funding with a focus on providing higher resources per student at lower concentrations of students. Additionally, the formula should be created as a weight above the foundation amount, allowing ESA funding to rise at the same rate as foundation funding. All ESA funds should flow through this formula, including funding currently provided as a separate matching grant.** This recommendation focused on three issues in the current approach to ESA funding: 1) funding cliffs, 2) the resource needs of students at lower concentration tiers, and 3) ESA funding historically increasing at a slower rate than foundation funding. He indicated that the data analysis indicates that a school's concentration of poverty, or the percentage of economically disadvantaged students within school, is not a statically significant predictor of proficiency.

Recommendation 7: The committees should consider removing special education funding from the resource matrix and provide funding based on actual special education students served.

Representative Cozart announced that at the next Education meeting members will review the full report, and at the December 14, 2020 meeting members will make a motion on the report.

(Please see Exhibit D1 and D2 for the (7) Recommendations)

Next Scheduled Meeting:

Monday, December 1, 2020

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

DRAFT