

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

Monday, September 12, 2016
1:30 P.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 1:30 p.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 Eddie Joe Williams.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Representative Bruce Cozart, Chair; Representative Charles L. Armstrong; Representative Gary Deffenbaugh; Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas; Representative Jon Eubanks; Representative Jeremy Gillam; Representative Michael John Gray; Representative Justin Harris; Representative Grant Hodges; Representative Mark Lowery; Representative Mark McElroy; Representative Reginald Murdock; Representative James Ratliff; and Representative John W. Walker.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Jon Woods; Representative Karilyn Brown; Representative Dan M. Douglas; Representative R. Trevor Drown; Representative David Fielding; Representative Vivian Flowers; Representative Stephen Meeks; Representative Mathew Pitsch; Representative Sue Scott; Representative James Sturch; Representative John Vines; and Representative Marshall Wright.

Minutes:

Without objection, the minutes of August 22, 2016 and August 23, 2016, were approved as written.

Exhibits:

Exhibit C1 – 08/22/16 Minutes

Exhibit C2 – 08/23/16 Minutes

Reports from Members Who Attended Recent Meetings Concerning Public or Higher Education

The Honorable Mark Lowery, State Representative, District 39, was recognized. Representative Lowery reminded members that the Legislative Task Force to Study the Realignment of Higher Education is starting to wrap up hearings on realignment. He stated the Task Force will hear from presidents of various colleges and universities that are not aligned with the system at meetings scheduled for September 14 and September 28, 2016. He noted the presentations would focus on the administrative and academic efficiencies achieved by nonaligned institutions. Representative Lowery said Task Force members will meet again in October to finalize a report to present to the House and Senate Interim Committees on Education by the deadline of November 1, 2016.

Discussion of Issues Related to Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Mr. Bill Gossage, Deputy Chief of Staff of External Operations for Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, and Former State Representative, District 82, was recognized. Mr. Gossage introduced **Dr. Robert Eaker**, Professor Emeritus, Middle Tennessee State University, and said it was an honor to have him at the meeting today. Mr. Gossage said he has admired Dr. Eaker and has respected his accomplishments for many years.

The Honorable Jeremy Gillam, Speaker of the House, and State Representative, District 45, was recognized. Representative Gillam said it is an Arkansas tradition to present an Arkansas Traveler Certificate to distinguished men and women from around the country who come and give of their time and graciously engage with us in the process. He stated the Certificate, created in 1941 by the Arkansas General Assembly, officially commissions the recipient as an ambassador for the state. Representative Gillam presented Certificates to **Dr. Eaker** and **Mr. Ed Ackerman**, President, Solution Tree, Incorporated, as tokens of appreciation for what they have done for education throughout the country.

Presenter:

Dr. Robert Eaker, Professor Emeritus, Middle Tennessee State University, was recognized. Dr. Eaker opened his presentation with comments about his upbringing, education, marriage, and career. He utilized a PowerPoint presentation, *Professional Learning Communities: What Are They and How Do They Work*, in his discussion. Dr. Eaker remarked that for the last twenty years, a movement to improve schools and to get students to learn more has been sweeping North America, and increasingly the world. He said two things have been happening at the same time: 1) trying to improve education through testing, and 2) using test scores to some measure to evaluate teachers, both of which involve a lot of money. He said concurrently, across the United States, states have been getting more and more schools to function as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs); and the reason is PLCs are the best hope for improving schools, both in teaching quality and levels of learning. In his introduction, Dr. Eaker paraphrased a well-known educator and author, Dr. Mike Schmoker, in asking: what if someone was to say there is a proven way that is based on common sense, does not cost a lot of money, has hundreds of schools as evidence that it works, has researchers who say it works, and is already being implemented. Dr. Eaker said the concept is called Professional Learning Communities at Work, and remarked that what makes it successful could be called *common sense*. He said the concept of Professional Learning Communities at Work represents a new way of thinking and acting, and is grounded in three (3) fundamental shifts from more traditional approaches to school improvement. Dr. Eaker discussed each of the shifts in depth, and provided research results. He discussed shifts in focus from: 1) “teaching” to “learning;” 2) teachers working in isolation to working in collaborative teams; and 3) “intention” to “results.” His discussion included aligning efforts, organizing collaborative teams, collaboratively analyzing student learning data, developing systematic plans to provide additional time and support for students, and the implications for statewide implementation of PLCs. Dr. Eaker concluded by saying that parents in Arkansas want three (3) things for their kids: 1) to be psychologically and physically safe, 2) to feel special, and 3) to learn; and encouraged putting a system in place to make that happen.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- providing clarity to the mechanics of collaboration,
- data on number of schools in Arkansas that are already PLCs,
- PLCs and high school remediation,
- PLC model as an asset to programs that combine subjects to improve literacy across the board,
- creating a more personalized learning experience; phasing out Carnegie Units,
- proficient students mentoring struggling students,
- transitional issues for teachers when shifting from a collegiate environment to real life,
- achieving student success through relentless pressure gracefully applied,
- four-year teacher colleges retaining value,
- evaluating the efficiency of the collaborative team approach in the PLC model,
- ensure children are learning in school instead of relying on home learning environments,
- learning social skills in school, and
- appropriateness of PLC model cutting across every school in the state; encouraging movement in that direction and eventual enactment.

Representative Cozart thanked Dr. Eaker and remarked it had been a great presentation. He said he hoped Dr. Eaker would appear before the Committees again in the near future.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Professional Learning Communities: What Are They and How Do They Work, Dr. Robert Eaker

Handout:

Professional Learning Communities: What Are They and How Do They Work, Dr. Robert Eaker

Discussion of *Project Future Story*

Project Future Story is a partnership among Southside School District, UACCB, Lyon College and Batesville area businesses that allows students to gain college credit while in high school.

The Honorable Jane English, State Senator, District 34, and Chair, Senate Interim Committee on Education, was recognized. Senator English introduced **Ms. Deborah J. Frazier**, Chancellor, University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville (UACCB) and **Mr. Roger Rich**, Superintendent, Southside School District. At the request of Senator English, current and former students of the Southside Charter High School who were present introduced themselves:

Kendra Walls, Student
Natalie Humphrey, Student
Seth Johnson, Student
Matt Reeves, Student
Anthony Moreno, Student

Brayden Eckard, Former Student
Employee of Bad Boy Mowers
Morgan Lessley, Student
Taylor Dale, Student
Chae Wolf, Student

Senator English said one of the reasons she invited Ms. Frazier and Mr. Rich to make a presentation about *Project Future Story* is the importance of knowing what a community is doing to improve the future of its citizens. Senator English said these young people have stories to tell about successes achieved through participation in the Project.

The Honorable James Sturch, State Representative, District 63, was recognized. Representative Sturch stated that *Project Future Story* deserves attention and merit, and is a program that can be implemented around the state.

Presenters:

Ms. Deborah J. Frazier, Chancellor, University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville, and **Mr. Roger Rich**, Superintendent, Southside School District, were recognized. Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Frazier and Mr. Rich related the history behind Southside School District, its pre-K through career program, and the focus of *Project Future Story* on creating career opportunities through the achievement of a value-added diploma. Areas of discussion included families and schools, teaching and learning, the economy, building pathways to the future, initial pathways, benefits of technical paths, benefits of college paths, partnerships, and successes. Throughout the discussion, the current and former students of Southside Charter High School shared personal histories pertinent to their education and its impact on their future. Mr. Rich commented that this rural education model can be replicated throughout the state, and discussed challenges that lie ahead.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- providing options to the justice system,
- student demographics,
- eligibility of students for scholarships, including lottery scholarships,
- conditioning students for lower wages,
- providing opportunities for students to realize higher aspirations,
- expanding the program across the state,
- value of partnerships with educational and business members of the community.

PowerPoint Presentation:
Project Future Story

Handout:
Project Future Story

Discussion of a Differentiated Funding Model for Special Education

The Honorable Uvalde Lindsey, State Senator, District 4, and Vice Chair of the Senate Interim Committee on Education, was recognized. Senator Lindsey requested Ms. Sivan Tuchman to appear before the Committees and, for informational and discussion purposes, explain a model for more money per student for special education without new funding.

Presenter:

Ms. Sivan Tuchman, Doctoral Academy Fellow, Office for Education Policy, University of Arkansas, was recognized. Ms. Tuchman discussed a different way of looking at special education funding, which, she said, was not being done anywhere else in the country. She said it involves utilizing a dynamic special education funding formula that will potentially alleviate some of the pressures the state is under to service students with disabilities in the state. Ms. Tuchman discussed the current funding of 2.9 special education teachers per 500 students, which assumes all districts have the same needs. She stated the new approach recommends student-based allocation (SBA), variable funding using disability and placement, and additional funding for small districts. She said the new formula would provide funding based on individual student needs, meet the financial needs of schools that serve students with higher needs, compensate schools and districts without economies of scale to support specialized programs, be relatively cost neutral, and reduce the need for catastrophic aid.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ≡ consideration is only for state funds,
- ≡ resulting monetary appropriations by the legislature,
- ≡ new approach addresses needs of complaints within the state that students with disabilities do not seem properly funded,
- ≡ drafting of alternative proposals, and
- ≡ recommendation for additional study.

PowerPoint Presentation:
Student-Based Allocation of Special Education Funding

Handout:
Student-Based Allocation of Special Education Funding

Next Scheduled Meeting:
Tuesday, September 13, 2016, at 9:00 a.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol, Little Rock

Adjournment:
The meeting adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

Approved: 10/03/16