

MEETING SUMMARY
K-12 AND VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Tuesday, September 15, 2015
1:30 P.M.
Room 138, State Capitol
Little Rock, Arkansas

Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas, the Chair of the K-12 and Vocational-Technical Institutions Subcommittee of the House Interim Committee on Education, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS OF THE K-12 AND VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE IN ATTENDANCE: Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas, Chair; Representative Mark McElroy, Vice Chair; and Representative Warwick Sabin.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Joyce Elliott; Representative Charles L. Armstrong; Representative Les Eaves; Representative David Fielding; Representative Justin Gonzales; Representative Michael John Gray; Representative Michelle Gray; Representative Sue Scott; Representative Dan Sullivan; and Representative John Walker.

Remarks by the Chair and Vice Chair

Representative Douglas introduced herself, presented a brief explanation of the responsibilities of the Subcommittee, and welcomed members.

The Honorable Mark McElroy, State Representative, District 11, and Vice Chair of the Subcommittee, was recognized. Representative McElroy introduced himself, and discussed the importance of education to the State of Arkansas.

Update on the Development of Rules and Regulations Required to Implement the Provisions of Act 962 of 2015

Presenter:

Mr. Terry Granderson, Interim Director, Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation (DPSAFT), was recognized. Mr. Granderson discussed actions taken to fulfill the requirements of Act 962 of 2015. He referenced a handout listing school districts which qualify for the High-Growth School District Loan Program (HGLP). He noted there are thirty (30) districts that meet the criteria of the statute. He pointed out maps in the handout which showed these districts by education service cooperatives. He indicated that totals for 2013-2015 and 2015-2017 Project by Cooperative/Count and Project by Cooperative/Funds are also included. He said the list of qualified districts has not yet been voted on by the Arkansas Commission for Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation (Commission), which will meet Friday, September 18, 2015. Mr. Granderson stated the list will be published on the DPSAFT website following the meeting of the Commission. Mr. Granderson related that another action required by Act 962 is to write rules for the Academic Facilities Extraordinary Circumstances Program. He said these rules are now written and will mirror the statute. He noted a project/funding application for school districts accompanies the rules and lists eligibility criteria: declining enrollment, rapid enrollment growth, insufficient bonding capacity, low assessed property valuations, and being at or above the ninety-fifth percentile on the academic facilities wealth index. He stated that, by statute, this application needs approval before any further action is taken.

Contributors to the Discussion:

Mr. Corey Biggs, Coordinator of Special Projects, Fiscal and Administrative Services, Arkansas Department of Education

Mr. Shane Broadway, Vice President for Governmental Relations, Arkansas State University System

Mr. Isaac Linam, Staff Attorney, Bureau of Legislative Research

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- qualifications for being defined as a high-growth school district,
- eligibility for funding through other programs,
- lack of funding for the HGLP,
- eligibility for a loan for districts that have failed to pass a millage to meet partnership responsibility,
- defining each category of criteria for extraordinary circumstances,
- process for promulgating rules,
- setting the Average Daily Membership (ADM) as being *at least 4% higher* in the definition for a growth district in the original statute,
- clarification of the original intent of the legislature when put into statute, and its current relevancy, and
- good faith intent and judgment in responding to growth and decline in the original process.

Exhibit:

Exhibit C – Act 962 of the 2015 Regular Session

Handout:

Act 962 of 2015, High-Growth School Districts

Representative Mark McElroy, taking up the role of Chair, announced that there would be a deviation from the agenda, and the Subcommittee would next take up Item E.

Discussion of Issues Related to the Installation of Seat Belts on School Buses

Presenters:

Representative McElroy was recognized, and opened a conversation about installation of seat belts and safety on school buses. He played a video on this issue for the Subcommittee. Representative McElroy stated the hard part of this venture is finding the money for installation: \$10,000 to \$12,000 per bus. He explained that his idea is to allow patrons in a school district to petition the School Board for 20% of the registered voters in the last election to place on the next regular election a millage earmarked for seat belts on school buses.

Ms. Hannah Alder, Elementary Student, Star City, Arkansas, was recognized. Ms. Alder stated that school buses are equipped with seat belts for bus drivers, but not for children. She made the point that, should an accident occur, the school bus driver would be held safely in the seat, but children would be thrown around the bus. She showed drawings she made for a 4-H project that illustrate the difference seat belts make for the safety of children.

Mr. Mike Simmons, Senior Transportation Manager, Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation, was recognized, and discussed shifting arguments on the issue of seat belts in school buses. He presented statistics on school buses and routes in Arkansas. He stated that in the last fifteen (15) years, in 645 million miles run on school bus routes, there have been four (4) on-board student fatalities in two (2) accidents. He noted the real concern lies on accidents occurring outside the school bus where there have been six (6) fatalities loading and unloading students. Mr. Simmons stated that Standard 17, issued by the federal government in 1977, completely changed the school bus industry and required school buses to meet motor vehicle safety standards. He commented there are thirty-six (36) motor vehicle safety standards which only deal with school

buses. Mr. Simmons additionally discussed *Summary Report: Alabama School Bus Seat Belt Pilot Project*, and the reason the Alabama study was brought about. He also said that, following the investigation of two accidents, in Port St. Lucie, Florida, and Chesterfield, New Jersey, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) seriously recommends lap/shoulder belts for school buses. Mr. Simmons discussed his strong opposition to lap belts; and concluded by saying that cost can never be compared with safety.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- * number of children in a seat to be accommodated with a seat belt,
- * approaching car dealers to donate a percentage of funds from each car sold for seat belt installation,
- * training children on proper use of seat belts, and
- * federal or Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations regarding seat belts.

Video:

Rossen Reports: Why don't most school buses have seat belts?

Links:

Today Show:

<http://www.today.com/news/rossen-reports-why-dont-most-school-buses-have-seat-belts-t43216>
<http://www.today.com/video/rossen-reports-why-dont-most-school-buses-have-seat-belts-522873923682>
<http://video.lycos.com/video/view/rossen-reports-why-dont-most-school-buses-have-seat-belts-1916665/>

Fox 16, Little Rock:

<http://www.fox16.com/news/local-news/lawmaker-wants-voters-to-make-call-on-school-bus-seat-belts>

Handouts:

Cost of Three-Point Seat Belts for School Buses

Fifth Annual Survey Verifies Motorists Continue to Pass Stopped School Buses, National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS), Press Release, September 14, 2015

National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT) Letter to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), July 2015

NAPT/National School Transportation Association (NSTA) Response to National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Recommendations, December, 2013

NSTA Comments to NHTSA Re Seat Belts on School Buses

Pricing for Lap/Shoulder Belts in New Florida School Buses, Chart

Safety Recommendation, NTSB, September 2013

Summary Report: Alabama School Bus Seat Belt Pilot Project, University Transportation Center for Alabama (UTCA), University of Alabama, 2010

The Equipping and Use of Passenger Lap/Shoulder Belts in School Buses, NASDPTS, Position Paper, February, 2014

Representative McElroy announced that the Committees would now take up Item D on the agenda.

Initial Discussion of Possible Reforms to the Operations of Alternative Learning Environment (ALE) Programs

Presenter:

Dr. Deborah Jones, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Learning Services, Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), was recognized. Dr. Jones, utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, discussed the importance of alternative education, and the current evolutionary paradigm for the programs in Arkansas. She said alternative education serves over 10,000 students in the state who do not function well in a traditional setting. She discussed effectiveness measures and presented 2014-15 ALE statistics, including financials. She talked about goals and the

focus on graduating students with skills to pursue a career and be self-sufficient. She said, while there is not a clear plan of action right now, the ADE, with input from across the state, will devise one. Dr. Jones discussed the progress of the Arkansas National Guard Youth Challenge, a residential program serving at-risk youth between the ages of 16 and 18. Dr. Jones said the creation of a Strategic Planning Council, involving ALE leaders in the state, will help make recommendations for ALE programs and provide models for school districts. She commented that the plan is for the Council to start meeting in November, and meet once a month for six months to determine recommendations.

Contributor to the Discussion:

Mr. Johnny Key, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- clarification of funding for ALE students,
- giving credit for prior learning,
- school districts choosing different ALE models,
- certification and giving consistency to teachers,
- engaging students, and
- working with co-models in the reform.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Learning Services, ALE Future Planning

Handout:

Learning Services, ALE Future Planning

Next Scheduled Meeting:

To be determined.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 3:18 p.m.

Approved: 03/14/16