

MEETING SUMMARY

JOINT MEETING
OF THE
HOUSE AND SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION

Monday, October 23, 2017

1:30 P.M.

Cafeteria, Marvell-Elaine High School, 1018 Hwy. 49, #B
Marvell, Arkansas

Senator Joyce Elliott, the Vice Chair of the Senate 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 Joyce Elliott, Vice Chair; Senator Linda Chesterfield; and Senator Alan Clark.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Representative Charlotte V. Douglas, Vice Chair; Representative Rick Beck; Representative Jon Eubanks; Representative Mickey Gates; Representative Mark McElroy; Representative Stephen Meeks; Representative James Sturch; and Representative Dan Sullivan.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Stephanie Flowers; Senator Eddie Joe Williams; Representative Charles Blake; Representative Vivian Flowers; Representative Reginald Murdock; Representative Aaron Pilkington; and Representative Chris Richey.

Remarks by the Chairs

Senator Elliott and **Representative Charlotte V. Douglas**, Vice Chair of the House Interim Committee on Education, welcomed attendees to the meeting, and thanked the staff of Marvell-Elaine High School for their hospitality. Senator Elliott commented that the Education Committees have discussed the notion that not everything happens in Little Rock, so, therefore, every Committee meeting should not be held in Little Rock. She said she has been excited about the visit to Marvell today, and looks forward to meetings in other parts of the state. Senator Elliott offered the apologies of the Senate and House Chairs, who could not be present at the meeting because of scheduling conflicts. Representative Douglas commented about the eloquence with which **Dr. Joyce Cottoms**, superintendent of the Marvell-Elaine School District, represents the district; and about the good job she is doing to communicate the Marvell-Elaine story around the state.

Welcome and Introductions

Members of the Education Committees, other legislators, and the audience, which included representatives from the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), the Department of Career Education (ACE), and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, introduced themselves. Mr. Clark Hall, County Judge, Phillips County, and a former state representative, was recognized and introduced himself.

Dr. Joyce Cottoms, Superintendent, Marvell-Elaine School District, was recognized. Dr. Cottoms welcomed the legislators on behalf of the Board of Directors, the faculty, the staff, and the students. She shared some things going on in the Marvell-Elaine School District which will play a great part in improving the schools and enhancing student achievement. She said the district has partnered with Opa! Food Management; has applied for, and received, a school-based health grant; and will benefit from a bond restructuring which passed and will enable the district to move forward with needed renovation and other construction.

Dr. Cottoms made additional recognitions in the audience, including Mr. Clyde Williams and Mr. Mark English of the School Board; Mr. Curtis Pettie of the Marvell City Council; members of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel; Ms. Beatrice Clark Shelby, Executive Director, and other members of the Boys, Girls, Adults Community Development Center (BGA-CDC); members of the Rural Community Alliance; Dr. Tommie Henderson, High School Principal; Ms. Sylvia Moore, Elementary School Principal; and the high school students.

Discussion of Policies and Programs Implemented by the Marvell-Elaine School District That Have Enhanced the Achievement of the District's Students

Presenter:

Dr. Tommie Henderson, Principal, Marvell-Elaine High School, was recognized. Dr. Henderson briefly related the district's past struggles resulting from a consolidation between the Marvell and Elaine school districts in 2006. He said that merger entailed bringing rival communities together, while supporting the individuality of each community. He said another challenge had been to ensure that disciplinary standards of the school were firmly established. He said he is proud of the work done by those who came before him, because the district now has some of the best, strongest, and most astute students in the state. Dr. Henderson stated the school is grateful for the support the state provides, and for grants that help support afterschool programs and the growth of students. He said that, under his leadership at the high school, work would focus on redeveloping the entire curriculum, and modernizing the way in which the technological infrastructure at the school is used. He noted the high school is going to a strict one-to-one program, a bookless school; and is working with teachers, parents, and the community to ensure that students are able to access information everywhere. Dr. Henderson stated that students at the high school are currently pushing the limits; that, out of a total enrollment of 174 students, there were 87 honor roll students this past quarter.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ❖ funding for afterschool programs,
- ❖ number of Advanced Placement (AP) classes at the high school,
- ❖ online textbooks,
- ❖ getting Broadband into remote areas and end-of-road communities,
- ❖ other possible environments in which students can access quality services to complete school work,
- ❖ mobile hot spots on busses,
- ❖ challenges faced in redeveloping the curriculum, and
- ❖ Professional Learning Community (PLC) grants.

Presenter:

Ms. Sylvia Moore, Principal, Marvell-Elaine Elementary School, was recognized. Ms. Moore stated the success of the elementary school is due to the assistance of dedicated teachers, staff, and partners (the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation and the BGA-CDC). She discussed achievements stemming from grants from the Good to Great Grant Program, the Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Program, and, the CDF (Children's Defense Fund) Freedom Schools Program.

Contributors to the Discussion:

Ms. Angela Duran, Campaign Director, Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading
Mr. Andrew Ford, Senior Associate, Education & Community Change, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- absentee program in K-12,
- sustaining student growth past Grade 3 in elementary school,
- need of funding for additional programs, including providing incentives for students, and field trips,
- appropriate age at which to introduce technology,
- considering K-J, kindergarten through jobs,

- ability for students from Elaine and Snow Lake to participate in pre-K,
- use of satellite facilities in the district,
- problems found with documentation for students to get into pre-K,
- replicating the formula for Marvell-Elaine's success,
- preparing teachers to be prepared for students with dyslexia,
- using NSLA funds for Chromebooks, and
- opening closed facilities in remote areas to accommodate physical and educational needs of students.

Mr. Curtis Pettie, Council Member, Marvell City Council, was recognized. Mr. Pettie stated that the work being done by Dr. Cottoms and others in the school district is making a great difference in the community and the way it is perceived.

The Honorable Chris Richey, State Representative, District 12, was recognized. Representative Richey stated he is very proud of what is going on in Marvell. He complimented Dr. Cottoms, her staff, and the School Board.

The Honorable Linda Chesterfield, State Senator, District 30, was recognized. Senator Chesterfield requested that Commissioner Key elaborate on what legislators should do as policymakers to facilitate the kind of progress shown in the Marvell-Elaine School District.

Mr. Johnny Key, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Commissioner Key commented that legislators should: be present to show recognition to a community and to support progress and success in the school district; note continuing successful trends in K-12; continue taking steps to hone in on three of the things that research says will move the needle for students: tutoring, pre-K, and before- and after-school programs; and bring focus to areas that do work.

Handout:

Marvell-Elaine Reads

Next Scheduled Meetings:

Monday, November 20, 2017, at 1:30 p.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol, Little Rock

Tuesday, November 21, 2017, at 9:00 a.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol, Little Rock

Adjournment:

The meeting recessed at 2:43 p.m. a tour of Marvell-Elaine High School.

Approved: 11/20/2017