

MINUTES**JOINT PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE****May 29, 2018**

The Joint Performance Review Committee met Tuesday, May 29, 2018 at 1:00 p.m., in Room A, MAC Building, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Committee members present: Senators Missy Irvin, Senate Chair, John Cooper, Jonathan Dismang, Lance Eads, Trent Garner, Jimmy Hickey, Jr., Terry Rice. Representatives Mark Lowery, House Chair, Scott Baltz, Sonia Eubanks Barker, LeAnne Burch, David Fielding, Jack Fortner, John Maddox, Reginald Murdock, Aaron Pilkington, Brandt Smith, Dan Sullivan, and Clarke Tucker.

Other members present: Senator Alan Clark. Representatives Kim Hammer, Charles Blake, Vivian Flowers, Fredrick Love, David Meeks, James Sorvillo, and John Walker.

Call to Order

Senator Irvin called the meeting to order.

Opening Remarks by Committee Chairs

Senator Irvin said the meeting will focus on ways to improve school safety. The JPR Committee is paralleling the Governor's Arkansas School Safety Commission with the goal of finding solutions.

Representative Lowery encouraged legislators to let the JPR Co-Chairs know of any issues they would like the Committee to consider at future meetings. He said one topic on the agenda for the upcoming June 6, 2018 Committee meeting is the distribution and effectiveness of the tobacco settlement monies. Legislators can request that other issues be added to the June 6th agenda.

Consideration of a Motion to Approve Minutes of January 25, 2018 [Exhibit C]

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2018 Joint Performance Review Committee meeting was approved without objection.

Update on the Work of the Governor's Arkansas School Safety Commission [Exhibit D, D-1]

Dr. Cheryl May, Commission Chair, and Director, Criminal Justice Institute (CJI), was recognized for a presentation. Dr. May gave a PowerPoint and explained that the formation of the Governor's Arkansas School Safety Commission was created by an Executive Order issued by the Governor on March 1, 2018. She gave an overview of the Commission and its primary vision to make Arkansas's K-12 schools safer. The Commission consists of eighteen members appointed by the Governor. The Commission meets twice a month and the focus area subcommittees meet in between the full Commission meetings. The Commission is charged with compiling a report to be presented to the Governor and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE). The preliminary report is due July 1, 2018 and the final report is due November 30, 2018. The Commission will base its recommendations on changes it believes are necessary to increase school safety. The report will include:

- A study and analysis of the safety of K-12 schools, including consideration of the physical and mental health of students
- A study of the architecture and construction of school buildings as it relates to the safety of students and staff in those buildings, including prevention and response to active shooter threats

- Undertake school visits with School Resource Officers, principals, counselors, superintendents, and others to develop a comprehensive view of the issues

Dr. May identified areas the Commission is researching, such as identification of what is currently in place, identification of best practices, and steps necessary to fill the gaps. The Commission identified key issues such as prevention, protection, mitigation, and recovery. She highlighted focus areas:

- Current legislation- Act 484 of 2013, the Safe Schools Initiative Act, amended by Act 950 of 2015, the School Safety Act, which incorporated the RAVE Panic Button into public schools. Act 541 of 2017 prevents school security records from being subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
- Intelligence/Communication models designed to help schools communicate with law enforcement regarding threats, including using tip lines. Tip lines can use anonymous applications such as "See Something/Say Something" and "It is Safe to Tell"
- Safety and Security Audits- a variety of safety audits are available to schools, but no standardized method exists
- Emergency Operation Plans and Active Shooter Drills- active shooter drills are to be performed in compliance with Act 484 of 2013
- Law Enforcement and Security- includes School Resource Officers (SROs), certified law enforcement officers trained to act as mentors, teachers, and informal counselors providing security for schools. Commissioned School Security Officers (CSSOs), non-law enforcement individuals on staff at schools, are trained and experienced, and capable of carrying weapons
- Auxiliary Officers/Deputies- sworn law enforcement officers who volunteer their time
- Physical Security- enhanced physical security for school building design, single point entry, and hardening school buildings currently considered "soft targets"

Other areas the Commission is studying are mental health awareness programs, which help identify individuals in crisis, and crisis intervention requiring all law enforcement officers attend a forty-hour training program to better identify individuals with mental health disorders. Behavioral threat assessment team training is offered to schools through the U.S. Department of Education.

Legislators discussed mental health programs and prevention programs with Dr. May. She was asked if the Commission has any data on the impact from violent video games and other violent games found on the internet. She said the issue has not yet been addressed by the Commission. Legislators also discussed the training offered to CSSOs and if the Commission has considered expanding training to include school personnel. Legislators continued discussions with Dr. May on school building design and consideration of a requirement for schools to conduct safety and security audits.

Discussion of School Safety Through Technology, Early Intervention for At-Risk Students, and Early Warning Systems

Harvey B. Hughes, Founder and Chief Strategist, Hughes Education, Dr. Glen Fenter, Superintendent, Marion Public Schools, and Kelly Colbert, Director of Special Education, Paragould School District, were recognized. Mr. Hughes gave a Power Point focused on early warning, early identification for at-risk students, and improved school safety through technology. He provided definitions for at-risk students:

- Students who exhibit behavioral and/or academic concerns
- Students who are disengaging mentally, physically and emotionally
- Students who commit violent acts on themselves or other students

- Students who are victims of abuse, neglect, serious emotional and/or mental, behavior disturbance

Mr. Hughes played a portion of an audio recording and discussed comments made by Florida Senator Marco Rubio following the tragic shooting at the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Mr. Hughes noted that Senator Rubio focused on insufficiencies found in Florida's school programs regarding identifying and reporting of students with violent tendencies. Senator Rubio also commented on the data available to Florida's schools and the lack of coordination between law enforcement, school officials, and mental health providers, which he believed contributed to the tragedy.

Mr. Hughes described data systems that currently exist in education as being locked in silos with no communication paths connecting the data. The system he developed collects existing data, validates the data, and provides implementation of early warning and early intervention procedures. The Smart Data Systems program is an early warning and early intervention tracking system that analyzes district-wide real-time data with reports on academic and behavioral trends, discipline outcomes, and disproportionately high rates of cyber-bullying among student groups. The program provides school personnel with the ability to identify potentially at-risk students by capturing data on pre-determined triggers like school attendance, behavioral misconduct and academic course failure. These triggers help predict student threat and violent behavior using data captured directly from the school district's existing data.

Dr. Fenter addressed the Committee commenting on the fact that today's school systems are dealing with students who are completely different than school systems were designed to support. Today's school climate is impacted by social media with students operating in a very different emotional landscape that today's teachers and public schools have not encountered. Dr. Fenter responded to questions about teacher education and training and whether or not modification and updates should be implemented. Dr. Fenter believes the answer is the creation of partnerships between public schools, mental health programs, law enforcement and software programs like what Mr. Hughes has created.

Kelly Colbert, Director of Special Education, Paragould School District, said Mr. Hughes' software program is used in her school and provides instant data and information on attendance and behavior. She said the information allows school personnel to intervene and provide the right assistance that students need.

Hugh Inman, Director of Secondary Education, Marion School District, discussed the data system that Mr. Hughes developed for the Marion Public Schools. The system collects data from over one dozen state data bases and incorporates the data into one program for use by Marion school personnel. Legislators discussed the difficulties public schools face in providing a safe environment for students.

Representative Lowery told Committee members a topic for discussion at a future meeting will be the barriers law enforcement face in their ability to notify schools about individual students who have been charged with a violent crime. Senator Irvin indicated that the discussion of data collection by public schools will be continued at a future meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.