

State of Arkansas

77th General Assembly

Regular Session, 1989

A Bill

SENATE BILL

293

By: Senator Malone

For An Act To Be Entitled

"AN ACT TO ESTABLISH AN OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; TO PROVIDE FOR ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT REPORT CARDS; TO CREATE AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTABILITY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. This act shall be known as and may be cited as the "School Report Cards Act."

SECTION 2. In order to enhance the public's access to public school performance indicators and to better measure the dividends paid on the increasing public investment in Arkansas' schools, the General Assembly finds that a separate office of accountability should be established within the State Department of Education. The foremost obligation of this office shall be to publish annual "school report cards" assessing the performance of schools and school districts with comparable characteristics, across a range of indicators and over a period of time, and providing information to set future performance goals for each school or school district. A co-equal obligation of this office is to be accurate and open with the Department, the Advisory Committee, the subcommittee, and the public. It is not to serve as a public relations organ of the Department of Education.

SECTION 3. (a) There is created the Office of Accountability within the Department of Education.

(b) The Director of General Education shall establish a coordinator and staff for the Office of Accountability.

(c) The coordinator and staff shall assist the citizens Advisory Committee on Accountability in the annual publication of school report cards,

as defined in this act, and the performance of other duties as set forth herein.

SECTION 4. (a) Beginning in 1990, the Office of Accountability shall issue an annual report on the performance of each public school district in the state and/or where feasible, on the performance of each school within a school district. This report will be known as the "school report card" and shall be an index of each school or school district's performance measured against statewide standards for comparable school districts and schools. The "school report card" shall make comparisons to a school or school district's performance in preceding years and project goals in performance categories.

(b) The "school report card" shall contain, but not be limited to, the school district's or school's drop out rate; college going rate; attendance rate; test scores on nationally-normed tests; number of students required to take remedial courses in high school and college; ratio of expenditures per pupil on administrative, athletic, and gifted and talented expenses.

(c) The "school report card" must be published no later than October 31 of each year, and it shall be published in a format that can be easily understood by parents and other members of the community who are not professional educators.

SECTION 5. In addition to the annual issuance of the "school report cards", the Office of Accountability shall be responsible for the following:

(1) Development of automated data systems for financial and educational reporting to department from the schools and/or school districts;

(2) Development of longitudinal student and school reporting for accurate and fair comparative analysis for purposes of school improvement;

(3) Development of methods to determine attitudes toward educational matters;

(4) Establishment of schedules for publication of information to keep the public and media informed on a regular and timely basis; and

(5) Working with program approval and certification sections of the State Department of Education and the State Department of Higher Education and the individual colleges to insure reasonable, equitable and excellent preparation of certified personnel in the institutions, both public and private, of higher education.

SECTION 6. (a) The Office of Accountability shall simultaneously make available to the Joint Interim Subcommittee and the Advisory Committee any and all material the Office submits to the Director of the State Department of Education.

(b) The staff of the Office of Accountability shall work cooperatively with and provide any necessary assistance to the Joint Interim Subcommittee.

SECTION 7. (a) To assist the Office of Accountability, there is established the Advisory Committee on Accountability to be composed of the following members:

(1) Director of the State Department of Education or her designee, who shall act as secretary to the Advisory Committee;

(2) Three (3) members of the business community with knowledge in the particular areas of concern;

(3) One (1) member of the Arkansas Senate;

(4) One (1) member of the Arkansas House of Representatives;

(5) One (1) person from a list of three (3) names submitted by the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA);

(6) One (1) person who has a substantial knowledge of teaching in public schools and can adequately serve;

(7) One (1) parent of a school-aged child;

(8) One (1) person from a list of three (3) names submitted by the deans of the colleges of education of the institutions of higher learning in the state.

(b) (1) The three (3) members from the business community, the parent, the individual with teaching experience, the AAEA representative, and the representative of the deans, shall be appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation of the Senate.

(2) The Committee on Committees shall appoint the Senate member to a two (2) year term.

(3) The Speaker of the House shall appoint the House member to a two (2) year term.

(4) All voting members shall serve four (4) year terms except that the terms of two (2) initial members shall expire after two (2) years of service, the terms of two (2) other initial members shall expire after three

(3) years of service. All terms shall expire on April 1st. Membership is limited to two (2) terms.

(5) The Director/designee and the legislative members of the committee shall serve as advisory members without voting privileges.

(c) Non-state employee committee members and legislative members of the committee shall serve without compensation but shall be entitled to reimbursement of expenses and mileage allowances for attendance at committee meetings at the same rate authorized by law for legislators' attendance at meetings of joint interim committees of the General Assembly.

SECTION 8. (a) To assist the General Assembly, there is established the Joint Interim Subcommittee of the Education Committee on Educational Reform in Arkansas to be composed of the following members:

(1) Two (2) members of the Revenue and Taxation Committee (one [1] Senator and one [1] Representative);

(2) Two (2) members of the Joint Budget Committee (one [1] Senator and one [1] Representative);

(3) Two (2) members of the Legislative Joint Auditing Committee (one [1] Senator and one [1] Representative);

(4) Four (4) members from the Education Committee (two [2] Senators and two [2] Representatives).

(b) (1) The Committee on Committees, after consultation with the appropriate committee chairman, shall appoint the Senate members, and shall name the Senate co-chairman;

(2) The Speaker of the House, after consultation with the appropriate committee chairman, shall appoint the House members, and shall name the House co-chairman.

(c) The duties of the Joint Interim Subcommittee shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) Oversight of the Office of Accountability;

(2) Review of policy issues affecting educational reform in Arkansas;

(3) Sponsorship of innovative education projects in conjunction with school districts, cooperatives, institutions of higher education, the state Boards and Departments of Education and Higher Education, the Governor's Office and private institutions.

SECTION 9. (a) The Advisory Committee on Accountability shall submit prior to January first each year, a written report containing their findings and recommendations in regards to their specific areas of concern to the General Assembly and the State Board of Education.

(b) The members of the Committee on Accountability shall receive the assistance and cooperation of the staff of the Office of Accountability and any other related divisions within the State Department of Education and Higher Education, the Division of Computer Services and all other branches of state government.

SECTION 10. All provisions of this act of a general and permanent nature are amendatory to the Arkansas Code of 1987 Annotated and the Arkansas Code Revision Commission shall incorporate the same in the Code.

SECTION 11. All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this act are hereby repealed.

SECTION 12. EMERGENCY. It is hereby found and determined by the General Assembly that a program assessing the performance of Arkansas schools is needed to maintain the public's confidence in educational reform in this state; that upon its establishment, the office can begin accumulating necessary indicators of growth and improvement to supply to all citizens of the state; that in order to establish such a program within the Department of Education, this act needs to become effective immediately upon its passage. Therefore, an emergency is hereby declared and this act being necessary for the preservation of the public health, welfare and safety shall become effective immediately upon passage.