

MINUTES

JOINT ADEQUACY EVALUATION OVERSIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE

1:30 P.M.

Tuesday, November 24, 2009

Room 171, State Capitol

Little Rock, Arkansas

Representative Bill Abernathy, the House Co-Chair of the Joint Adequacy Evaluation Oversight Subcommittee, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS OF THE JOINT ADEQUACY EVALUATION OVERSIGHT

SUBCOMMITTEE IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Steve Bryles, Senate Co-Chair; Representative Bill Abernathy, House Co-Chair; Senator Jimmy Jeffress, Senate Vice-Chair; Representative Eddie Cheatham, House Vice-Chair; Senator Shane Broadway; Senator Joyce Elliott; Senator Kim Hendren; Senator Gene Jeffress; Senator Johnny Key; Senator Mary Anne Salmon; Representative Monty Betts; Representative Toni Bradford; Representative Les Carnine; Representative David Rainey; Representative R.D. Saunders; and Representative Charolette Wagner.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Paul Bookout; Senator Steve Faris; Senator Randy Laverty; Senator Jim Luker; Senator Larry Teague; Representative Tommy Lee Baker; Representative Jonathan Barnett; Representative Ann Clemmer; Representative Monty Davenport; Representative Jody Dickenson; Representative David Dunn; Representative Jane English; Representative Nathan George; Representative Steve Harrelson; Representative Debra Hobbs; Representative Ray Kidd; Representative Uvalde Lindsey; Representative Mark Martin; Representative Allen Maxwell; Representative Robert Moore; Representative George Overbey; Representative Mark Perry; Representative Roy Ragland; Representative Terry Rice; Representative Mary Slinkard; Representative Garry Smith; and Representative Tim Summers.

Without objection, the minutes of October 28, 2009, were approved as written.

Representative Abernathy announced that all except eight schools have turned in their adequacy reports; and emphasized that the reports from the remaining eight schools need to be turned in before the next meeting of the Subcommittee, so that complete adequacy information can be studied for the next session.

Discussion of Issues Pertaining to On-Line Professional Development for Educators

Representative Abernathy briefly summarized on-line professional development for educators as an introduction to the presentation of a staff report on how funds were being used in the program. He said the program was allocated up to \$4 million annually (about \$9 per student) to develop and implement a statewide professional development support system. The \$4 million comes out

of the \$50 per student (a total of \$22.4 million to \$23.1 million annually statewide) that is provided as professional development categorical funding. The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) distributes the \$4 million as grants to the Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN) and other groups for professional development. Because there was no information available on program results, Representative Abernathy had asked that Bureau of Legislative Research staff do research into the program's progress. He wanted to know what kind of results were being achieved, and how many teachers were using the on-line program for part of the annual requirement of 60 hours of professional development. Representative Abernathy expressed that the purpose of today's discussion is to evaluate the program.

Ms. Nell Smith, Senior Legislative Analyst, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized by Representative Abernathy.

Ms. Smith said that staff was asked to review the on-line professional development program and determine how the \$4 million that the program receives is spent. She said that staff did not address the quality of any of the courses offered, but just tried to determine what the state got for its money. Ms. Smith said that staff used documents provided in two binders by ADE and AETN for the review. As a check of the numbers on the documents in the binders, staff reviewed AASIS data, some bank records, and expenditure records.

Ms. Smith said the research was difficult because of:

- General lack of good documentation on the part of ADE and AETN
- Grant award letters did not specify how the money was to be used or funding time frames
- Few budgets from grantees and very little detail on those that were provided
- Inconsistency in the level of detail, making it difficult to make meaningful year-over-year comparisons

Ms. Smith then provided a comprehensive overview of the staff's report, including:

- Historical perspective
- Variety in types of professional development that is offered
- Funding breakdown and explanation of tables
- Course breakdown
- Course completion
- Course registrants
- Funding AETN received for the program
- Funding AAEA received for the program
- Funding for other grantees

A question and answer session followed. The session included discussions of:

- Initial guidelines and purpose of the professional development program
- Guidance from the General Assembly to agencies to carry out the program
- Annual 60 hours of required professional development for teachers
- On-line courses, course content, course development, course approvals, and credits
- Accountability for the assessment of teacher development
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the program
- Checks and balances for the program

Representative Abernathy expressed his thought that there was general unanimity with this being a good program concept to serve students.

Mr. Tony Brooks, Deputy Director and COO, AETN, and **Ms. Kathleen Branton**, Senior Director of Education and Government Relations, AETN, were recognized by Representative Abernathy.

Mr. Brooks commented on the growth of, and need for, this project. He said that when AETN first received \$2.9 million in February 2006, it got the program up and running by September, and had been very cautious about how the funds were spent. AETN wanted to spend the money on something teachers could use that would help them in the classroom, make them better teachers, and help them better educate children.

Ms. Branton commented that there wasn't a model for this program. Arkansas was stepping out and doing something that only Arizona had done. Arkansas is a national model now because of the development of this system. She said the courses are good, and the teachers like them and are taking them.

To help improve the program and for additional transparency, Mr. Brooks added that they have:

- 1) Already created a cash sub-fund for any monies from ADE so that the money can be separated out and specifics can be identified
- 2) Are implementing a project manager mode for that, so that another set of eyes can look at and monitor projects and funding
- 3) Are reporting more frequently to ADE

Dr. Diana Julian, Deputy Commissioner of Education, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized by Representative Abernathy.

Dr. Julian agreed that the process needs to be tightened up on both ends for more acute understanding; and it also needs to be documented. She also agreed that a formal assessment of the program is necessary and stated that the department is looking into it.

Ms. Debbie Coffman, Education Associate Director, Professional Development, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized by Representative Abernathy.

Ms. Coffman said all of the money has not been spent because, in light of rapidly changing technology, wise decisions need to be made to provide the most adequate professional development within a user-friendly system.

In conclusion, Representative Abernathy said that usually when a grant is given out, there is a purpose for the grant and that there should be accountability. He remarked that the Subcommittee is not seeing this at all in this case. He requested that the Department of Education furnish a report looking at this issue in terms of grant oversight and accountability; and see if it matches what is needed for professional development.

Representative Abernathy announced that the next meeting of the Subcommittee will be at

10:00 a.m. on December 3, 2009, in Room 171 of the State Capitol; with another meeting scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on December 14, 2009, in Room 171 of the State Capitol. There will also be a joint meeting of the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education at 10:00 a.m. on December 17, 2009, in Room 171 of the State Capitol.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.