

MINUTES

JOINT ADEQUACY EVALUATION OVERSIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE

1:30 P.M.

Monday, December 14, 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 Randy Laverty; Representative Tommy Lee Baker; Representative Nancy Blount; Representative Richard Carroll; Representative Eddie Cooper; Representative Robert Dale; Representative Monty Davenport; Representative Jody Dickenson; Representative Ray Kidd; Representative Buddy Lovell; Representative Tracy Pennartz; Representative Mark Perry; Representative Roy Ragland; Representative Johnnie Roebuck; and Representative Tim Summers.

Without objection, the minutes of November 24, 2009, were approved as written.

Updated Information Concerning the Deer/Mt. Judea School District

Mr. Richard Denniston, the Superintendent of the Deer/Mt. Judea School District, was recognized. Mr. Denniston, utilizing a handout, provided the Subcommittee with an update on the efforts to address the issue of possible administrative consolidation in Newton County, which includes the Deer/Mt. Judea School District. Mr. Denniston discussed the concept of “consolidation by collaboration,” which would entail the Jasper School District releasing a portion of its territory that contained the former Oark School District to the Deer/Mt. Judea School District. Calling the proposal a “win-win” situation for everyone, Mr. Denniston went on to enumerate the benefits to all parties involved and to outline the two possible methods by which this could be accomplished, one administrative and one statutory.

An extensive discussion ensued. Among the topics covered were:

- Outstanding bonded indebtedness of each school district
- Salary schedule for Deer/Mt. Judea School District

- Annexation of the former Oark School District by the Jasper School District in 2004 as a result of Act 60 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003
- Transportation of students in challenging terrain
- Consolidation incentive funding
- Effect proposed change would make on Facilities Wealth Index of two (2) school districts
- Whether or not there is united support from the involved school districts
- Potential changes to the composition of the two (2) school boards

Senator Randy Laverty and Representative Roy Ragland, whose respective legislative districts encompass the school districts involved, were recognized and spoke about the necessity of resolving the issues raised by the potential administrative consolidation of the Deer/Mt. Judea School District.

Senator Steve Bryles, the Senate Co-Chair of the Joint Adequacy Evaluation Oversight Subcommittee, assumed the duties of the Chair. Senator Bryles thanked Mr. Denniston for his presentation and for giving the Subcommittee much to consider.

Senator Bryles announced that there would be deviation from the published agenda to hear an update on the status of the district adequacy surveys and the school site visits. He recognized **Mr. Richard Wilson**, the Assistant Director for Research Services, Bureau of Legislative Research. Mr. Wilson advised the Subcommittee that 64 out of 74 site visits are now complete. The remaining ten, weather permitting, will be finished before February 8th, the start of the Fiscal Session. Mr. Wilson stated that 241 of the state's 244 school districts have completed the Web-based district survey. The three outstanding districts have had technological issues and are working through these. Mr. Wilson said that the district surveys are not as pressing as the completion of the site visits. When the site visits are finished, staff will follow up with the outstanding districts and schools to gain their cooperation in completing the outstanding surveys. Questions from the Subcommittee focused primarily on the use of the data from the survey and site visits, particularly as they related to the use of stimulus funds for capital needs and the effectiveness of the use of poverty (NSLA) money.

Senator Bryles thanked Mr. Wilson for his remarks.

Discussion of Issues Related to Teacher Salaries

Ms. Kristen Sharp, Legislative Analyst, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. Ms. Sharp discussed with the Subcommittee the latest report prepared by the Research Section of the Bureau of Legislative Research on teacher salaries. Ms. Sharp's presentation included discussions of the following topics:

- Salary comparison;
- Salary disparity within Arkansas;
- Average teacher salary;
- Salaries with cost-of-living adjustment;
- Factors in determining average teacher salaries;
- Other forms of compensation and incentives teachers can receive, and
- Salary comparisons to other professions.

In the discussion that followed Ms. Sharp's presentation, the following points were raised by members of the Subcommittee:

- The need to maintain continuing funding for teacher salaries.
- The need to continue to close the disparity in teacher salaries within the state.
- The need for an economic analysis comparing the variation in the cost-of-living between regions of the state. **Mr. Michael Brown**, Legislative Analyst, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. Noting that this type of analysis was possible using the state's Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), Mr. Brown advised the Subcommittee that he would undertake an economic impact analysis on the variances.

Senator Bryles thanked Ms. Sharp and Mr. Brown for their presentations. Representative Abernathy, the House Co-Chair of the Joint Adequacy Evaluation Oversight Subcommittee, resumed the duties of the Chair.

Discussion of Issues Related to Programs Designed to Enhance the Academic Performance of Schools and School Districts

Representative Abernathy explained that this presentation was related to Interim Study Proposal 2009-198, which dealt with the programmatic support provided to academically struggling schools and the results of these support efforts.

Ms. Nell Smith, Senior Legislative Analyst, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. Ms. Smith discussed with the Subcommittee the formatting design and the results of a review of support programs designed to help struggling schools and the academic improvement or lack thereof in those schools. Ms. Smith stated that her report focused on three programs that have been operating long enough to show results: America's Choice, Scholastic Audit, and the Arkansas Leadership Academy's School Support Program. The reported results were:

- ❖ Of the 20 schools that received America's Choice services for three years, two got off the school improvement list by 2008-09. One of the 11 schools that worked with America's Choice for two years was removed from the school improvement list.
- ❖ Of the 34 schools that received a scholastic audit in 2006-07, two were removed from the school improvement list by 2008-09. One of the 30 schools audited in 2007-08 and one of the 32 schools audited in 2008-09 were also removed from the school improvement list.
- ❖ Of the four schools in the School Support Program, one school was removed from the school improvement list.

For the purposes of the report, a comparison of year-over-year school improvement status was used as a measure because it provided a single calculation to describe student achievement. She noted that a change in student achievement status by itself may not show the full impact on student achievement, and should be considered only one measure of a program's effectiveness.

Dr. Alice Barnes Rose, Assistant Commissioner, Learning Services, Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), was recognized. Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Rose discussed with the Subcommittee the "planning process" of the Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Program (ACSIP), describing various committees and their priorities and goals through implementation and monitoring.

Several members of the Subcommittee expressed concern that ADE's presentation was not what they had envisioned the Subcommittee would be hearing. A general discussion followed about what data the Subcommittee is asking for and what questions the Subcommittee wanted answered.

Representative Abernathy stated that this topic would be carried over for discussion at the Subcommittee's next meeting. He advised the ADE that the Subcommittee wants to know if the ADE programs are helping, or is money just being spent without results.

Representative Abernathy announced that the next meeting of the Subcommittee will be at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 5, 2010, in Room 171 of the State Capitol.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:49 p.m.