

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**JOINT MEETING  
OF THE  
HOUSE AND SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION**

**Monday, June 9, 2014  
10:00 A.M.  
Room 171, State Capitol  
Little Rock, Arkansas**

Senator Johnny Key, the Chair of the Senate Interim Committee on Education, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**MEMBERS OF THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE:** Senator Johnny Key, Chair; Senator Uvalde Lindsey; and Senator Jason Rapert.

**MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE:** Representative Ann Clemmer, Vice Chair; Representative Charles L. Armstrong; Representative Les Carnine; Representative John Catlett; Representative Bruce Cozart; Representative Robert Dale; Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas; Representative Jon Eubanks; Representative Debra Hobbs; Representative Karen Hopper; Representative Sheilla Lampkin; Representative Mark Lowery; Representative James Ratliff; and Representative Brent Talley.

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE:** Representative Randy Alexander; Representative Harold Copenhaver; Representative Jim Dotson; Representative Stephen Meeks; Representative Reginald Murdock; and Representative Chris Richey.

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE:** Senator Linda Chesterfield; Senator Bobby Pierce; Senator Bill Sample; Representative Bob Ballinger; Representative Scott Baltz; Representative Ken Bragg; Representative Mary Broadaway; Representative Dan Douglas; Representative Jeremy Gillam; Representative Kim Hammer; Representative John Hutchison; Representative Andrea Lea; Representative Kelley Linck; Representative Mark McElroy; Representative Micah Neal; Representative Jim Nickels; Representative Betty Overbey; Representative Sue Scott; Representative Tommy Thompson; Representative Wes Wagner; Representative Butch Wilkins; Representative Henry "Hank" Wilkins, IV; and Representative Tommy Wren.

**Morning Session**

Remarks by the Co-Chairs

Senator Key announced that this would be the last meeting that Dr. Tom Kimbrell would attend as Commissioner before assuming his new role as Superintendent at the Bryant School District. Senator Key remarked that Dr. Kimbrell has brought people together to work for common interests. He said that during Dr. Kimbrell's tenure, great strides have been made in education, in the working relationship between K-12 and higher education, and among all education entities. Senator Key read a citation from the Senate and presented it to Dr. Kimbrell. **The Honorable Ann Clemmer**, State Representative, District 23, and Vice Chair of the House Interim Committee on Education, read a citation from the House and presented it to Dr. Kimbrell. Dr. Kimbrell received a standing ovation following each presentation.

**Dr. Tom Kimbrell**, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Dr. Kimbrell thanked the Committees for their kind words and recognition. He said it had been a pleasure working as Commissioner for nearly five years and establishing some great relationships. He said he looked forward to seeing education

continue to prosper in the state. He said he appreciated the Committees' commitment to the importance of supporting our children.

Minutes:

Without objection, the minutes of April 14, 2014, April 15, 2014, April 22, 2014, and May 6, 2014, were approved as written.

Exhibits:

Exhibit C1 – 04/14/14 Minutes  
Exhibit C2 – 04/15/14 Minutes  
Exhibit C3 – 04/22/14 Minutes  
Exhibit C4 – 05/06/14 Minutes

Reports from Members Who Attended Recent Meetings Concerning Public or Higher Education

**The Honorable Sheilla Lampkin**, State Representative, District 9, was recognized. Representative Lampkin reported on attending a meeting of the SREB (Southern Regional Education Board). She said this meeting was one of a series about expanding the role of community colleges over the southern states, particularly with regard to helping students develop readiness skills for postsecondary education.

**The Honorable Charlotte Vining Douglas**, State Representative, District 75, was recognized, and made an announcement about the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance's Serving up Solutions event on June 19, 2014.

Discussion of the Arkansas Home Visiting Network

Presenter:

**Dr. Kathy Pillow-Price**, Executive Director, The Arkansas Home Visiting Network, was recognized. Using a PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Pillow-Price described The Arkansas Home Visiting Network (AHVN) as an organization committed to devoting the resources necessary to build healthier, happier, and more productive Arkansas families. She discussed issues pertinent to home visiting services, including eligibility, home visitors, economic benefits, funding streams, grants and model programs, and key goals. Dr. Pillow-Price commented on AHVN's achievement, on development and growth of the Training Institute, and on tracking data to measure the effectiveness of home visiting interventions. She said that AHVN's vision includes establishing models across Arkansas to help parents and caregivers give children and families a strong start and prevent serious problems later in life.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- data collection, dissemination, and security,
- benchmarks for the success of a program,
- academic and developmental improvement, and
- frequency of home visits.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Stronger Families. Brighter Futures. Arkansas Home Visiting Network

Handout:

Stronger Families. Brighter Futures. Arkansas Home Visiting Network

Discussion of the Arkansas Research Education Optical Network (ARE-ON)

Presenter:

**Mr. David Merrifield**, Interim Executive Director, Arkansas Research Education Optical Network, was recognized, and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the background of ARE-ON. He said ARE-ON is a consortium of public colleges and universities in Arkansas formed to build and operate a high-speed fiber optic network for higher education and research. Mr. Merrifield stated the mission of ARE-ON is: 1) to promote, develop, and apply advanced application and communication technologies, and 2) to support and enhance education, research, public service, and economic development. He stated that ARE-ON is one of many state-based networks around the nation, and it has connections to regional and national networks, including the Internet2 Network. He said ARE-ON's capabilities include supporting the transfer of large amounts of data for various disciplines, accessing cloud storage and applications, and providing emergency preparedness for disasters. He noted that telehealth and telemedicine are big areas within ARE-ON. Mr. Merrifield provided maps of Arkansas illustrating the ARE-ON Fiber Optic Network and the ARE-ON Universities and Colleges. He also discussed the Arkansas e-Link Network, a virtual network placed on top of the ARE-ON network.

Contributor to the Discussion:

**Dr. Donald Bobbitt**, President, University of Arkansas System

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- process for determining subscriber fees and rates for services,
- funding and annual budget for ARE-ON,
- membership, availability of funding, and providing bandwidth to two-year colleges,
- plans for active pursuit of additional funding,
- number of ARE-ON employees,
- provisions for service calls and maintenance,
- founding members and board of directors of ARE-ON,
- meaning of education from the perspective of bandwidth,
- expanding use of fiber optic network beyond connecting colleges,
- logistics of Broadband connectivity for K-12,
- leasing of fiber optic cable from private providers,
- ARE-ON's ability to provide access to the Internet2 Network,
- duration of leases with private providers,
- provision of services and eligibility for E-Rate,
- commodity internet service,
- serving schools in rural areas,
- traditional traffic vs. research traffic on ARE-ON,
- technical problems that might arise with addition of 238 school districts to the network,
- availability of excess network capacity to sustain day-to-day traffic and to accommodate bursts and growth,
- Internet2 Network,
- ownership or leasing of physical infrastructure,
- membership satisfaction with ARE-ON services, and
- availability of latitude for membership consideration.

PowerPoint Presentation:

ARE-ON, Arkansas Research and Education Optical Network

Discussion of FASTERArkansas

Presenter:

**Mr. Jerry Jones**, Chair, FASTERArkansas, and Executive Vice President, Acxiom, was recognized. Mr. Jones discussed how, in response to a request from Governor Beebe, he brought together a group of Arkansans to study and to propose recommendations for remedying the lack of fast, high-capacity internet capabilities being provided to public schools in Arkansas. He said the group met six times last year between July and December and heard from a range of experts from around the state and the country on related issues. He said two subcommittees, a technical and an infrastructure subcommittee, chaired by Mr. Kendall Gibbons, and a finance committee, chaired by former governor, Mr. Jim Guy Tucker, were appointed. He stated the work culminated with the adoption at the December 2013 meeting of the recommendations that are now set forth on page 31 of the *Arkansas Digital Learning Study*. He listed four primary recommendations that came out of Mr. Gibbons' subcommittee:

1. Connect schools with a robust fiber-optic network.
2. Adopt the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) recommendations for K12 bandwidth as minimum targets.
3. Centralize management for statewide network support services.
4. Efficiently aggregate statewide demand to achieve greater economies of scale, reduce costs, improve access, and deliver high-quality content.

Mr. Jones said it is the responsibility of the State of Arkansas to provide an adequate education to students which includes high-speed internet access to every public school in the state. He urged that the law be updated to allow K-12 schools access to existing taxpayer-funded high-speed internet infrastructure. He said this would do five things:

1. Ensure our children will have the opportunity to receive a 21<sup>st</sup> Century education.
2. Create a more educated workforce and bring more jobs to the state.
3. Save school districts money.
4. Save taxpayers money.
5. Interject the system with more competition and alternatives for public schools to choose from.

Presenter:

**Mr. Kendall Gibbons**, Vice President of Information Technology, Arvest Bank, and Chair, Technical and Infrastructure Subcommittee, was recognized. Mr. Gibbons discussed technical aspects of bandwidth and connectivity. He stated the subcommittee advocates for a network solution that reduces the number of taxpayer-funded networks in Arkansas. He said this solution phases out APSCN (Arkansas Public School Computer Network) and shifts K-12 backbone traffic to ARE-ON.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- cost of bandwidth through private sector vs. ARE-ON,
- volume of internet usage in schools,
- accurately assessing school districts' costs, capabilities, and capacities,
- capacity required to add K-12 to ARE-ON,
- priority problem or access problem,
- necessity for setting standards for schools regarding internet access,
- trend is going to more capacity, lower prices, and
- market demand in northwest Arkansas enables lower cost.

Handout:

Proposed FASTERArkansas Network

Presenter:

**Ms. Julie Mullenix**, Lobbyist and Legal Counsel, Mullenix & Associates LLC, was recognized. Ms. Mullenix stated she represented Rural Arkansas Telephone Systems in her remarks. She discussed the state's competition with private enterprise, Broadband availability, and telecommunications providers' investment of time and dollars in infrastructure. She reviewed Statewide Private Provider Networks, the ARE-ON Network, ADE Survey: Cost of Current Local Bandwidth, and ADE: Top 20 School Districts with the Most Current and Planned Bandwidth.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ◆ coding of Broadband purchases by school districts,
- ◆ studies on capacity, and concerns if districts are added to ARE-ON,
- ◆ clarifying the disparity between different answers and getting a true picture,
- ◆ school districts having technology, but not using it,
- ◆ availability of Internet2 outside of ARE-ON, and
- ◆ list of all school districts with current capability and spending.

Handout:

Broadband Handout, Mullenix

Recess:

The meeting recessed for lunch at 12:48 p.m.

Afternoon Session

Senator Key reconvened the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Presenter:

**Ms. Nell Smith**, Administrator, Policy Analysis and Research, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. Ms. Smith presented three reports involving the Matrix. She explained that the Matrix is the formula that is used to calculate the per student foundation funding rate. She said it includes components that have been considered necessary for an adequate education. She stated the formula is not in statute, only the foundation funding rate. It is a funding model, not an expenditure model. She said foundation funding is unrestricted; school districts are not required to spend the money according to the intention of the Matrix. Ms. Smith said the purpose of the Adequacy Study is to see how well school districts' spending patterns statewide align with the Matrix and whether adjustments have to be made. Ms. Smith went on to present a comprehensive description of each section of the Matrix before presenting the reports.

Preliminary Discussion of Broadband and Adequacy Funding (Adequacy)

Ms. Smith discussed school districts' Broadband expenditures as they relate to foundation funding and the Matrix. She walked members through Broadband Expenditures, a detailed Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) Memo.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ≈ breakdown of how technology staff is included in the Matrix,
- ≈ dwindling of federal stimulus funds, which were replaced with Operations & Maintenance (O&M) funds,
- ≈ variance in how school districts buy and utilize technology,
- ≈ tracking and maintaining an inventory of computer hardware to assess capabilities,
- ≈ availability of technological expertise in high poverty school districts,
- ≈ having a statewide plan for school districts regarding technology,
- ≈ variance in dispersal of technology funds,
- ≈ funding structure and technology personnel in other states,

- ≈ participating districts and funding that goes collectively to co-ops per year, and
- ≈ setting policies for students' access of internet sites.

Handouts:

Broadband Expenditures, BLR Memo  
Funding Matrix

Continued Discussion of Issues Related to Teacher Salaries (Adequacy)

Ms. Smith reported on results of research completed on three different proposals regarding the impact of increasing the minimum statutory teacher salary: Proposal #1: Increase the minimum salary to \$31,000; Proposal #2: Increase the salary schedule by 1%; and Proposal #3: Increase the salary schedule by 2%. She provided answers to four follow-up questions regarding each proposal. She walked members through Teacher Salary Increase Proposals, a detailed Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) Memo.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- how length of contracts figures into calculations,
- cause of teacher salaries flattening out in chart on page 4 of report,
- basing the funding formula on calculating a per pupil dollar amount,
- keeping teacher salaries up with the average teacher salary in the Matrix,
- looking at an average *starting* teacher salary instead of an average teacher salary,
- statewide discrepancies in average teacher salaries,
- options for methodologies to update the Matrix,
- adjustments to categorical funds, and
- reducing or adjusting steps in teacher salary schedules.

Handout:

Teacher Salary Increase Proposals, BLR Memo

Discussion of Administrator Salaries (Adequacy)

Ms. Smith walked members through District and School Administrator Salaries, a detailed Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) Memo. She noted the report provides information on the salaries of superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, and assistant principals.

Handout:

District and School Administrator Salaries, BLR Memo

Next Scheduled Meetings:

Tuesday, June 10, 2014, at 9:00 a.m. in Committee Room A, of the MAC Building, *Joint Meeting of House and Senate Interim Committees on Education and the State and Public School Life and Health Insurance Program Legislative Task Force*

Monday, July 14, 2014, at 10:00 a.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol in Little Rock

Tuesday, July 15, 2014, at 9:00 a.m. in Room 171 of the State Capitol in Little Rock

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 3:53 p.m.