

Adopted Recommendations and Cost Estimates

Arkansas Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Education Adopted Recommendations and Costs

Listed below are the recommendations and cost estimates adopted by the Arkansas Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Education (BRC). The BRC established four (4) subcommittees to facilitate its deliberations. The subcommittees provided an initial cost estimate, if one could be determined, with each of its recommendations. The Funding/Facilities Subcommittee reviewed these recommendations and cost estimates and made recommendations to the BRC. The BRC reviewed and adopted the recommendations and cost estimates at its meeting on June 19, 2002.

Several of the initial cost estimates for various recommendations were not determinable by the recommending subcommittee due to a lack of reliable data. In these instances, the subcommittee made a recommendation of “**No Cost Estimate.**” The BRC, during its deliberation, determined that “**No Cost Estimate**” was not a representative description of the potential fiscal impact of the recommendations. The BRC determined that the phrase “**To Be Determined**” was more representative of the potential fiscal impact of its recommendations to the public.

Curriculum/Early Childhood Subcommittee

- **A program of early childhood education shall be available for all four-year old children in Arkansas utilizing a variety of service providers. Special emphasis shall be placed upon children in families whose income is at or below the poverty income guidelines established by State/Federal agencies. Adequate state funding must be available for the success of the program.**

COST ESTIMATE: \$80 million

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: \$100 million, excluding transportation and facilities (based on 28,500 participants at a cost of \$3,500 per participant)

- **A comprehensive curriculum shall be provided in each Arkansas school district to provide for the needs of its students in terms of academic, social, cultural and physical development.**

COST ESTIMATE: \$16 million (\$7.5 million increase above current appropriation level) plus additional unspecified costs

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: \$24 million, with a minimum expenditure of \$564 per student. The Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Education recommends that the additional monies be used to expand the availability of poverty index funds to more children but in no event should the amount of monies spent per child in the 2001-2002 fiscal year be reduced.

- **The accountability of students for their educational performance is equally as important as that of teachers, schools or school districts. A system of individual student accountability for actively pursuing a rigorous and appropriate course of study and demonstrating adequate performance on assessment measures is essential.**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined

- **The involvement of parents in the planning and implementation of their child’s educational experiences is a critical component in achieving the level of performance that is required.**

COST ESTIMATE: Minimal

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined

- **Each student shall be provided experiences to ensure the acquisition of essential life skills to be successful in a global economy.**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined

- **Students who cannot experience success within the regular curriculum shall be provided access to specially designed programs to address their unique needs.**

COST ESTIMATE: \$22 million

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: \$22 million, with \$10 million designated for Limited English Proficiency and \$12 million designated for Alternative Learning Environment.

- **Each school district shall provide access to up-to-date technology, facilities and other instructional equipment and materials to support the curriculum at every level.**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined

Funding/Facilities Subcommittee

Facilities

- **We recommend an immediate dramatic infusion of capital needs money to ensure adequate facilities in every school district (as finally configured), including the building of new regional high school facilities.**
 - a) **This will require a thorough, independent, objective facilities inventory of the entire state.**
 - b) **There must be specific standards for what “adequate facilities” means.**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined

- **Once all facilities are raised to an adequate level, we recommend that future funding distribution formulas provide adequate monies to continue to maintain and provide adequate facilities for academic instructional purposes. In order for the distribution of funds to be equitable, we recommend that the formula be based upon a recognition that mills in one district may not raise as much money as the same number of mills in another district.**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: 1) Improve the debt funding allowance by adding \$15 million, restricting payments to approved academic facilities, changing the Local Wealth Index to a millage power equalizer, and cap state assistance at 60% of local debt payment; 2) Increase the General Facility Allowance by \$8 million to create non-debt local school improvements. (This essentially doubles the present program.)

- **We recommend requiring local districts to maintain a level of local funding sufficient to maintain an adequate system, as defined by the state. If funding fails for a period of two consecutive years the district shall be subject to reorganization by the state.**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined

Workforce Education

- **Every school district shall provide free workforce education programs with minimum uniform curriculum standards utilizing certified staff.**
- **Every school district in Arkansas shall have reasonable access to an area career center.**

COST ESTIMATE: \$44 million

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: \$44 million

Organizational Structure Subcommittee

- **Any school district that does not meet the required core curriculum or cannot meet the minimum teacher salaries by September 2003, shall be dissolved and reorganized with contiguous districts as determined by the Board of Trustees of the schools by July 2004. Consideration of the following shall provide justification for the decisions:**
 - a) **geography and community activity patterns**
 - b) **amount of time a child spends on the bus**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined

- **Incentive monies according to the current incentive formula shall be provided to schools that consolidate voluntarily by September 2003. In order to provide adequate funding for the incentive, the Subcommittee requests the Funding/Facilities Subcommittee consider a recommendation for a biennial appropriation of four (4) million dollars.**

COST ESTIMATE: \$4 million for the 2003-2005 biennium

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: \$4 million annually

- **Amend Arkansas' Public School Choice statute to enhance the ability of students and parents to utilize it and create regional high schools dispersed throughout the state. These changes would:**
 - a) **Offer student access to an expanded curriculum**
 - b) **Offer greater access to higher education**
 - c) **Offer greater access to vocational education**
 - d) **Address the problem of inefficiency (particularly at the high school level)**
 - e) **Address the problem of teacher shortage (especially in some rural areas)**
 - f) **Address to a greater degree the issue of teacher salaries**
 - g) **Address the issue of facilities (elementary facilities are often better)**

COST ESTIMATE: \$12 million for the 2003-2005 biennium

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined

- **Separation of service and accountability/regulatory roles within the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) is recommended to more effectively monitor and implement the state's school accountability requirements. We also encourage the ADE to continue working on the reorganization of service and accountability/ regulatory roles within ADE.**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined

- **We strongly encourage relevant information on year-round schools be discussed at the annual School Board Training meetings, the Joint Conference on Teaching meetings, Administrators meetings, and PTA meetings.**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined

Teacher Salaries/Professional Development Subcommittee

Recruitment

- **Ensure the continuation of the Annual Job Fair, currently conducted by the Arkansas Department of Education.**

COST ESTIMATE: \$30,000 annually

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: \$30,000 annually

- **Establish an Arkansas Teacher Scholarship/Loan Program to assist students in the pursuit of studies leading to teacher licensure who are willing to pledge five years of teaching in Arkansas upon completion of the program.**

COST ESTIMATE: \$2 million

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: \$2 million

- **Provide incentives for teachers willing to work in teacher shortage areas: subject areas, geographic areas, or low-performing schools/districts.**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: \$5 million

- **Establish a Teacher Recruitment Network with representation from each university teacher education program in the state.**

COST ESTIMATE: \$250,000 (\$25,000 per institution)

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: \$250,000 (\$25,000 per institution)

Teacher Retention

- **Require building and district administrators to devote at least three hours per year of professional development work to matters pertaining to teacher retention.**

COST ESTIMATE: No Additional Cost

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: No Additional Cost

- **Administrators apply strategies related to teacher retention as part of the Arkansas Consolidated School Improvement Plan (ACSIP).**

COST ESTIMATE: No Additional Cost

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: No Additional Cost

- **Implement periodic, independent evaluations of the professional development programs for teachers in order to assure activities are well targeted and timely.**

COST ESTIMATE: \$40,000 annually (\$200,000 every 3 - 5 years)

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: \$200,000 every other biennium

- **Extend the requirement for teacher professional development from 30 to 60 hours per year by the year 2008.**

COST ESTIMATE: \$37.5 Million

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: Cost included in Teacher Salary Increase

- **Encourage factors that assure quality and safety in classrooms and schools for teachers and students.**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined

Teacher Salary

- **Align beginning salaries for Arkansas teachers, with a focus toward equitability and competitiveness. The recommended levels for the required minimum starting salary (Bachelor's degree, no experience) to be enacted by the 2003 legislative session are: \$26,000 (implemented by 2004-2005 School Year), \$28,000 (implemented by 2006-2007 School Year), and \$30,000 (implemented by 2008-2009 School Year). The overall goal should be to reach the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) average salary level by the 2006-07 academic year, estimated to be \$45,000.**

COST ESTIMATE: \$405 Million

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: \$405 Million over three biennial budget cycles

- **Employee contributions made by teachers for health insurance and related benefits be the same amount as contributed by other state employees. The State of Arkansas shall provide additional state funding to cover the associated costs.**

COST ESTIMATE: \$40 to \$60 million

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: \$40 to \$60 million

- **Establish multiple career paths for teachers.**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined

- **Equate hiring practices throughout the state by accepting all of a teacher's previous experience in a school accredited by a regional accreditation agency (i.e., North Central Association).**

COST ESTIMATE: No Cost Estimate

ADOPTED BRC COST RECOMMENDATION: To Be Determined