

## MINUTES

### ARKANSAS BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

**April 17, 2002**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Room 151, State Capitol  
Little Rock, Arkansas**

Ms. Stacy Pittman, the Co-Chair of the Arkansas Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Education, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

#### **ARKANSAS BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON PUBLIC EDUCATION**

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr. Frank Anthony; Ms. Charlie Cole Chaffin; Ms. Judy Donovan; Dr. Charles Dunn; Dr. Benny Gooden; Dr. Reed Greenwood; Mr. Gene Gregory; Ms. Pat Harris; Mr. Wayne Hartsfield; Ms. Shelby Hillman; Mr. Randy Hughes; Mr. Phil Jones; Dr. Don Love; Mr. Hugh McDonald; Ms. Kathy McFetridge; Mr. Bob McGinnis, Co-Chair; Dr. Martha McNair; Mr. David Matthews; Mr. Kevin Moore; Ms. Stacy Pittman, Co-Chair; Ms. Alisia Ramirez-Hartz; Mr. Larry Ross; Mr. Keith Stokes and Ms. Jhnettee Walker.

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT:** Representative M. Olin Cook; and Representative George French.

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESENT:** Senator Jimmy Jeffress; Representative Thomas Moore; Representative Roger Smith; Representative Lindbergh Thomas; and Representative Paul Weaver.

#### **Approval of the Minutes of the April 3, 2002 Meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission [Exhibit C].**

After reviewing the minutes of the April 3, 2002, meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission, the minutes were approved as written.

**Mr. Tristan Greene**, Special Assistant to the Director, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Mr. Greene provided the Commission with an update on the status of *Lake View v. Huckabee, et al.* Ms. Pittman thanked Mr. Greene for the update.

**Ms. Denise Cobb**, Research Survey Director, Institute of Government, University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR), was recognized. Ms. Cobb

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presented the Commission with a report detailing the initial findings from the data collected at the *Speak Up, Arkansas!* forums. Ms. Pittman thanked Ms. Cobb for her presentation.

The meeting recessed at 10:20 a.m. The Commission's subcommittees met from 10:20 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the various committee rooms of the Capitol. The Commission reconvened at 12:30 p.m. for a working lunch.

**Reports from Subcommittees**

The Commission heard reports concerning the meetings of the subcommittees.

**Teacher Salaries/Professional Development**

**Dr. Reed Greenwood**, Chair, Teacher Salaries/Professional Development Subcommittee, reported that the subcommittee discussed the following preliminary recommendations:

*Recruitment*

- The Arkansas Department of Education should ensure the continuation of the Annual Job Fair by funding it (it is now supported by grant money) at \$30,000 per year as well as continuing to seek private support.
- The Arkansas Legislature should establish an Arkansas Teacher Scholarship Program designed to assist students who are pursuing a course of study leading to elementary or secondary teacher licensure and who are willing to pledge five years of teaching in Arkansas upon completion of the program. A fund of two million dollars would fund 400 students at \$5000.00 per year, approximately half the total cost of full-time enrollment.
- There should be incentives for funding “Hard to Staff” course material areas and “Hard to Staff” geographic areas in Arkansas—e.g., a program for financial incentives such as accelerated loan forgiveness, stipends or bonuses, waiving restrictions which prohibit retired teachers from returning to the classroom, and other measures.
- A Teacher Recruitment Network should be established, comprised of at least one representative from each of the teacher education programs throughout the state. Although there may be some central service to the network through the Arkansas Department of Education, the network

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- would be charged with the tasks of recruiting teachers into the profession throughout the state.

*Retention*

- All building and district administrators should be required to devote at least three hours per year of professional development work to matters pertaining to teacher retention issues and methods of improvement. (No cost)
- Building level administrators should use strategies related to teacher retention as part of the ACSIP School Improvement Plan—for example, discussing and implementing improvements for new teachers and for teachers in such groups as Teach for America, Americorps, Troops to Teachers, and those specific to Arkansas.
- There should be periodic independent evaluation of the professional development programs for teacher to assure that the professional development activities undertaken and well targeted and timely.
- The time for professional development should be extended, by the year 2008, from 30 to 60 hours per year.
- The specific policy currently in place that grants a teacher only three hours of professional development for a semester-length college course should be changed so that the teacher receives at least one-third of the year's requirement.

*Salaries*

- Beginning salaries in Arkansas should be equitable. The required beginning salary (BA degree, no experience) should be raised as follows:
  - 2003 Legislative Session - \$26,000.00
  - 2005 Legislative Session - \$28,000.00
  - 2007 Legislative Session - \$30,000.00The overall goal should be to reach the SREB Average Salary level by the 2006-07 academic year.
- The employee contribution made by teachers for their health insurance and related benefits should be the same amount contributed by other state employees.
- Teachers should be able to advance on the salary schedule according to their achievement, in some manner, such as the following:
  - Standard License
  - Career Teacher
  - Mentor Teacher
  - Master Teacher

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Each level of achievement requires accomplishments in addition to the basic required professional development and should be compensated by moving three additional steps on the salary schedule.

- Districts hiring teachers should accept, year for year, all the teacher's previous experience, so that hiring practices throughout the state are more equitable.

Following the subcommittee's report, the Commission held a discussion concerning the need for accountability regarding professional development activities and how to structure such an accountability system.

**Organizational Structure**

**Ms. Charlie Cole Chaffin**, Chair, Organizational Structure Subcommittee, reported that the subcommittee discussed the following preliminary recommendations:

- 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:
  1. geography and community activity patterns
  2. amount of time a child spends on the bus
- Incentive monies according to the current incentive formula shall be provided to schools that consolidate voluntarily by September 2003.

The Subcommittee discussed but took no action on potential recommendations regarding class loads and the structure of a state accountability entity.

**Curriculum/Early Childhood Education**

**Dr. Benny Gooden**, Chair, Curriculum/Early Childhood Education Subcommittee, reported that the subcommittee discussed the following items:

- Reviewed the composition of the 38 units of study at the secondary-level required by the **STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION OF ARKANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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- Reviewed a study concerning the number of school districts in the state that do not offer 38 units of study at the secondary-level each year – 200 of the 310 school district do not offer all 38 units every year
- Update from Ms. Krista Underwood, Coordinator, K-12 Literacy, Arkansas Department of Education, regarding early literacy grants.

### **Funding/Facilities**

**Mr. Larry Ross**, Chair, Funding/Facilities Subcommittee, reported that the subcommittee discussed the following preliminary recommendations:

- Every school district shall provide a free early childhood education program for all four-year-olds with minimum uniform curriculum standards utilizing certified staff.
  1. Adequate state funding be provided for the success of the programs.
  2. Every school district shall be allowed to utilize state funding to contract with existing providers of early childhood education programs that meet or exceed minimum uniform standards with certified staff.
- Every school district shall provide free workforce education programs with minimum uniform curriculum standards utilizing certified staff.
  1. Every school district in Arkansas shall have reasonable access to an area career center.

The Commission voted to express its appreciation to the Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN), KATV, the Arkansas School Boards Association, the state's public radio stations, and UALR's Institute of Government for making the *Speak Up, Arkansas!* forums a success.

Ms. Pittman announced that the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, May 1, 2002, at 10:00 a.m. in Room 151 of the State Capitol. She noted that the Commission's Subcommittees would also be meeting. Ms. Pittman also reminded the members of the Commission about its retreat, which is scheduled for Saturday, April 27, 2002, at the University of Arkansas System Administration Building in Little Rock.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.