

MINUTES

ARKANSAS BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

April 3, 2002

10:00 a.m.

**Room 149, State Capitol
Little Rock, Arkansas**

Mr. Bob McGinnis, 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; 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. Ulicious Reed; Mr. Larry Ross; and Mr. Keith Stokes and Ms. Johnette Walker.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT: Representative M. Olin Cook; Representative George French; Senator Jim Hill; Senator David Malone; and Representative Larry Teague.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESENT:

Representative Joyce Dees; Representative Boyd Hickenbotham; Senator Jimmy Jeffress; Representative Thomas Moore; Representative Marvin Parks, and Senator Mark Alan Smith.

Approval of the Minutes of the March 20, 2002 Meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission [Exhibit C].

After reviewing the minutes of the March 20, 2002, meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission, the minutes were approved as written.

Ms. Stacy Pittman, the Co-Chair of the Arkansas Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Education, was recognized. Ms. Pittman provided the members of the Commission with an update on **Speak Up Arkansas!**, a series of forums to be held at 89 sites around the state on Thursday, April 4, 2002. She noted that the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR)'s Institute of

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Government would be compiling the results of the forums. She stated that members of the Commission would receive a copy of the UALR report at the Commission's April 16th meeting.

The meeting recessed at 10:15 a.m. The Commission's subcommittees met from 10:15 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 items:

- ❑ Initial key findings to identify options to begin the development of recommendations
- ❑ Reduction of salary disparities among school districts
- ❑ Enhanced minimum salaries for teachers – discussing potential recommendation to raise the minimum salary schedule incrementally over the next few years to a level of \$30,000
- ❑ Increase salaries for all teachers to become regionally and nationally competitive
- ❑ Enhanced fringe benefits for teachers, especially in the area of health insurance
- ❑ Establishment of a “career ladder” process for teachers
- ❑ Establishment of a system of building-level professional development opportunities for teachers
- ❑ Creation of specialized teacher academies
- ❑ Enhanced accountability for professional development

Curriculum/Early Childhood Education

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

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- ❑ Reviewed initial key findings, focusing on the K-12 curriculum
- ❑ Adopted an additional key finding concerning accountability in curriculum in private schools and home schools
- ❑ Adopted an additional key finding concerning the cultural and linguistic isolation of some students in the state
- ❑ Reviewed several possible recommendations concerning curriculum:
 1. Requiring all high schools to offer 38 core subjects every year
 2. Consequences for failure to meet the 38 core courses requirement
 3. Use of distance education courses as a curriculum supplement
 4. Impact of different scheduling methodologies

Organizational Structure

Ms. Charlie Cole Chaffin, Chair, Organizational Structures Subcommittee, reported that the subcommittee discussed the following items:

- ❑ Consideration of recommendations at the Subcommittee's next meeting
- ❑ Policy issues regarding public school choice
- ❑ Policy issues regarding school districts size, although not considering any recommendation that has on student enrollment as its sole criteria
- ❑ Establishment of K-6 or K-8 school districts
- ❑ Development of remedies for the mismanagement of districts
- ❑ Policy issues regarding year-round schools
- ❑ Policy issues regarding student transportation
- ❑ Establishment of an incentive fund for school district that voluntarily consolidate

Funding/Facilities

Mr. David Matthews, Acting Chair, Funding/Facilities Subcommittee, reported that the subcommittee discussed the following items:

- ❑ Uniform standards for early childhood education programs pre-school regarding curriculum and staffing
- ❑ Contracting with local school districts for the establishment of early childhood education programs
- ❑ Policy issues regarding teacher salaries
- ❑ Policy issues regarding pupil/teacher ratios

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- Policy issues regarding facilities

Following the subcommittee reports, the Commission held a discussion concerning K-4 academic standards and the state-mandated student assessment system.

Mr. McGinnis announced that the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, April 17, 2002, at 10:00 a.m. in Room 151 of the State Capitol. He noted that the Commission's Subcommittees would also be meeting. Mr. McGinnis encouraged members of the Commission members to attend the **Speak Up Arkansas!** meeting in their area.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.