

MINUTES

ARKANSAS BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

February 20, 2002

10:00 a.m.

**Room 149, 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: Ms. Stacy Pittman, Co-Chair; Mr. Frank Anthony; Ms. Charlie Cole Chaffin; Ms. Judy Donovan; Dr. Charles Dunn; Dr. Benny Gooden; Mr. Gene Gregory; Ms. Pat Harris; Mr. Wayne Hartsfield; Ms. Shelby Hillman; Mr. Randy Hughes; Dr. Don Love; Mr. Hugh McDonald; Ms. Kathy McFetridge; Dr. Martha McNair; Mr. David Matthews; Mr. Kevin Moore; Ms. Alisia Ramirez-Hartz; Mr. Ulicious Reed; Mr. Larry Ross; Mr. Keith Stokes; and Ms. Johnette Walker.

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

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESENT: Senator Steve Bryles; Senator Jimmy Jeffress; Representative Travis Boyd; Representative Boyd Hickenbotham; Representative Bob Mathis; Representative Thomas Moore; Representative Steve Oglesby; Representative Marvin Parks; Representative Tommy Roebuck; Representative Roger Smith; Representative Lindbergh Thomas; and Representative Paul Weaver.

Approval of the Minutes of the February 6, 2002 Meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission [Exhibit C].

After reviewing the minutes of the February 6, 2002, meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission, the minutes were approved as written.

The meeting recessed at 10:25 a.m. The Commission's subcommittees met from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the various committee rooms of the Capitol. The Commission recessed for lunch from noon to 1:00 p.m.

Mr. Tristan Greene, Special Assistant to the Director, Department of Education, was recognized. Mr. Greene updated the Commission on the status of the Lake View litigation. He discussed the amicus curiae briefs that had been filed by several intervening parties. Mr. Greene also discussed the expected time frame for a decision by the Arkansas Supreme Court. According to Mr. Greene, procedural issues would in all probability extend the expected date for a decision into 2003.

Reports from Subcommittees

The Commission heard reports concerning the meetings of the subcommittees.

Communications

At the request of Ms. Pittman, **Ms. Kathy McFetridge**, member, Communications Subcommittee, reported the subcommittee discussed the following items:

- The contents and features of the Blue Ribbon Commission's website, www.EducationinArkansas.com
- The purpose of and preparations for **Speak Up, Arkansas!**, a series of public forums that will be held in all of the state's 75 counties on April 4th, 2002, will be held from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Pursuant to the motion made by Mr. David Matthews and seconded by Ms. Kathy McFetridge, the Commission voted without objection to hold a news conference at the Capitol on March 6, 2002, at 10 a.m. to announce its website and **Speak Up, Arkansas!**

Curriculum/Education Childhood Education

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

- Draft document concerning early childhood education issues
- Preliminary recommendations regarding curriculum

Teacher Salaries/Professional Development

Mr. Randy Hughes, Acting Chair, Teachers Salaries/Professional Development Subcommittee, reported that the subcommittee discussed the following items:

- Preliminary recommendations regarding teachers salaries and professional development
- Methodologies for the distribution of resources across the state to increase and/or equalize teacher salaries
- Procedures used by other state agencies to equalize salaries across the state
- Issues related to teacher recruitment and retention

Organizational Structure

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

- Restructuring of school districts based on the ability of the district(s) to meet academic standards
- Establishing monetary incentives to encourage school districts to consolidate

- Linking school district performance and participation in competitive activities
- The organizational structure of the Arkansas Department of Education and the education service cooperatives
- Creation of K-8 school districts

Funding/Facilities

Mr. Larry Ross, Chair, Funding/Facilities Subcommittee, reported that the Subcommittee discussed the following items:

- Mandatory statewide four-year-old Preschool Program
- Methods of offering state mandated curriculum other than reorganization
- Minimum teacher salary schedule vs. teacher salary schedule weighted to consider experience and training
- Attracting quality teachers
- Reduction of state-wide salary disparities
- Supplemental pay for teachers in specialty curricula areas, geographically isolated areas or economically deprived areas
- Salary increases contingent upon increased number of days in teacher contract (extra days to be used for in-service training and professional development)
- Workforce Education curricula must be an integral component of any solution to adequacy/equity issues
- Elevating wealth of poorer school districts without commensurate reductions in wealthier districts
- Ensuring minimum state curriculum is offered

Following the subcommittee reports, the Commission held a full and frank discussion concerning the content and cost of its proposed recommendations.

Ms. Pittman, noting that she had met with the Subcommittee chairs, announced a revised meeting schedule for the Commission. The revised meeting schedule includes the following dates:

March 6, 2002	
March 20, 2002	Key Findings from subcommittees due
April 3, 2002	Major Considerations due
April 4, 2002	State-wide community forums
April 17, 2002	Draft Recommendations from subcommittees due
April 27, 2002	BRC Retreat
May 1, 2002	
May 15, 2002	
May 29, 2002	Tentative additional meeting date
June 5, 2002	
June 19, 2002	
June 26, 2002	Tentative additional meeting date
July 1, 2002	BRC report due

The members of the Commission discussed, but took no action on, holding meetings on consecutive days to facilitate its work.

Ms. Pittman announced that the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, March 6, 2002, at 10:00 a.m. in Room 149 of the State Capitol. She noted that the Commission's Subcommittees would also be meeting.

There being no further business, the Commission adjourned at 2:30 p.m.