

MINUTES

ARKANSAS BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

January 23, 2002

10:00 a.m.

**Room 151, 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. Robert McGinnis, Co-Chair; Ms. Stacy Pittman, Co-Chair; Mr. Frank Anthony; Ms. Charlie Cole Chaffin; Ms. Judy Donovan; Dr. Benny Gooden; Dr. Reed Greenwood; Mr. Gene Gregory; Ms. Pat Harris; Mr. Wayne Hartsfield; Ms. Shelby Hillman; Mr. Randy Hughes; Dr. Don Love; Dr. Martha McNair; Mr. David Matthews; Mr. Kevin Moore; Ms. Alisia Ramirez-Hartz; Mr. Ulicious Reed; Mr. Larry Ross; and Mr. Keith Stokes.

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

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESENT: Senator Jimmy Jeffress; Senator Paul G. Miller; Senator Terry Smith; Representative Travis Boyd; Representative LeRoy Dangeau; Representative Thomas Moore; Representative Marvin Parks; Representative Harmon Seawel; Representative Roger Smith; and Representative Lindbergh Thomas.

Mr. McGinnis discussed the circumstance that necessitated changing the meeting date to January 23rd. He announced that arrangements had been made for an alternative meeting site to avoid changing the Commission's meeting schedule in the future. After discussing the Commission's schedule for the day, Mr. McGinnis announced the Governor would speak to the Commission at 2:30 p.m. regarding his recently released education reform proposals.

Noting that the Commission's subcommittees were beginning to discuss their recommendations for submission to the full Commission, Mr. McGinnis discussed the requirements for adoption of a recommendation by the subcommittees and the full Commission. After a brief discussion, the Commission adopted the following procedures:

- Approval of a proposed recommendation by each subcommittee would require a majority vote of the members of the subcommittee
- Approval of a proposed recommendation by the full Commission would require an affirmative vote by 18 of the 25 members

Approval of the Minutes of the January 2, 2002 Meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission [Exhibit C]

After reviewing the minutes of the January 2, 2002, meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission, the minutes were approved as written.

Ms. Stacy Pittman, the co-chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission, was recognized. Ms. Pittman advised the Commission of a statewide town hall meeting on public education to be held in all 75 counties on Thursday, April 4, 2002. AETN, KATV, the Arkansas School Boards Association, and other corporate sponsors will underwrite the event. Ms. Pittman went on to discuss the logistical requirements for the undertaking.

Mr. McGinnis advised the members of the Commission that Ms. Kathy McFetridge had received an award for her services as a school board member from the Arkansas School Boards Association.

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.

Reports from Subcommittees

The Commission heard reports concerning the meetings of the subcommittees.

Organizational Structure

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

- The definition of the terms “efficiency”, “adequacy” and “equity” and the interrelationships between these concepts
- The focus of the subcommittee’s work is not on the number of school districts but on the characteristics of school districts that deliver services to meet the educational needs of the students they serve

- The dissolution of any school district that cannot offer the core curriculum of required courses to its students and assignment of students to other districts based on geographical and demographic considerations

At the conclusion of Ms. Chaffin's presentation, there was a full and frank discussion of a variety of issues. Among the topics discussed were:

- The core curriculum required by the Standards for Accreditation
- The differences between teacher certification and teacher quality
- "Efficiency", "adequacy" and "equity" and the interrelationships between these concepts
- The relationship between poverty and student achievement

Curriculum/Education Childhood Education

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

- Development of early childhood education programs for four-year olds
- Utilization of all current delivery systems with the addition of a standardized educational component
- Mandatory versus optional participation in the program, noting the historical antipathy towards mandatory participation
- Parental support for and participation in these programs and the mechanism(s) to accomplish these aims
- Educational component of the programs must be aligned with the K-12 system
- Hours of operation and days of operation
- Staffing issues, such as pay, qualifications, and professional development opportunities
- Development of a transportation system for children participating in the programs

Funding/Facilities

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

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- Most popular secondary vocational programs are Medical Professions, General Internship, Personal Computer, Geographic Information Systems, Radio/Television, and Engineering
- Gaps in the current system of secondary workforce education programs are due to programmatic costs
- Estimated cost of \$45 million over an eleven-year period to equalize secondary course offerings across the state
- Start-up, operations, and replacement costs associated with secondary vocational centers
- Partnerships with postsecondary institutions to offer vocational courses to secondary students
- Need to develop a “ducks-in-a-row” model for the incorporation of vocational courses into the curriculum

Mr. Ross reminded the subcommittees of the need to attach dollar figures to any recommendations presented.

Ms. Pittman was recognized. She discussed the establishment of the Educational Excellence Trust Fund and its impact on the overall funding for public education. The staff was directed to provide information concerning the Educational Excellence Trust Fund to the Commission at its next meeting.

Teacher Salaries/Professional Development

Dr. Reed Greenwood, Chair, Teachers Salaries/Professional Development Subcommittee, reported that the subcommittee discussed the following items:

- Parity in salaries for teachers and administrators across the state
- Increase in teacher salaries to the regional and national averages
- Extension of the school calendar for professional development opportunities
- Incentives for teaching in critical needs subject areas
- Incentives for teaching in distressed areas
- Incentives for obtaining additional degrees and training
- Performance-based pay plans
- Review and enhancement of benefits (health insurance, etc.)
- Focus of next subcommittee meeting will be recruitment, teacher preparation, and professional development

At the conclusion of the subcommittee reports, the Commission discussed the dates for a retreat to work on its report. After a brief period of deliberation, the Commission selected the weekend of April 26th through April 28th for its retreat at a location to be determined by the co-chairs.

The meeting recessed from 2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

At 2:30 p.m., the Commission reconvened to hear remarks from Governor Mike Huckabee. Governor Huckabee spoke to the Commission about a series of educational reform proposals he put forth in a speech to a Little Rock civic group on January 8, 2002. Entitled NEXT STEP, the Governor's proposals included reforms for:

- Professional staff accountability and compensation
- Academic standards, curriculum and teaching methods
- Communicating results to all stakeholders
- Broadening the state's charter school law
- Enhanced financial reporting
- Improved pre-school and health care access for children
- Inclusion and expansion of broad-based opportunities for students in the arts
- Partnerships between business, industry, postsecondary institutions of higher education, postsecondary technical institutions, and public schools

Mr. McGinnis and Ms. Pittman thanked Governor Huckabee for his presentation and his involvement in this critical public policy discussion.

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

There being no further business, the Commission adjourned at 3:00 p.m.