

MINUTES

ARKANSAS BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

March 6, 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: Ms. Stacy Pittman, Co-Chair; 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; Dr. Don Love; Mr. Hugh McDonald; Ms. Kathy McFetridge; Mr. Bob McGinnis; 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 David Bisbee; Senator Jimmy Jeffress; Senator Jodie Mahony; Representative Johnnie Bolin; Representative Ken Cowling; Representative Boyd Hickenbotham; Representative Marvin Parks; and Representative Roger Smith.

The meeting recessed so that the members of the Commission could attend a press conference announcing **Speak Up, Arkansas!**, a series of public forums that will be held in all of the state's 75 counties on April 4th, 2002, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 10:25 a.m.

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

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

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The meeting recessed at 10:30 a.m. The Commission's subcommittees met from 10:30 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

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

- Scholarships for recruiting new teachers into the profession
- Incentives to recruit teachers into geographically and academically distressed areas of the state
- Presentation by Ms. Johnette Walker and two members of the staff from Wilmot Elementary School concerning the impact of extended year and extended day school calendars on student performance
- Need for better compensation for teachers, but developed no consensus on how to best accomplish this
- Any pay-for-performance system developed to compensate teachers must be based on objective criteria
- Various methodologies for evaluating teachers
- Salary schedules proposed by the Arkansas Education Association (AEA)
- Measuring Performance Honors (MPH), a statistically defensible point assignment system intended to measure the relative performance of an individual school on academic and learning environment indicators. It will form the basis for rewards and sanctions as defined within the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program (ACTAAP)
- Initial discussion of the Subcommittee's key findings

Organizational Structure

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

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- Presentation by Mr. Marty Strange, Director, Rural Schools and Community Trust, of a report on the correlation between school size and the academic achievement of low-income and minority students
- Concurrent credit courses
- Enhancement of the academic aspects of the senior year of high school
- Impact of federal, state and local governments on the operations of school districts
- Presentations regarding year-round schools, incentives for district consolidation, and pupil/teacher ratios at their next meeting
- Initial discussion of the Subcommittee's key findings

Curriculum/Education Childhood Education

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

Early Childhood Education

- Noted the controversial nature of the topic
- Draft of Subcommittee's key findings has been developed
- Discussed key statistics regarding early childhood education
- Need to better utilize and expand the current system
- Transportation and curriculum are the crucial components
- Need to provide training to early childhood staff
- Need community volunteers and parental education components
- Need to develop incentives to encourage participation in the early childhood education system
- System should be voluntary, not mandatory
- Curriculum should be consistent with the curriculum recommended by the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission (AECC)
- Public Schools should be among the providers of early childhood education
- Adequate funding must be made available
- Facilities should meet current state standards

Dr. Gooden noted that the Subcommittee was also working on recommendations and key findings regarding the K-12 curriculum.

Funding/Facilities

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

- Presentation by representatives of the Arkansas PTA regarding parental and family involvement in the public schools
- Development of its key findings

Ms. Jeannie Cole, President, Arkansas PTA, made a brief presentation to the Commission concerning the National PTA's Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs. Mr. McGinnis thanked Ms. Cole for her presentation.

The Commission held a full and frank discussion about expanding the scope of its work to include review of the funding formula for public education and make recommendations to the General Assembly regarding proposed changes to the formula. Mr. David Matthews made a motion that the Co-Chairs appoint a subcommittee to review issues related to the funding formula. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Mr. McGinnis announced that the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, March 20, 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 reminded the members that the Commission's retreat was scheduled for Saturday, April 27, 2002, at the University of Arkansas System Office in Cammack Village.

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