

MINUTES

ARKANSAS BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

October 17, 2001

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; Mr. Hugh McDonald; Ms. Kathy McFetridge; Dr. Martha McNair; Mr. David Matthews; Mr. Kevin Moore; Ms. Alisia Ramirez-Hartz; Mr. Ulicious Reed; and Mr. Keith Stokes.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE Representative M. Olin Cook; Representative George French; and Representative Larry Teague.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE:

Representative Bob Mathis; Representative Thomas Moore; Representative Steve Oglesby; Representative Charles Ormond; and Representative Harmon Seawel.

Approval of the Minutes of the October 3, 2001 Meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission [Exhibit C]

Pursuant to the motion of Dr. Don Love, the minutes of the October 3, 2001, meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission were adopted with the following amendments:

The language contained in the second paragraph on Page 3 of the October 3, 2001 minutes was amended to read:

“Following Mr. Ross’ presentation, the Commission engaged in a full and frank discussion of its role in reviewing and making recommendations concerning the funding of an improved educational system for the state. Pursuant to the motion of Mr. David Matthews, the Commission voted that its primary goal should be the *identification of what is deemed an adequate and equitable system of public education.* Upon completion of the primary goal, the Commission would then begin to explore sources of revenue to help meet these identified costs.”

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The language contained in the third paragraph on Page 3 of the October 3, 2001 minutes was amended to read:

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

- *Presentation by **Ms. Patricia Martin**, Assistant Director for Public School Finance and Administration, Department of Education, and **Ms. Janinne Riggs**, Associate Director for School Improvement and Professional Development, Arkansas Department of Education, concerning teacher salaries and professional development*
- Salary schedules
- Teacher scholarships and incentives
- Professional development system, pre-service and in-service

Ms. Stacy Pittman, the Co-Chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission, was recognized. Ms. Pittman updated the Commission on the activities of the Communications Subcommittee, which met from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. in Room 138 of the State Capitol.

Meetings of the Commission's Subcommittees

The meeting recessed at 10:15 a.m. The Commission's subcommittees met from 10:15 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the various committee rooms of the Capitol. The Commission recessed for lunch at 12:00 p.m. and reconvened at 12:45 p.m.

Reports from Subcommittees

The Commission heard reports concerning the meetings of the subcommittees.

Funding/Facilities Subcommittee

Mr. Wayne Hartsfield, Acting Chair, the Funding/Facilities Subcommittee, reported that the subcommittee held a panel discussion with superintendents concerning funding issues. The superintendents participating in the discussion were:

Mr. Frank Anthony, Pine Bluff School District,
Mr. J. M. Edington, Biggers-Reyno School District
Mr. Gene Gregory, Arkansas City School District
Mr. Bill Kessinger, West Memphis School District
Mr. Ulicious Reed, Marvell School District
Dr. Jim Rollins, Springdale School District

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Dr. Gary Smith, Pulaski County Special School District

Mr. Bob Watson, El Dorado School District

Each superintendent provided information to the subcommittee regarding the district's demographics, enrollment, facilities, finances, and critical needs. The critical issues identified as a result of the discussions included:

- Teacher salaries
- Professional development opportunities
- Pre-school programs
- Establishment of a permanent facilities fund
- The adverse impact of the current funding formula on school districts in the Eastern and Southern part of the state
- The continued growth of school districts in Northwest Arkansas
- The critical shortages of counselors and teachers in math, science, foreign language, and special education
- Need for incentives to attract teachers to certain areas of the state, in addition to equalized salaries statewide
- The positive attitudes of administrators

Curriculum\Early Childhood Education Subcommittee

Dr. Benny Gooden, Chair, Curriculum\Early Childhood Education

Subcommittee, reported that the subcommittee discussed the:

- Presentation by **Dr. Steve Franks**, Director, Arkansas Department of Workforce Education on the state's vocational education system
- Delivery system for vocational education courses and the shortcomings of the current system
- Method of funding vocational education
- Problems with the current funding system
- Strengths and weaknesses of the state's system of secondary vocational centers
- Need for additional information regarding the comparability of the state's academic standards and curriculum frameworks with the Rose Standards
- Information on early childhood programs in the South

Salaries/Professional Development Subcommittee

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

- Presentation concerning teacher salaries and associated items such as health care by **Mr. Sid Johnson**, President, Arkansas Education Association (AEA) and **Mr. Rich Nagel**; Executive Director, AEA, including a proposal to raise Arkansas teacher salaries by \$8,500.00
- Presentation by **Mr. Dan Farley**, Executive Director, Arkansas

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School Boards Association (ASBA) and **Ms. Kathy Morledge**, Director of Training and Communications, ASBA, on professional development

- Presentation by **Dr. Kellar Noggle**, Executive Director, Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA), on teacher and administrator salaries
- Increase of teacher salaries (which all three organizations supported)
- Increase of health insurance costs and the corresponding impact on school district employees

Organizational Structure Subcommittee

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

- Presentation by **Dr. Winston Simpson**, P-16 Coordinator, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, concerning the results of a comparative study of school district administrative costs in Arkansas and Georgia
- Consolidation of school districts as a method of reducing educational costs, which while not supported by the evidence presented as a cost savings measure, might be beneficial for other reasons
- School choice
- Need to have Subcommittee members attend the meetings of the State Board Advisory Committee counterpart
- Review of school districts, educational cooperatives, and the Arkansas Department of Education in terms of their roles in the state's educational system, their organizational structure, and their academic and economic accountability
- Timetable for completion of the Subcommittee's information collection and review activities and its review of various options for discussion and recommendation to the full Commission

Communications Subcommittee

Ms. Stacy Pittman reported that the Communications Subcommittee discussed the:

- Establishment of a website for the Commission to provide information on its activities and to receive input from the public
- Development of media kits
- Review of preparatory information for community meetings and a statewide media tour

Mr. McGinnis stated that the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, November 7, 2001, at 10 a.m. in Room 149 of the State Capitol. After a brief discussion, the Commission also set a second meeting date, Wednesday, November 21, 2001.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.