

Arkansas Commission on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap

The Commission on Closing the Academic Achievement Gap was established by the Arkansas State Legislature, under Act 33 during the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003.

Minutes
May 21, 2015

Members in attendance: Dr. Dawn Tirando Simpson, Senator Jack Crumbly, Dr. Luis Restrepo, Cassandra Barnett, Nate Todd, Dr. Vera Lang Brown

Guests in attendance: Sandra Hurst, Karli Saracini

Meeting Location: Arkansas Department of Education, Commissioner's Conference Room, Building A, Little Rock, Arkansas Department of Education

Welcome/Call to Order:

Dr. Simpson, chair, called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m. Travel forms were handed out, completed and turned in.

Discussion: The Bridging the Gap Symposium

Dr. Simpson reported on plans for the Symposium which is scheduled for June 19th at the Arkansas Career Training Institute. The planning sub-committee met on Tuesday, May 19 at Carl Stewart Middle School where Kathy Powers teaches. Dr. Simpson and Ms. Powers met to set a tentative agenda for the symposium. They also recommend that the Symposium be extended to a full day to make it more appealing to teachers who are looking for professional development hours.

The format of the symposium will start with registration at 8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m., then a general session to include a welcome and announcements. The plan is for three breakout sessions in the morning and three in the afternoon. Each session will offer two different presentations from which the participants will choose. Depending on the number of presentations, it is possible that some of the presentations will be offered twice. Suggested topics include:

- Common Core and how it affects the achievement gap. Dr. Jesse Hargrove has been asked to present on this topic and will combine it with a book signing
- Technology: two possibilities – how gaming in the classroom might impact the achievement gap or how to use the ADE's Data Center
- Parental involvement
- The legislative outlook & the effects of poverty on the achievement gap (Senator Crumbly)
- Best practices and how to set up a local achievement gap group
- Sandra Hurst & Karli Saracini will present on efficacy and its effect on the achievement gap

Logistics:

- Kevin Beaumont has put it on the ADE professional development calendar and made Dr. Simpson and the Commission an approved PD provider.
- Working to arrange for Dawson Education Service Cooperative to handle the financial aspects of the registration. The recommendation is \$35 per person. It was suggested by Dr. Restrepo that the Symposium be promoted at the state universities and college that

have MAT programs and that students be given a discounted registration fee of \$15 to encourage their participation.

- ACTI's culinary arts students will handle the luncheon
- Dr. Simpson is checking on paying travel and possibly hotel expenses for the keynote speakers and commissioners. Updates on travel reimbursements will be sent at a later date
- For overnight accommodations, the Embassy Suites is the recommendation.
- Dr. Simpson is encouraging commission members to come in on the night of June 18th in order to socialize and get to know one another better.

Other discussion:

- The question was raised concerning whether commission members need to complete a financial disclosure forms every year. Every commission member should sign and return the form every year. See <http://www.arkansasethics.com/> for the rules and regulations and the form.
- How can we identify and recognize individuals and districts who are contributing to closing the achievement gap? Once identified, the schools should be asked to present or webinars could be developed where they talk about their success. Their success needs to be shared and serve as models for other schools that are not having as much success.

Discussion of the Minutes from the Previous Meeting:

Although Kathy Powers was not able to attend the meeting, she sent word to move acceptance of the last meeting's minutes. Senator Jack Crumbly seconded. Motion carried.

Special Presentation:

Sandra Hurst, Director of Educator Effectiveness and Karli Saracini, Director of Licensure presented *Equitable Access and its Impact on the Achievement Gap*

Dr. Simpson requested that the slide presentation be sent to the commission.

As part of a grant application, the Offices of Educator Effectiveness and Educator Licensure are developing a plan addressing equitable access to a quality education in Arkansas. Data examined included identifying the top 25% high poverty schools, top 25% of high minority schools, the 25 % of low poverty schools as well as the bottom 25% of low minority schools. Of the 1064 schools in the state, 266 ranked in the top 25% for high poverty. Other data taken into account included information about four categories of teachers – inexperienced teachers, unqualified teachers (out-of-area for more than 30 days or long term/unlicensed substitutes), out-of-field teachers (teaching out of their licensed area with an ALP) and the rate of teacher turnover. The plan is still in the preliminary stages. More information will be made available to the commission when the plan is complete.

Future Meeting Date:

The next meeting will be the Bridging the Gap Symposium on June 18 and 19. The following meeting is scheduled for September 17 but Dr. Simpson has requested that the commission meet on September 10. Commission members are asked to check their calendars to see if the alternate date will work.

The Meeting Adjourned at 3:50.