

Arkansas Commission on Closing the Achievement Gap

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

Minutes
April 19, 2012

Members in Attendance: Dr. Dawn Simpson, Dr. Jesse Hargrove, Ms. Kathy Powers, Mr. Jon Fulkerson, Mr. Brooks Harrington

Others in Attendance: Mr. John Hoy, Assistant Commissioner of Academic Accountability

Excused Absence: Dr. Eddie McCoy, Ms. Elfreda Boyd, Dr. Vera Lang Brown

Meeting location: Commissioner's Conference Room, Arkansas Department of Education, Four State Capitol Mall, Little Rock, Arkansas

Welcome/ Call to Order:

Dr. Dawn Simpson, chair, opened the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

Minutes of March 15, 2012: Dr. Hargrove made a motion to accept the minutes and Mr. Fulkerson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Hoy announced that the U.S. Department of Education sent a letter to the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) stating that the waiver request needed some revision. The letter expressed concern that the large subgroup in the proposed waiver might mask the smaller populations of students for accountability purposes. The ADE will need to provide additional evidence that constituents and constituent groups were consulted about the waiver request and are willing to lend their support to the proposal. Mr. Hoy inquired if the Closing the Gap Commission (the Commission) would be interested in writing a letter of support. Mr. Hoy left the meeting while the members discussed the request and took a vote.

The Commission felt they had been fully briefed on the waiver proposal and that the changes in the accountability system would be in the best interest of Arkansas students.

Mr. Fulkerson made a motion to support the Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver request proposal in regards to the accountability system by writing a letter affirming their support. Dr. Hargrove seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Dr. Simpson announced that Mr. Gus Williamson tendered his resignation from the Closing the Gap Commission due to time constraints. She also stated that subcommittee reports would be tabled until the May 17th meeting since some of the members were absent.

Presentation: Ms. Kathy Powers, Bridging the Gap, 2011 Teacher of the Year

Ms. Powers wanted to give the Commission a sample of what she will be presenting at the Blytheville symposium. During the presentation, Ms. Powers provided research showing that there is a direct correlation between an individual's educational level and earning potential. Today's students are pioneering in language through blogs, tweets, and social networking. While students are bombarded with information, it is critical that the students receive guidance

from teachers on how to think and in helping them analyze the information. The learning gap continues to widen during non-school hours including students who participate in enrichment, camp, travel, and trips to local libraries. The gap further widens with the digital divide. Students in poverty rarely have access to internet at home. More minorities have access to internet on a mobile device than on a computer. It is difficult to conduct research or complete a resume on a smartphone. Ms. Powers concluded that the ADE has adopted the Common Core State Standards and this will impact instruction in the classroom. Traditionally, teachers have given instruction by means of direct delivery. As the state moves to Common Core, the teacher will serve more as a facilitator by teaching students how to educate themselves.

Mr. Fulkerson added that Eric Jensen's book, Teaching with Poverty in Mind, is a great resource for educators to deeper understand poverty issues.

Additional Business:

The subcommittee will finalize the planning for the Blytheville Symposium. The reception will be held at the Holiday Inn in Blytheville. A meeting room has been reserved and light refreshments will be served. Mr. Fulkerson has also contacted the media about the event.

Dr. Simpson expressed her appreciation to Mr. Fulkerson on behalf of the Commission for all his hard work, planning, and coordinating efforts with the Blytheville Symposium.

Dr. Simpson will be sending out an electronic invitation to school superintendents announcing the event. The invitation will include the logo, agenda, and hotel information. Participants will be able to register for the symposium on the website. She has also completed the professional development training, so participants will receive three hours for attending the symposium.

Future meeting date:

May 17, 2012

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

Recorded by Sheree K. Baird, Social Studies Specialist