

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
May 17, 2012

Members in Attendance: Dr. Dawn Simpson, Dr. Jesse Hargrove, Ms. Kathy Powers, Mr. Jon Fulkerson, Dr. Vera Lang Brown

Others in Attendance: N/A

Excused Absence: Dr. Eddie McCoy, Ms. Elfreda Boyd,

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 April 19, 2012:

Mr. Fulkerson made a motion to accept the minutes and Dr. Lang Brown seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Dr. Simpson said that the Closing the Gap Commission (The Commission) will review the subcommittees when the group meets again next August. The Commission will not be meeting during the months of June and July.

Blytheville Symposium:

The Commission members felt that the bus tour of Blytheville was terrific. The superintendent of Blytheville had come up with this idea for his faculty because he didn't think they realized the level of poverty in the community. He had all of his teachers participate in this activity. The next year the faculty took a bus tour of the community, the teachers got off the bus and handed out flyers to the community recruiting people to attend a "Back to School Bash" event. The school partnered with Wal-Mart which donated backpacks and other school supplies.

Kathy Powers thought this approach was an excellent model for outreach. She shared that she would plans to take this idea back to the Conway school district and community.

The members of The Commission expressed that all of the sessions were excellent especially Dr. Rainey's and Mr. Hoy's presentations.

Mr. Fulkerson added that the number of participants was somewhat lower than they had expected. One possible explanation might be that Blytheville is viewed by many as a less than desirable community and that may have a contributing factor. Also, the time of the year the event was held may not have been ideal for teacher to miss instructional time. Many teachers are drained after spring testing, and have already acquired their sixty hours of professional development. Other ideas to improve attendance in the future included a later start time to give participants time to travel, and to schedule a full day of activities. These are some ideas to keep

in mind when scheduling the next out of town event. Everyone agreed that the event was well organized and included great training materials.

In order to help with event communications in the future, phone calls and additional community outreach might help bring in more attendees. Other ideas discussed included partnering with a nearby university or community college, presenting at a large conference such as AEA, or moving the conference to fall which might be a better time for schools.

Dr. Lang Brown expressed her desire to have Pine Bluff host the next Closing the Gap symposium. Dr. Calvin Johnston was involved with the legislation and is serving as the interim chancellor at the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff.

A motion was made for Pine Bluff to host the next symposium, and the motion carried.

Dr. Lang Brown will contact Dr. Rainey and Dr. Johnston about the future Pine Bluff meeting.

The Commission discussed the idea of community and parental involvement being the focus of the next meeting. For example, a video is available that showcases the community of Mobile, AL, and the work they did to help close the achievement gap.

Kathy Powers has worked on a survey for principals in order to gather information about their local Closing the Gap Commissions. The data collected will be included in the November report.

Vacancies: The Commission has made a recommendation that Kathy Powers remain a member of the group. Additionally, the Commission has reached out to Paul Bookout's office for assistance with filling other vacancies.

Future Subcommittees:

Scholastic/Audit: Chair, Dr. Vera Lang Brown

Parental Involvement: Chair, Jon Fulkerson

Common Core: Chair, Dr. Jesse Hargrove

Next Meeting:

September 20, 2012

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm