

**Minutes
State Board of Education Meeting
Friday, December 15, 2017**

The State Board of Education met Friday, December 15, 2017, in the Arkansas Department of Education Auditorium. Chair Dr. Jay Barth called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Present: Dr. Jay Barth, Chair; Joe Black, Vice-Chair; Diane Zook; Ouida Newton; Susan Chambers (via conference call); Brett Williamson; Dr. Fitz Hill; Mireya Reith; Courtney Cochran, 2017 Teacher of the Year; and Johnny Key, Commissioner.

Absent: Charisse Dean

Reports

Report 1- Computer Science Initiative Report

Director of Computer Science Mr. Anthony Owen said he had new announcements following up to the initial Computer Science Education Week report. He said he will share data before the January State Board meeting. He said there was a 12% increase of students taking computer science courses between this year and the previous year. He said there are 6,200 Arkansas students taking computer science courses at the high school level this year.

Mr. Owen said there is a gender gap in students taking computer science courses. He said there are initiatives to help library media specialists integrate computer science at the K-8 level. He said industry partner relationships is an important part of the growth of the computer science initiative.

Executive Director of the Women's Foundation of Arkansas Ms. Anna Beth Gorman said one of their initiatives is Girls of Promise®. She says the program exposes girls to STEM and encourages their engagement. Ms. Gorman said Girls of Promise® collaborated with AT&T to run a pitch competition for 6th -12th grade students. She said the winning students' pitch would be screened in theaters across Arkansas in December 2017.

Report 2- Northeast Education Service Cooperative Evaluation Report

State Superintendent Dr. Mike Hernandez said this report includes links to Northeast Education Service Cooperative's Self Study along with the evaluation teams Highlights of the Cooperative, Evaluation Review, and Recommendations. Dr. Mike Hernandez said for clarification purposes, there is a note in the report that the Junior Fire Academy is the only one ran by a cooperative, but that it is not the only one in the state.

Report 3- Dawson Education Service Cooperative Evaluation Report

State Superintendent Dr. Mike Hernandez said this report includes links to the Dawson Education Service Cooperative's Self Study along with the evaluation teams Highlights of the Cooperative, Evaluation Review, and Recommendations.

Report 4- SUCCEED Scholarship

Deputy General Counsel Ms. Courtney Salas-Ford said every school on the report has a licensed teacher on staff or a contract with a special education teacher. She said the Department is not mandated to track these teachers.

Special Education Division Manager Ms. Lisa Tyler said the Department does not track whether or not students enrolled in private schools have a severe disability or a disability not classified as severe. She said the law does not require that private schools provide a support therapist for individual students. Ms. Tyler said there is not a requirement that private school support therapy be documented by the Department.

Ms. Salas-Ford said a student can have multiple disabilities, but will be qualified under one qualifying category. She said parents of students with disabilities are required to sign a release form upon enrollment at a private school that they have relinquished their rights to a free, appropriate public education, and the special education services provided in the public school system. She said those parents are notified that services will be subject to the private school proportionate share obligation of the private school's public education residential district. Ms. Salas-Ford said rights for a free, appropriate public education are reinstated for a student who decides to enroll in a traditional or charter public school.

Report 5- 2017 Arkansas Advisory Council Annual Report

Public School Program Coordinator Dr. Mary Kathryn Stein said the report is a historical document of gifted education in Arkansas. She said College Board considers Arkansas a model state for gifted education. Dr. Stein said the emergence of digital learning has expanded access to AP courses across Arkansas.

Commissioner Key said there is a need for more student recruitment for AP course entry at the district and school level.

Dr. Stein said students who take the PSAT and are identified through an algorithm that they will be successful in AP courses receive an individualized letter recommending courses at their school that they should take.

Report 6- 2017 Arkansas Teacher of the Year Report

Ms. Courtney Cochran said teachers should focus on whole-child learning. She said teachers should both teach and inspire.

She said Butterfield Trail Middle School engages its students in "expeditionary learning units." She said students give presentations upon completion of the units to the wider community. She said the motto at Butterfield Trail Middle School is to "Ignite a Passion for learning now." She said they are doing a good job in teaching the whole child.

Report 7- Chair's Report

Dr. Barth said there are a few areas of focus that he would like to emphasize through the end of the State Board year beginning in July 2017 and ending in July 2018. He said the first goal was to build camaraderie among board members. He said the focus for 2018 is educator rules and Act 930 rules. He said the board should consider the actionable items of the State Board task forces. Dr. Barth said the board should ensure clarity to ensure the greatest chance of success is given once schools under state control are given back to local control.

Mr. Williamson said the State Board would meet on Wednesday, March 7th and Thursday, March 8th instead of the listed Thursday, March 8th and Friday, March 9th. He said the group would visit schools in El Dorado.

Ms. Newton said she attended the board of directors meeting at the Dawson Education Service Cooperative. She said the cooperative is concerned that they will not be able to train all of their K-2 teachers for the R.I.S.E. Initiative. She said the Grady School District would have a new industry come into the area. She said there is a simulator that will allow students to train on log cutters and loaders in order to fit the new local job market demands.

Assistant Commissioner for Learning Services Ms. Stacy said the R.I.S.E. the Department is working on creating different pathways to incorporating the science of reading requirement. She said there are a number of ways that teachers can engage in the R.I.S.E. Initiative before official training.

Ms. Zook said she visited Pike View Early Learning Childhood. She said teen parents can drop their students off at the early learning childhood center and have transportation to their high schools so that they can complete their education. She said she supported this effort to support students.

Report 8- Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Key shared a report from Donors Choose, a platform for teachers to raise money for items needed in the classroom.

Commissioner Key said he and Dr. Barth drafted a letter as a follow-up to Little Rock Area Public Education Stakeholder Group member Attorney Antwan Phillips. Commissioner Key said there are a number of points addressed in the letter.

Commissioner Key said Dr. Mark DeYmaz of Mosaic Church reached out to Little Rock School District Superintendent Mr. Mike Poore with the interest of bringing public and charter school leaders together. He said conversations on gathering parents to discuss their reasoning behind choosing certain schools have begun.

Commissioner Key said the letter addresses discipline issues, and cites the Task Force on Student Discipline's work.

Commissioner Key said the letter addresses the request for a cooperative in Pulaski County. He said had conversations with various superintendents on this matter, and will continue conversations in January 2018.

Commissioner Key said all State Board members had the opportunity to review the letter. He said he and Dr. Barth would sign the letter and send it to all Little Rock Area Public Education Stakeholder Group members.

He said the Walton Family Foundation has made an investment in IFF, a real estate, community investment, and advisory group.

Report 9- State Board Standing Committees, Special Committees, Liaisons, and Appointments Report

Task Force on Family Engagement in Learning and Deeper Learning Grant member Ms. Reith said she would like to have updates from the Task Force added to the January State Board meeting. She said the November work session began with outlining the vision, timeline and stakeholders. She said that work will continue in the December meeting. Ms. Reith said one of the first actions of the task force is to gather outside stakeholders that will help shape the family learning and engagement standards in Arkansas. She said the task force now has access to external facilitation support from IDRA facilitator Dr. Aurelio Montemayor in 2018 at no cost to the Department through the organization's community-building funding.

Task Force on Student Discipline member Dr. Hill said the task force is in the preliminary stage of identifying outcome goals. He asked for input on the task force's December written report. He said the task force is concerned about at-home suspension and the impact on academic achievement and community safety.

Dr. Hill said middle school and high school alternative schools are currently in the same facility in Little Rock. He said there are issues that exist with mixing both levels of students in the same facility. He said a local church is being considered as the new location of a middle school level alternative school.

Dr. Barth said ForwARd is looking to using ESSA data and ForwARd community indicators for future assessments. He said ForwARd is addressing internet access issues, pre-K work, and working with the Office of Innovation for Education. He said ForwARd is supporting Level 5 communities. He said ForwARd is doing work in all district communities that are currently under state control.

Liaison to ESSA Steering Committee Ms. Ouida Newton said the Department has not received a call from the U.S. Department of Education with feedback on the Arkansas ESSA plan.

Liaison to Public School Accountability Ms. Zook said the School Improvement unit is working on transitional support plans. She said the unit is running preliminary data for schools. She said Tracy Webb is the new director of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Ivy Pfeffer said the Department is looking to build a strong onboarding process for new employees through Human Resources. She said the Department is updating milestones in the strategic plan. She said all Department employees have had the opportunity to share thoughts and perspectives with Commissioner Key through the series of "Coffee with the Commissioner" meetings.


Liaison to National Association of State Boards of Education Ms. Reith said the NASBE board is in transition. She encouraged State Board members to consider nominations for NASBE committees. She said she will attend the NASBE legislative meeting in spring 2018.

Liaison to Special Education Ms. Zook said there is no new business.

Adjournment

Ms. Reith moved, seconded by Mr. Black to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Minutes recorded by Kelicia Hollis



Johnny Key, Commissioner



Dr. Jay Barth, Chair

