

Minutes
Little Rock Area Public Education Stakeholder Group Meeting
Monday, January 30, 2017

The Little Rock Area Public Education Stakeholder Group met Monday, January 30, 2017, in the Arkansas Department of Education Auditorium. Vice Chair Jim McKenzie called the meeting to order at 5:11 p.m.

Members Present: Jim McKenzie, Vice-Chair; Tamika Edwards; Ann Brown Marshall; Antwan Phillips; Leticia Reta; and Dianna Varady.

Members Absent: Tommy Branch, Chair.

Audience: ADE staff, general public, and press.

The meeting was live streamed and the recording was posted on the ADE website at http://www.arkansased.gov/state-board/minutes/board_meeting_categories/2016.

Consideration to Approve Minutes – December 5, 2016

Ms. Edwards moved, seconded by Ms. Marshall, to approve the December 5, 2016, minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

Work Session: Consideration of Recommendations for the State Board

Ms. Varady said there is evidence that students receiving Special Education (SPED) services and students from low social economic status are not enrolling in charter schools at the same rate as other students. She said this needed further examination.

She said district collaboration models included a common enrollment system for the region.

She said there may be a need for addressing incentives for small schools related to students with more support needs.

She said student discipline - suspension or expulsion - may be addressed with an agreed upon process for all students in the region.

She said more exploration of systems like New Orleans may be needed to reduce the possibilities of segregation. She would like a review of how the New Orleans education system was changed and if it could apply in Little Rock. She said in other areas, charter schools are authorized at the local level, not state level. She said the funding was allocated to the New Orleans system and then allocated to the local charter.

She said the data indicated that schools are doing about the same in the region. She said it was important to understand why high achieving students may be leaving the Little Rock School District (LRSD) or Pulaski County Special School District (PCSSD) – are the issues proficiency, perception, or other.

Ms. Marshall said she is interested in collaboration as noted in the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) report. She said some areas have made sense for collaboration; however, collaboration has not come easily or quickly. She said in a common enrollment location, parents could see a menu of all available schools. She said the common location would be staffed by employees that are bilingual and knowledgeable. She said how parents receive information about education options may shape where parents send their children to school.

Dr. Denise Airola said pre-school parents use two sources of information – a non-profit group runs a clearinghouse for unbiased information and a network of home child care centers offers information. She said CRPE studied similar resources funded by grants funds. She said it may valuable to explore if funding is available for a similar opportunity in Arkansas.

Mr. Phillips said focus groups would be a way to gather the information. He said a reporting system for accurate information would be helpful. He said enrollment census could be used for future charter considerations. He did not support the CRPE report recommendation, page 2 of executive summary, for charter schools replacing traditional schools.

Mr. McKenzie noted that the CRPE report found that collaboration is not always a good idea and in fact can be a waste of time and resources in areas with a toxic political environment and lack of trust among the parties. He said informed perceptions need to have a trusted source. He noted that the CRPE report indicated that full collaboration between traditional public schools and public charter schools was rare and often depended upon extraordinary individual leaders and had difficulty becoming institutionalized when that leadership moved on. He said that may indicate that the underlying structure of the traditional public school/public charter school relationship may work against collaboration instead of encouraging it.

Mr. McKenzie also noted that the CRPE report recommended equitable school choice in all parts of a community. He said the inequitable distribution means some students may be deprived of opportunity, means that all students must be transported, which causes transportation issues that others bear the cost of solving and contributes to student obesity. He observed that because of inequities in facility funding and planning, charter schools are renting private buildings, and could be considered an inefficient use of scarce public funds.

On the matter of what to do with PCSSD, Mr. McKenzie stated that if PCSSD were to raise the money to improve its facilities and get out of court supervision and if the Board of Education granted the anticipated requests of Sherwood and Maumelle for separate districts, then the remainder of PCSSD should be merged into LRSD, but until then we run the risk of duplications and inefficiencies in school facilities. He said Dr. Guess had recommended time for stability within the PCSSD and that advice should be heeded.

Mr. McKenzie said that at some point the number of charter seats in south Pulaski County would fatally destabilize LRSD. The questions of how many charter seats are too many in Pulaski County should be asked and answered before more seats are authorized. He specifically recommended the development of a master school siting plan that covered traditional public and charter school systems in Pulaski County and raised the possibility of issuing request for proposals (RFP) to provide education services in specific areas.

Mr. Phillips said the location study was interesting to him.

Ms. Edwards asked who was the trusted source of information? She said this is the first step in moving forward.

Ms. Varady suggested for a future meeting that city leaders, representatives from the schools be invited to discuss what can they do and how they feel about these suggestions. She said the conversation should include common enrollment and incentives for desegregation.

Ms. Marshall said she would like to know how the traditional public schools feel about collaboration and what is in it for them.

Ms. Edwards said she wondered what is possible. What is within the power of the State Board or Department to establish a culture of collaboration - aligning policies, addressing inefficiencies, etc.

Mr. Phillips asked where is there is room to insert tangible recommendations. He said the Department could be the trusted source of data. He said an equity report among traditional and charter schools could be developed.

Mr. McKenzie said there is no education service cooperative in central Arkansas.

Dr. Jay Barth, State Board co-chair, said sooner is better for the report from this Stakeholder Group. He recommended the Group finish the recommendations to the State Board. He said some recommendations will be feasible and some not feasible at this time. He said to consider what policies and procedures may need to change. He said the final decisions may be ideal, feasible, or need policy change. He said to

consider what role non-profits could play in the recommendations. He said for each issue to consider simple to complex recommendations.

Ms. Varady asked about a continuum of recommendations for disproportionate enrollment that could include a parents' guide (these schools are in your region, rights for students with disabilities, etc.) to a common enrollment system.

Consideration for Next Steps

Director of the Office of Innovation in Education Dr. Denise Airola said the next step would be creating a draft of recommendations. She said framing the work is critical. She recommended using Google Docs to begin the draft.

Consideration of Agenda for Next Meeting

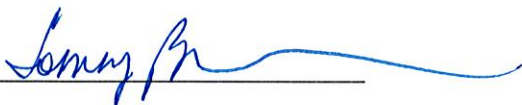
Vice Chair Jim McKenzie said the next meeting will be held Monday, March 13, 2017, at 5:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Ms. Edwards moved, seconded by Ms. Varady, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman.



Tommy Branch, Chair