

Minutes
State Board of Education Special Committee on Academic Distress Meeting
Friday, October 14, 2016

The State Board of Education Special Committee on Academic Distress met Friday, October 14, 2016, in the Arkansas Department of Education Auditorium. Chair Diane Zook called the meeting to order at 12:44 p.m.

Present: Diane Zook, Chair; Brett Williamson; Joe Black; Ouida Newton; Charisse Dean; Mireya Reith; Dr. Fitz Hill; and Meghan Ables.

Absent: none

Consideration to Approve Minutes – September 9, 2016

Ms. Reith moved, seconded by Ms. Newton, to approve the minutes from the September 9, 2016, meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Recommendations from School Improvement Unit

School Improvement Director Dr. Richard Wilde said the recommendations were submitted to the State Board on July 15, 2016. He said there were four pillars found in excellent and equitable schools– challenging, rigorous curricula; engaging, effective instruction; a culture of continuous improvement; and positive, powerful relationships. He said the State Board approved three recommendations for schools in classified in Academic Distress: modify/create school improvement plan around three goals; districts develop a plan of support; and engage the local school board in the process. He said the school improvement leadership teams had three overarching goals: 1) develop a clear and shared academic focus that will lead to removal from Academic Distress; 2) in conjunction with all stakeholders develop a positive school culture conducive to learning and staff professional growth; and 3) in conjunction with the district improvement leadership team develop a culture of continuous improvement.

Dr. Wilde said the districts were asked to submit a plan of support for the schools. He said eight (8) essential questions were used to guide the development of the plan.

Consideration of Progress for Hope High School – Hope School District

ADE School Improvement Specialist Dr. Robert Toney said the Hope School District submitted the district plan. He said the plan would require revisions as

progress is made. He said this is the first time the Hope High School has been classified in academic distress. He said the areas of strength at the district level include: professional development plan to support the principal; assessment of curricular needs and implementing a curriculum alignment plan; efforts to create a positive school climate and a culture that is conducive to learning; staff organized into Professional Learning Communities with structured trainings provided; and utilizing multiple cyber-media opportunities to communicate with parents and community.

Dr. Toney said areas in need of refinement at the district level include: evaluation process for categorical expenditures, review the assessment plan using a formal assessment inventory to provide clarity for each assessment used; provide specific additional supports to engage parents of students that are below proficient on ACT Aspire exam; and increasing documentation of reports to the local school board related to school improvement.

Dr. Toney said the strengths of Hope High School include: specific roles and responsibilities for the administrative team have been identified; initial analysis of the current realities and school improvement needs have been completed; development of a positive school culture is emphasized; and math and Language Arts instructional teams meet to plan and analyze instruction. He said the areas for additional refinement for the high school include: the communication of the clear and shared academic focus should be clarified; in the initial phases of the academic distress improvement process; and recommendation for Hope High School to return to the subcommittee at the end of the school year to report their progress.

Hope High School Principal Mr. Bill Hogle said he was learning how to use data to guide decision-making and leadership. He said they are focusing on adult data rather than just student data. Mr. Hogle said the high school was a New Tech High School. He said Response to Intervention was conducted during the instructional period. He said all classes are implementing literacy. He said the high school implemented the Strive for Five campaign to encourage students to reduce tardiness and absenteeism. He said teacher absenteeism was improving.

Hope School District School Improvement Specialist Ms. Carla Narlesky said she was using a data wall to track the progress of each class. She said the teams are collaborating to meet the needs of students.

Hope School District Superintendent Mr. Bobby Hart said the school board was supportive and engaged. He said the Department has very helpful with answering questions. He said the district was implementing Academies in Grades 5-8 to help students be prepared to enter high school. He said as a result of the academic distress designation, opportunity choice has resulted in the loss of 18 students to the district. He said the team was working to better

align the curriculum from Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Consideration of Progress for Watson Chapel High School – Watson Chapel School District

School Improvement Director Dr. Richard Wilde said feeder patterns have an effect on high schools. He said the Watson Chapel High School begins with Grade 10.

School Improvement Specialist Ms. Lasonia Johnson said the school has been classified in academic distress for three consecutive years. She said areas of strength at the district include: instructional support for students; effort to acclimate new teachers during orientation; and professional supports for teachers. She said areas in need of refinement include: clarification of the amount of discretionary funds; anticipated impact on student improvement for each categorical expenditure should be evidence-based; the purpose of unit assessments needs to be defined and included in the assessment inventory; and the expected levels of student achievement on each assessment to be identified within the SMART goal.

Ms. Johnson said within the high school plan department leaders have been assigned an administrative period to work with colleagues based on identified areas. She said areas of strength included: educator and student climate surveys were administered in the first quarter; the school leadership team utilizes guiding questions in their data analysis; the school leadership team in collaboration with instruction teams developed annual student achievement goals.

Watson Chapel High School Principal Ms. Kristy Sanders said the school worked on the school culture, included changing some teaching assignments and increasing student expectations. She said restorative justice was implemented and a School Culture and Climate Specialist was hired. She said a survey was utilized. She said student and teacher attendance was improving. She said the school was using a variety of methods to communicate with parents. She said the support from the Department has been on target.

Watson Chapel School District Superintendent Dr. Connie Hathorn said the students were in need of wrap around services. He said the teachers were using short cycle instruction and assessment to monitor the academic needs of students.

Watson Chapel School District School Culture and Climate Specialist Ms. Dovie Burl said the students were exhibiting behaviors as a result of reading issues. She said she helped to build relationships between the teachers and students.

Watson Chapel School District Director of Teaching and Learning Ms. Karen Fuller said the focus areas in elementary are reading, math, science and social studies. She said the interventions are being targeted to the needs of the students.

Watson Chapel School District School Improvement Specialist Ms. Kerri Williams said the district communicated with parents through School Messenger, Blackboard Connect, Remind 101, and social media.

Consideration of Progress for Pine Bluff High School and Belair Middle School – Pine Bluff School District

Dr. Wilde said the two schools have been classified in academic distress for three years.

Belair Middle School Principal Dr. Suzette Bloodman said the school has provided professional development in the focus areas. She said the teachers were using common assessments and modifying instruction and intervention for the students. She said the school was inviting parents to participate in various events.

Pine Bluff High School Interim Principal Dr. Reginald Wilson said the high school had three goals: parental involvement, culture, and assessments. He said information materials and planned event nights were helping to engage parents in the learning. He said the campus was working on events to change the culture. He said the teachers were planning to use assessments periodically to identify student needs.

Pine Bluff School District Superintendent Dr. Michael Robinson said interventions are provided to scholars during the school day. He said the district needed honesty and trust to be able to communicate effectively and improve the learning culture. He said the district was building systemic pillars to transform the effectiveness of the work. He said culture was an issue in the district but he was seeing some great improvements. He said he was hosting round table conversations and getting support from the community. He said the sense of urgency was shared across the district. He said Ms. Smith had started the work before he arrived. He said all officers were focused on the work.

Dr. Wilde said Dr. Robinson was trying to build capacity within the district. He said Dr. Robinson was setting a work tone that the district has been previously unfamiliar with.

Assistant Commissioner for Fiscal and Administrative Services Mr. Greg Rogers said the district was in early intervention for fiscal services.

Pine Bluff School Board President Mr. Henry Dabner said he mentored 17 male students in the district last year. He said he was a member of the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO).

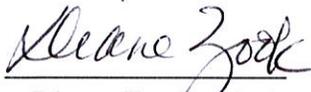
Reporting Schedule

Hope will be scheduled to report in late spring. Watson Chapel may be rescheduled if necessary based on the degree of progress reported in their 45 reports. Pine Bluff was scheduled for further review before the Standing Committee on Academic Distress on March 10, 2017.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman.


Diane Zook, Chair