

**Minutes**  
**State Board of Education Standing Committee on Academic Distress**  
**Friday, September 9, 2016**

The State Board of Education Standing Committee on Academic Distress met Friday, September 9, 2016, in the Auditorium of the Arch Ford building. Chair Diane Zook called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

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

Absent: None

**Chair's Report**

Chair Zook asked each member to provide a brief introduction.

Public School Program Manager Dr. Richard Wilde offered a revised process for review of schools classified in academic distress. The committee acknowledged support for the revised process.

**School in Academic Distress – Dermott High School**

Public School Program Manager Dr. Richard Wilde said the Dermott School District was making progress but the district faced similar challenges as other districts in the Delta. He said the school board was engaged and was supportive of the administration.

Dermott School District Superintendent Ms. Kristi Ridgell said the district was providing support to schools. She said district administration was meeting with individual educators to provide support and resources.

Dermott High School Principal and School Improvement Specialist Ms. Heather Hardin said the Department support has been helpful. She said data are indicating 12+ percent gain in mathematics and literacy during the last year. She said students are engaged in the conversations around the data and expectations. She said the school culture was improving as a result of this work. She said a new climate could be felt in the school due to the support, compassion, and high expectations for students and teachers. She said data days are protected to analyze data and develop strategic plans for moving forward. She said teachers worked to develop curriculum during the summer. She said the school has several new teachers and support was being provided to these educators. She said by narrowing the focus the work has been accomplished with

fidelity and the school was seeing progress.

Ms. Hardin said the reading goals were set for the first interim progress check and would be revised after that checkpoint. She said the school did not have a documented literacy plan but it was being considered. She said a check and balance system has been put into place to ensure student transcripts are accurate and students are on track to graduate. She said the school based health clinic has helped to lower absenteeism. She said parents and community have been very engaged in the clothes closet and the food bank. A community member provided backpacks and supplies for all students. She said parents are assisting in day-to-day operations that help the principal and teachers. She said the Teacher Cadet program is new this year. She said the Jewels mentoring program has been active for two (2) years.

Ms. Hardin said at one time the school was receiving too much help, but the current support from the Department has contributed to narrowing the focus. She said the support has been well received and helpful.

Dermott School District Curriculum Coordinator Ms. Arnese Gardner said the Department has been very targeted in their support to the district.

The district and school will report to the Standing Committee on Academic Distress on June 9, 2017.

### **School in Academic Distress – Marvell-Elaine High School**

Public School Program Manager Dr. Richard Wilde said the Marvell-Elaine High School was recently added to the academic distress list. He said the district has bordered on fiscal distress. He said the district has made appropriate decisions based on the limited budget. He said there was teacher turnover and a need for school culture improvement.

Marvell-Elaine School District Superintendent Ms. Joyce Cottoms said the district has made administrative changes. She said the district has contracted with Mr. Norman Hill for financial assistance. She said the district has declining enrollment, difficulty recruiting quality educators, limited housing, and a declining balance since 2012. She said the instructional facilitators had to be moved into classrooms to fill vacancies.

Marvell-Elaine High School Principal Mr. Antony Hobbs said the teachers were working on bell-to-bell learning. He said the school culture was the priority item for his first year.

Ms. Cottoms said the ADE has been very helpful. She said the district was very receptive to the assistance.

The district and school will report to the Standing Committee on Academic Distress on January 13, 2017.

## **School in Academic Distress – Strong High School**

Public School Program Manager Dr. Richard Wilde said Strong High School has been on the academic distress list for three (3) years.

Strong-Huttig School District Superintendent Mr. Jeff Alphin said the district was working on three (3) focus areas – changing the culture, improving the curriculum, and retaining effective teachers.

Strong High School Principal Dr. Wendell Colen outlined nine (9) steps to changing the culture.

Strong School District School Improvement Specialist Ms. Shirley Kyle outlined nineteen (19) steps to improving the curriculum. She said the ADE School Improvement Unit has provided support in analyzing data and designing next steps.

Mr. Alphin said the district was fully staffed. He outlined nine (9) steps for retaining effective teachers. He said the district was working with the South Central Education Service Cooperative to develop the educator pipeline. He said the district had a declining enrollment.

Mr. Alphin said the Department support has been collaborative.

No follow-up date for reporting has been determined.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 1:39 p.m.

*Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman.*

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Diane Zook, Chair