

State Board of Education
Minutes
April 10, 2000

The State Board of Education met for regular session on Monday, April 10, 2000, in the Auditorium of the Department of Education Building. Following a presentation by Dan Farley, Executive Director of the Arkansas School Boards Association, on Study Circles, the Agenda meeting was called to order at 8:45 a.m.

Members present: Luke Gordy, Chairman; JoNell Caldwell; Claiborne Deming; Bill Fisher; Robert Hackler; Shelby Hillman; Jim McLarty; Betty Pickett; Richard Smith; and Lewis Thompson, Jr.

Members absent: Anita Yates, Vice Chairman.

Mr. Gordy reported that he represented the Board at Central High School when Texas Governor George W. Bush, Election 2000 Presidential Candidate, visited Arkansas. He informed the Board that Consent Agenda Item C4, Review of Loans and Bonds Applications, was being moved to the Action Agenda.

Mr. McLarty moved the adoption of the amended Consent Agenda. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Minutes of the Regular Meeting, March 13, 2000.
- Minutes of the Joint Meeting with the Higher Education Coordinating Board and the State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities, March 9, 2000.
- Newly Employed, Promotions and Separations.
- Personnel Recommendations.
- Final Approval to Rules and Regulations Governing Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Funding.

ACTION AGENDA

Review of Loans and Bonds Applications

Patricia Martin was recognized for this presentation. She informed the Board that two schools had withdrawn requests for approval of loan applications – Alma School District and Waldron School District.

Mr. McLarty noted that he had expressed concern to staff about the seeming large number of teacher licensure violations that were reported for these schools seeking approval of loans and bonds. His count was 346 collectively for these schools. As a Board member he indicated he was expected to act on policy decisions with less than

sufficient information. The information provided does not list the areas of certification deficiency, the number of students impacted, nor the grade level. He noted that he requested that information for the schools seeking approval. It was provided prior to the meeting. Two districts were selected at random from the information provided by Bob Maddox. Mr. McLarty distributed copies of teacher violations from those districts to Board members. (Attachment #1) He used this information to indicate that there are many students in our public schools taught by a teacher who does not hold appropriate licensure.

Mr. McLarty indicated it was his opinion that this was a serious matter not only for the schools in this group, but for all schools across the state. It is only when the Board is asked to approve loans and bonds applications that such information about schools is shown to the Board.

Mr. Smith concurred with the critical nature of this licensure issue. He suggested that this could be a topic for consideration by the Board's Legislative Committee as it prepares its agenda for the 2001 session. Smith observed that the licensure issue is especially critical in the Delta region of the state that he represents. He suggested that better pay for teachers, especially those who choose to work in the Delta is critical. He noted that bordering states are paying higher salaries and luring our best teachers out of the state.

Mr. Fisher, who sits on the North Central Association (NCA) State Committee, indicated all 19 member states in the NCA region are experiencing teacher shortages and an increasing number of teachers working in positions for which they do not hold the proper licensure. He reported that for the 1999-2000 school year only three districts in the state were accredited with no citations for teacher licensure.

Mr. Simon reminded the Board that one of the indicators to be observed in the new Accountability Model (ACTAAP) is the percentage of teachers not properly licensed. He also reported that a number of efforts are underway to address these issues – specifically the new licensure system adopted by the Board and its implementation strategies and a Title II Teacher Quality grant jointly funded to the Department and the Department of Higher Education.

Mr. Fisher requested that Mr. Simon make a more complete report to the Board at the May meeting about the process of determining and reporting licensure violations.

Mr. Gordy referred to discussions at the Joint Meeting of the Boards that addressed the issue of alternative certification. He indicated that Dr. Cummins was working on a report that addresses some of the possibilities that have been successfully adopted in New Jersey related to the alternative licensure process. Gordy stressed that the Board's policy must go much further than merely reporting numbers and the doing nothing. Action must be a part of the policy to deal with licensure.

Mr. McLarty challenged the Board to consider these issues as if they impacted our own children. He believes that reporting high numbers of licensure violations gives a bad perception to the public. He stated that any class taught by a poor teacher could mean that each child in that class could lose the potential of a year's work.

Mr. Hackler, speaking as a former superintendent, indicated that administrators would be the happiest group in the state if salaries were raised and certified teachers were readily available to be hired for each position. However, that's not the situation. Administrators have to make difficult decisions too often to put non-certified person in classrooms or not offer the classes. He believes that people outside the education community must get involved in helping move this situation forward.

Mr. Fisher reminded the Board that there is a great difference between certified and qualified and that everyone must keep these distinctions in mind when discussing this issue.

Ms. Pickett noted what appeared to be discrepancies in reporting the budgets for proposed activities to be completed by these loans or bonds projects. She cited the Farmington application that requested \$830,000, but much of that amount is not accounted for in the projects listed. She would like to know how all the funds would be allocated. Mr. Fisher indicated that often refunding can be an issue and perhaps Ms. Martin can provide additional information in those cases. In future requests, Ms. Pickett requested more information be provided about proposed expenditures.

Mr. Fisher moved adoption of the list as proposed with the deletion of Alma and Waldron Districts. Mr. Hackler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Initial Discussion: Proposed Revisions to Rules and Regulations Governing Charter Schools

Brenda Matthews was recognized for this presentation. She reported that much was learned about the Charter School application and approval process during the first year. Many issues arose that were unanticipated. Ms. Matthews indicated that staff requests the opportunity to prepare and submit a fully rewritten version of the rules and regulations, rather than a revision of the current document. Reasoning in support of this request is for a new document to compliment the statute, not repeat much of the language found in legislation. The intent would be to make the new document more "user friendly" for the applicant and address a number of procedural issues that need clarification.

Mr. Hackler indicated this proposal was moving in the appropriate direction. He noted that information provided by the applicants, especially in the hearings, included too much generality and too few details, thus it was hard to make a fair decision. It was his opinion that more time to prepare the petition as well as prepare for the hearings would allow for a more comprehensive, detailed presentation. Hackler also stressed the importance of

more technical assistance and guidance for petitioners, especially those preparing for open enrollment schools.

Mr. Gordy stated that he has the responsibility of writing letters to the petitioners. In that correspondence, he acknowledged the difficult process of those petitioners and the limited time that was given to spend on developing the petition. He stated that as a Board we have gained a valuable experience, as have those first applicants. He challenged the staff to make the process easier for all parties.

Mr. McLarty noted that there were no suggested changes provided for review by the Board at this time. He believes that the Board should have staff recommendations as a point of departure for consideration of changes to the Rules and Regulations. Mr. Gordy responded that the staff presented this item as he requested. As Chair, he wanted Board members to have the opportunity to identify issues that should be considered in the revision. This is the Board's opportunity to give input before staff commits time to work on this document.

Ms. Hillman requested that each of the year-one petitioners be invited to revise and resubmit an application for next year. Hopefully the Board and staff will be better prepared to assist in the development of quality applications.

Mr. McLarty reported feed back from participants at a recent NASBE conference was very positive that districts such as Alma were considering addressing pre K programs. He informed the group that currently such programs could not participate in regular school funding and that a change in the law would have to take place before that could occur. Also, he noted that additional resources would have to be appropriated to allow schools to serve additional children.

Mr. Gordy reported that Governor Huckabee has established a task force to evaluate and get more funding to serve Pre K children.

Mr. Hackler expressed concern that the desegregation issues would always preclude consideration of an application being approved in Maumelle.

Ms. Hillman moved approval of staff recommendation to rewrite the Charter School Rules and Regulations and they be available for review by the Board at the May meeting. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Charter Schools Proposed Schedule for 2000-2001 Petition Cycle

Brenda Matthews requested that the Board adopt the proposed timeline for submission of Charter School Applications. She indicated that this schedule would provide the maximum amount of time possible for petitioners to develop applications and allow adequate time for review by the Board. She called attention to the fact that conversion applications and open-enrollment applications were due at different times. Ms. Pickett inquired as to what information would be provided to entities requesting application

information. Ms. Matthews indicated that each application packet would have the complete timeline. Mr. Smith moved adoption of the proposed time line. Ms. Caldwell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the FY2001 Budget for Smart Start

Mr. John Kunkel was recognized to present this item. Mr. Kunkel indicated this budget item is brought before the Board at this time so that the regional service cooperatives can make staffing decisions prior to May 1 as required by state law. He noted that this is the same level of funding for this item as last year and no new funds are anticipated. Mr. Kunkel pointed out that one new literacy specialist was proposed, but no new funding would be requested. This new position will be assigned to the Arkansas River Cooperative to work specifically with schools having high percentages of students performing below basic on the assessment tests. Mr. McLarty observed that this item was presented prior to the Board's consideration of the entire budget last year as well. He expressed his disapproval of such budgeting procedure. He believes that the Board should have an opportunity to see the entire budget before being asked to approve component pieces. Mr. Fisher moved approval of the proposed Smart Start Budget. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Revision to Rules and Regulations Governing Professional Development to Include Educational Technology

Charles Knox representing the Arkansas Association of School Administrators was recognized to speak to this item. Mr. Knox submitted a letter of request to speak in keeping with the Board's Operating Guidelines. Mr. Knox stated that he was a strong proponent of technology and professional development for staff to learn to become proficient in the use of technology. He related that as superintendent he required staff to participate in training specific to applications that were being adopted in his district. He observed that there are many issues that demand professional development such as Smart Start, Smart Step, curriculum alignment, and data driven decision-making. He questioned the wisdom of requiring all staff to spend a day (six clock hours) in professional development on technology if they are not directly involved in implementation of a specific application. Mr. Knox believes that most districts are making better decisions about the use of staff development days and value the opportunity for flexibility at the local level. He suggested that the decision for allocation of the staff development days should remain with the districts and they not be required to set aside one day for technology.

Jim Boardman was recognized to present this item for staff. Mr. Boardman indicated that this recommendation to revise the rules and regulations grows out of a recognition that the entire school staff should have more training on the appropriate use of technology in instruction. He cited Education Week research that only seven other states do not require technology training for teachers. A survey conducted by the Milken Education Foundation reveals that on the average across the United State, 12.4 clock hours of technology training is required. He implied that we are currently behind in our

requirements and that we are continuing to lag behind in this area. It was noted that in many classrooms, the students were better prepared in technology than the teachers.

Ms. Pickett moved adoption of the staff recommendation to include six clock hours of professional development annually as part of the total 30-hour requirement. In making her motion she observed that funds are routinely spent for computer hardware without making the commitment to training. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Report: Academic Distress

Dr. Charity Smith was recognized for this presentation. Dr. Smith reviewed for the Board the process used by staff in determining the status of academic distress. She also presented a three-year data profile depicting the progress of schools previously identified as academically distressed or on the “watch list” for become academically distressed.

Based on the three-year data trend, the Marvell district is recommended for removal from academic distress, Phase I. These districts are recommended for removal from the academic distress watch list: Augusta, Cotton Plant, Hughes, Kingsland, Osceola, Pine Bluff, and Stamps.

Dr. Smith recognized administrators from each of the above districts and each district was presented a plaque recognizing the progress made in improving student performance.

Districts recommended for Academic Watch status for 2000-2001: Dermott, Lake View, Saratoga, and Waldo.

Districts recommended for Academic Distress Phase I for 2000-2001: Gould, Helena/West Helena, Lee County, and Winslow.

Districts recommended for Academic Distress Phase II for 2000-2001: Altheimer, Crawfordsville, Elaine, and Parkin.

Mr. Hackler asked if representatives of the districts being recommended for removal from academic distress would share effective strategies employed by the district to improve performance. Responses from the districts included the following: High expectation on the part of all staff; Commitment of staff to a common objective; A team effort; Getting parents involved in their child’s learning; Community involvement; Professional development for staff; Student’s becoming involved and concerned for the image of the school.

Mr. McLarty moved approval of staff recommendations for the academic distressed categories for 2000-2001. Mr. Hackler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Caldwell commended Dr. Smith and her staff for the attractive informative brochure provided to describe academic distress.

Commitment to Principles of Desegregation Settlement Agreement: Report on the Execution of the Implementation Plan

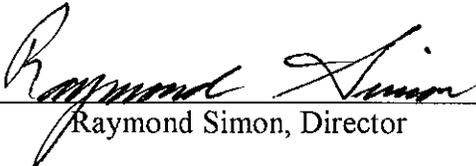
Mr. Edwin Strickland was recognized for this report. Mr. Strickland reported that the required monitoring information was filed with the court on March 31, 2000. Mr. Fisher moved adoption of the report. Ms. Caldwell seconded the motion. Mr. McLarty noted that in the report dated October 26, 1999 from the Office of Desegregation Monitoring which discussed test score disparity and the use of the NCE score as the metric for loan forgiveness. He recalls that from the settlement agreement composite test scores are to be used to make that determination. McLarty requested that staff be asked to compile a set of test data using the composites to build a report consistent with the settlement agreement. It was agreed that staff would prepare such a report for presentation to the Board. The motion to adopt the report was approved unanimously.

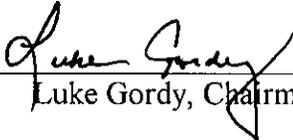
Presentation – Dr. Douglas Reeves, Center for Performance Assessment

Mr. Simon introduced Dr. Douglas Reeves as a leader in performance assessment and educational accountability. Dr. Reeves has worked with the schools in the implementation of the Smart Start Initiative and other related activities over the past two years. Dr. Reeves addressed the Board on the issues of Educational Accountability.

Mr. Fisher moved adjournment. Ms. Caldwell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Minutes recorded and reported by Dr. Charles D. Watson


Raymond Simon, Director


Luke Gordy, Chairman