

Minutes
State Board of Education Special Committee on Academic Distress Meeting
Friday, August 14, 2015

The State Board of Education Special Committee on Academic Distress met Friday, August 14, 2015, in the Arkansas Department of Education Auditorium. Chair Vicki Saviers called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

Present: Vicki Saviers, Chair; Toyce Newton; Diane Zook; Brett Williamson; and Ouida Newton.

Absent: none

Reports

Report-1 Chair's Report

No report.

Consent Agenda

Ms. Zook moved, seconded by Mr. Williamson, to approve the consent agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

Item included in the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes - July 10, 2015

Action Agenda

A-1 Progress Report from Belair Middle School and Pine Bluff High School in the Pine Bluff School District

Pine Bluff School District Superintendent Dr. T. C. Wallace, Jr. said the school board and the superintendent are on the same page. He said the district was overstaffed and, therefore, reduced some positions. He said the district closed two schools, eliminated 68 teaching and support positions and eliminated five administrative positions. He said some expenditures were also abolished. He said these reductions resulted in financial savings to the district. He said he anticipated increased enrollment in the district. He asked the Board to include the district in solving issues reported to the State Board members.

Pine Bluff School Board President Mr. Harold Jackson said the school board

approved the reductions described by Dr. Wallace. He said the school board was committed to removing the school from the academic distress list. He said the school board members attended the requested training. He said the school board meets monthly as required and also meets for a work study session monthly.

School Improvement Director Dr. Richard Wilde said through observation, he has noted more planning and educators have more voice in decisions. He said it is early in the change process and there needed to be continued monitoring. He said the school board needed to be more transparent in their discussion of the actions. He said the superintendent is delegating to the chief officers and being more inclusive. He said the systems are not in place at this time. He said it is too early in the year to evaluate the effectiveness. He said the school was working on changing the culture of the adults but also needed to consider a plan to change the culture of learning by the students.

Dr. Wallace said he is licensed as a superintendent in Arkansas, Texas, New York, Mississippi, and Michigan. He said his license is provisional in Arkansas. He said he communicates directly with the chief officers and administrators. He said the district had a needs assessment completed by an outside provider and by internal groups. Dr. Wallace said he projected a reduction in cost for external providers.

Chief School Reform Officer Ms. Alesia Smith said the teachers have received training on BloomBoard. She said the curriculum is vertically aligned. She said the needs assessment was ongoing with feedback from administrators and teachers. She said the district would use The Learning Institute and Star Reading and Math as interim assessments. She said they would use Compass for interventions. She said the principals were working with their staffs to build expectations around the new vision for the Pine Bluff School District. She said the district had worked with two external providers – From the Heart and Keith Sanders Group. She said the district currently has a contract with From the Heart, but no contract has been signed for the Keith Sanders Group.

Public School Accountability Coordinator Mr. Elbert Harvey said that Dr. Wallace's provisional license expires March 17, 2016. He recommended the district collaborate with the chamber of commerce and schedule regular community meetings and report the feedback.

Motion

Ms. Zook made a motion, seconded by Mr. Williamson, to provide a full report of progress and concerns, to hold a town hall meeting to inform the public, and report progress to the State Board in November 2015. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman.



Vicki Saviers, Chair