

Minutes

State Board of Education
Telephone Conference Call, Wednesday, August 28, 2002

The State Board of Education convened via a telephone conference call on Wednesday, August 28, 2002. At 9:00 a.m. Dr. Charles Watson called the roll and determined that a quorum was present. Shelby Hillman, Chairman, called the meeting to order.

Board members reporting present: Shelby Hillman, Chairman; JoNell Caldwell, Vice-Chairman; Luke Gordy; Robert Hackler; Peggy Jeffries; Calvin King and Lewis Thompson, Jr.

No Board member was absent.

Ms. Hillman requested that Mr. Simon recap the results of the priority setting just completed. Mr. Simon noted that there were some errors in tabulation in the initial report that was circulated. He summarized briefly the items receiving high priority preference by Board members and noted that 18 of the 72 total items received highest priority ranking.

Dr. King reported that he was not available when Federal Express driver attempted to deliver the packet and that he had been away traveling. As a result, he did not have the packet available for reference during the call.

Mr. Simon referred to assumptions that seemed to emerge from comments by Board members in reference to priority items. Ms. Jeffries expressed her preference for discussing the priority items individually and thus have an opportunity to comment on some of the items. Mr. Hackler suggested that the 18 priority items as voted by the Board be listed then each could be considered if necessary.

Mr. Simon listed the following numbered items that received highest priority ranking by the Board.

1, 6, 10, 12, 16, 19, 20, 21, 34, 41, 42, 43, 46, 48, 53, 58, 66 and regional high schools.

Discussion on item 6 – Professional Development.

Mr. Gordy voiced strong support for high quality professional development, but felt that professional development for administrators was lacking in this context. He moved that this item be extended to include high quality professional development for administrators that would include topics related to ACTAAP, disaggregation of data and instructional leadership. Ms. Jeffries seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously.

Ms. Jeffries inquired as to how the number of hours being recommended compared with requirements for teachers and administrators in surrounding states. Mr. Simon noted that it was not atypical for schools to have from five to ten days per year for professional development. He believes these recommendations are reasonable, especially since the content must be directed to improving performance and instructional issues. Mr. Simon stressed that in recent years many school administrators have attested to the lack of time for accomplishing what needed to be done in the current five days. For several years, the Board has had a policy in place that allows a school to request a waiver of up to five student instructional days for professional development. The Department has attempted to assure the Board that this time is well spent and the training proposed is "high quality." Mr. Simon stated that the waiver practice would cease when a new policy was adopted.

Dr. King stressed the importance of increased salary for increased work. Mr. Simon assured the Board that the number of contract days would have to be a consideration in the salary issue

discussion. Dr. King also raised salary issues related to extra pay for working in “hard to fill” areas of the state and for teaching in content areas such as mathematics, science, special education, etc., which are high need content areas.

Ms. Jeffries inquired if some of these topics should be included in the recommendations. Mr. Simon reminded the Board that these are preliminary recommendations. Many more meetings will have to occur with a wider range of participants to develop legislation or policy to implement these recommendations. He emphasized that although there is not a lot of time between now and the beginning of the session, much work remains if the Department and Board are to be ready for the session in January.

Mr. Gordy reminded the Board that some of these same issues were advanced in the report of the Teacher Quality Task Force.

Ms. Jeffries expressed caution in making these and other recommendations for the amount of tax revenue that would have to be raised to implement these actions.

Discussion of Regional Schools

Mr. Gordy suggested that the regional concept was preferable to other options in that it impacted the local systems much less than a unified system. Mr. Simon stressed that the goals are the same – more efficiently run schools, qualified teachers, and broader curriculum. He implied that the primary question was the structure that is most acceptable to the public. He stated that a regional system of high schools will accomplish the goals without changing the basic structure and local boards would be maintained. Mr. Gordy stated that it was his belief that districts should not have an option to offer or not offer choice. Ms. Jeffries inquired if such a plan had been tried in other states. Various responses followed: Missouri currently has regional high schools in operation; Arkansas currently has regional options for area schools that provide workforce education classes; some schools provide regional options for meeting the needs of special education students.

Dr. King questioned the extent to which state funding would follow students. He was assured that state funds would follow the child.

Ms. Hillman reminded the Board that the Blue Ribbon Commission recommended the regional high school concept.

Discussion of Item #12, Early Childhood issues

Mr. Simon noted that he sensed agreement that offerings for pre-school programs would be limited to four-year-olds at this time. He stated that in addition to framing this recommendation it would be necessary to revise the Accreditation Standards to include four-year-olds. Ms. Jeffries asked if all of the objectives for kindergarten (five-year-olds) had been met. She stated her preference would be to fully implement kindergarten on a mandated basis before adding additional levels. Mr. Simon indicated that the option for participation in a four-year-old program would be at the discretion of the parents, but schools would make such programs available.

Mr. Gordy moved that all four-year-olds have access to quality pre-school programs. Dr. King seconded the motion. Ms. Jeffries stated that no studies prove the success of these pre-school programs over time. She suggested that the Board should be very aware of the expenses of such programs. Mr. Gordy stated that pre-school programs are good for children of the state. The type program being advocated goes beyond childcare and includes instructional programs.

Mr. Hackler asked about the proposal to establish a sliding-fee scale when all parents are now paying taxes. Why ask parents to pay just because they make more money? Mr. Simon responded that this structure is currently used in ABC programs and it appears to be working. He

also noted that this was one way to introduce a wider availability of pre-school programs and to help keep costs down.

Dr. King inquired if providers outside public schools could be considered as providers. Could HIPPO or another program provide services and funds follow the child. The response suggested that there was nothing in the recommendation that would not allow this option.

The motion was adopted on a 5 – 2 vote. (Hackler and Jeffries voted no.)

Discussion of Strengthening Oversight of Education Service Cooperatives

Dr. King inquired as to the composition of the cooperative boards. Mr. Simon responded that in most cases superintendents (or their representative) from the schools in the service region compose the Board of Directors. Statutes that enable cooperatives provide for an executive committee composed of representatives of the Board to serve as an administrative body.

Mr. Simon reported that there was interest among many within the state to place greater oversight on the cooperatives. He has worked with representatives from the cooperative directors to revise legislation to address these issues. The Department and cooperative directors have jointly developed an agreement on a revision of current laws for administration of cooperatives. The issue of removal of a cooperative director was raised. Scott Smith stated that cooperative directors are considered the same as school administrators and any statute that impacts school superintendents also applies to cooperative directors.

Mr. Gordy commended Mr. Simon and the cooperative directors for work toward addressing cooperative issues. He stated that some cooperatives are doing a good job and others are less effective. He thinks these steps are in the right direction.

Ms. Jeffries stated that she favored more direct supervision of the cooperatives. Mr. Simon responded that initially he agreed and at one point considered recommending that the directors should be employees of the Department. He further noted that the cooperative directors had convinced him that a compromise in this area would be best for all concerned. Mr. Simon indicated that if the Department directly supervised those positions, should a vacancy occur, the state could be in a position to administer programs at the cooperatives. The Department does not have sufficient staff for such supervision. Also, through the cooperative directors, local school superintendents feel they have an advocate or voice to carry their message. If the cooperative directors were Department employees that relationship would not exist.

Mr. Gordy moved that the report be adopted as amended. Dr. King seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously.

Mr. Gordy requested that mandated professional development for administrators be added to the Standards in keeping with the recommendations previously adopted as part of the Advisory Committee document. Ms. Jeffries offered a minority report on the requirement for mandatory professional development for Board members. She cited the National PTA position on this issue.

Mr. Gordy moved adoption of Standards revisions as discussed. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion. The motion was adopted 6-1. (Jeffries voted no.)

Dr. King moved that the total report of the Advisory Committee as revised and the proposed revisions to the Standards be adopted and forwarded to the Joint Interim Committee on or before September 1. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion. The motion was adopted 6 – 1. (Jeffries voted no.)

Ms. Hillman stated that the adoption of these recommendations was only preliminary and the Board should be prepared to work on these and other issues to develop a legislative program for

January. She thanked Board members for working on these recommendations and responding in such a short time.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

The Minutes were recorded and reported by Dr. Charles D. Watson

Shelby Hillman, Chair

Raymond Simon, Director