

Arkansas Public Higher Education Coordination of Education Efforts Report

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**ARKANSAS COMMISSION FOR COORDINATION
OF EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS
2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Commission for the Coordination of Educational Efforts was created by Act 109 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003. Act 109 required the Commission to recommend policies related to the improvement of coordination among and between the levels of education from pre-kindergarten to the graduate level, and included a specific list of topics for consideration. Subsequent legislation has adjusted the size and composition of the board but retained the initial purpose. The original topics and legislative history are provided for reference in Appendix A to this report.

For a decade the Commission for Coordination has met quarterly, listened to many distinguished speakers from government, education, and the private sector and annually provided a report with recommendations for change and attention. A partial list of past presentations is also provided for reference in Appendix A.

In the past ten years, many things have changed that affect education and jobs in Arkansas and the efforts that coordinate and link them. Some of these are executive acts, such as the STEM Works effort that promotes STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education leading to a workforce empowered for the knowledge-based jobs of the 21st Century. STEM Works includes UTeach programs at three universities that will improve the availability of teachers skilled in STEM disciplines and three project-based learning initiatives – Project Lead the Way, New Tech, EAST Core. The Arkansas Economic Development Commission has emphasized growth in skilled, higher paying jobs and the infrastructure to support technology based startups and increase venture capital.

There are also large efforts driven primarily by other state agencies, such as the advent of the Common Core Curriculum and Arkansas' role in developing the Next Generation Science Standards. These efforts affect the entire educational enterprise.

New organizations have also emerged focused on the vision of Arkansas in the 21st Century. Accelerate Arkansas focuses on the broad changes in education and the economy required to get the average income in Arkansas to equal the US average. The Arkansas STEM Coalition focuses on engaging the educational enterprise,

state agencies, businesses and citizens to remake Arkansas STEM policies, strategies and programs in order to expand the economy of Arkansas and produce higher paying jobs. There are programs to remediate, reduce the need for remediation, increase the success, extent and diversity of AP courses, and other programs for concurrent enrollment and distance education. Other programs encourage students to visit college campuses and employers, to gain information for planning their lives.

In 2015, the Commission heard from the Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Department of Career Education, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, and the Division of Early Childcare Education at the Arkansas Department of Human Services. Presentations were made to update the Commission on the work of the Arkansas Research Center, the Governor’s Computer Science Task Force, and ForwARd Arkansas.

Recommendations of the Commission are:

1. To support the implementation of the recommendations set forth in ForwARd Arkansas’s “New Vision for Arkansas Education”. Those recommendations are as follows:

PRE-K

All students, starting with those in highest need, have access to high-quality early childhood learning opportunities so they arrive at kindergarten ready to learn.

- Starting with lowest-income areas, improve quality of programs to meet new, high standards.
- Then, increase access to pre-K in areas of shortage.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Each student is supported in developing the full range of knowledge and skills she/he needs to be successful in college and career. All schools have a culture of mutual respect, high expectations for all, teamwork and continuous growth.

- Embed more high-quality teacher collaboration in schools.

- Establish workforce education pathways that provide college credit during high school and prepare students for both career and higher education options.
- Improve testing in a way that maintains academic rigor, uses classroom time thoughtfully, informs teaching, and measures student progress holistically.

TEACHER PIPELINE

All schools, especially those in high-need areas, have access to talented educators who have been rigorously prepared. Build homegrown teaching talent by expanding programs like Teacher Cadet.

- Expand pathways for nontraditional educators without sacrificing quality.
- Attract top talent to high-need schools and subjects by improving incentives.

SUPPORT BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

All students and families, starting with those in highest need, have access to and support in accessing the nutritional and health resources needed to come to school ready to learn.

- Increase access to nutrition by implementing healthy breakfast as a part of the school day.
- Provide high-risk children and families improved support in navigating access to quality health care services.

LEADERSHIP

All education leaders put students at the center of their decisions, work tirelessly to build and support a team, deploy resources effectively, and hold themselves and their team accountable for enabling all children to be successful.

- Empower principals to set a shared vision, and manage staff and resources to reach it.
- Support implementation of a rigorous administrator evaluation system.

- Expand rigorous preparation programs and mentorship.
- Focus school board training on good governance; align board elections with general election.

ACADEMIC DISTRESS

All schools in academic distress and pre-academic distress receive support and interventions that enable them to transform their school cultures, dramatically improve student achievement, and sustain their improvement over time.

- Create a transparent process that proactively identifies schools approaching distress.
- Empower one unit at the ADE and staff it with top talent to manage the process.
- Measure progress holistically (not just test scores) and share with the community.

SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

All school districts have sufficient funding and use resources in a way that most effectively supports student success. Policies enable the implementation of recommendations needed for Arkansas to become a leading state in education.

- Streamline the regulatory burden (on teachers and administrators, educator prep programs, ADE) to enable a focus on instruction, encourage innovation, and support a mindset shift from compliance to excellence.
 - Improve district capabilities to make decisions based on evidence of educational impact.
 - Over time, increase funding to support educational excellence, tying incremental increases to evidence of effective resource use
2. To endorse the recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Computer Science, including expansion of K-12 computer science offerings from early grades through high quality college and career preparatory courses offered in

every high school in Arkansas. Whenever possible computer science should be integrated in other courses as an important tool to research and problem solving, especially in problem based learning opportunities such as the EAST Initiative and Project Lead the Way. The Commission also supports the recommendations for expanded teacher training in computer science and the expansion of more advanced high school classes to be available in the state's high schools.

3. To review and increase funding for Arkansas higher education institutions so that those institutions have the resources needed to meet the technological needs of current and incoming students, as new computer science standards are put in place in K-12 schools.

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Appendix A: Background and History

The Commission for the Coordination of Educational Efforts was created by Act 109 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003 in response to a perceived need for coordinated efforts to address problems with the flow of students from K-12 educational institutions to institutions of higher education and ultimately to the workforce. One major example of an issue requiring coordinated attention was the high rate of remediation required in students entering the institutions of higher education.

The Act required the appointment of members by the Governor, President Pro Tempore, Speaker of the House, the Presidents Council of Colleges and Universities, and by virtue of positions. Act 109 required the Commission to recommend policies related to the improvement of coordination among and between the levels of education from pre-kindergarten to the graduate level as well as:

- Recommend policies on concurrent enrollment of high school students in college courses.
- Make recommendations related to a common calendar for all public schools and institutions of higher education.
- Study the various delivery systems of distance learning and recommend ways to improve and make more efficient a delivery system for Arkansas.
- Recommend ways that the public schools, the Department of Education, the Department of Higher Education, and the institutions of higher education can improve working relationships in order to improve the effectiveness of teaching for the public schools.
- Recommend ways of improving the transfer of credit from institution to institution for the benefit of the student. This includes recommendations for improving the transfer from two-year to four-year institutions as well as the transfer among two-year institutions and four-year institutions.
- Make recommendations related to aligning the curriculum from kindergarten through the bachelor's level in colleges and universities.
- Recommend ways of improving the link between educational efforts and economic development for Arkansas.
- Recommend priorities for the funding of education.

- Review all current scholarship programs of the state and institutions of higher education and make recommendations for improving future scholarship programs.
- Make recommendations related to the future need for remediation of first-time college students.
- Make recommendations to improve science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education from kindergarten through the bachelor's level in higher education.
- Make recommendations to improve the use of educational technology.
- Recommend any other improvements in education at any level to benefit students and the state.

Act 1936 of 2005 amended Act 109 by adding the President of the Arkansas Science & Technology Authority and the Executive Chief Information Officer as members. Act 1936 also added duties concerning science and technology, as listed above.

Act 751 of 2007 dissolved and transferred the duties of the Executive Chief Information Officer to the Department of Information Systems. Therefore, the Director of the Department of Information Systems replaced the Chief Information Officer as a member of the Commission.

The first meeting of the Arkansas Commission for Coordination of Educational Efforts was held on August 12, 2004 where Dr. Ken James, then Commissioner of the Department of Education, and Dr. Linda Beene, then Director of the Department of Higher Education, presented an explanation of the commission, the reason for its creation and desired outcomes. Florine Milligan, Arkansas State University Trustee member, was elected Chair of the Commission at its November 2005 meeting, a position she diligently continued to fill through 2013.

Each year the recommendations of the Commission were provided to the Governor, the Senate and House Committees on Education, the State Board of Education, the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the boards of trustees of public institutions of higher education, and superintendents of Arkansas public schools in the December Annual Report as required by Act 109 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003.

Amy Braswell, representing public school teachers, was elected chair of the Commission at its March 2015 meeting.

The Commission has met quarterly since August 2004 to gather information. Presentations and information presented to the Commission include:

- Jim Boardman, assistant director for research and technology at the Department of Education, addressed the tracking of students from kindergarten through college graduation;
- Dr. Jim Purcell informed the Commission about the changes in scholarships based on new legislation and the new lottery. He also spoke about President Obama's new American Graduation Initiative;
- Dr. Charity Smith, assistant commissioner for Academic Accountability at the Department of Education, presented information about data and tracking of students in kindergarten through high school graduation;
- Dr. Neal Gibson from the Arkansas Research Center and the Department of Education spoke to the Commission about student growth and data visualization. The Department of Education received a grant to develop a statewide longitudinal data system;
- Tonya Russell, director of the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education at the Department of Human Services, reported activities by the Department of Human Services that encourage parental involvement, especially at the early childhood level;
- Dr. Jim Purcell presented information about Complete College America, a new initiative designed to identify and target college graduation goals. He also described the scholarships available and reported on the Department of Higher Education's process of awarding those scholarships;
- Jim Boardman presented the Commission with information about the data grant of \$9.8 million from the U.S. Department of Education to the Department of Education;
- Dr. Tom Kimbrell, commissioner of the Department of Education, updated the Commission on the Common Core State Standards for Readiness for College and Career. This is an effort of most states to adopt common standards in English, language arts, and mathematics education;
- William Walker, director of the Department of Career Education, spoke to the Commission on the duties of that department;
- Dr. Ed Franklin, executive director of the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges, spoke to the Commission about the Center for Student Success;
- Shane Broadway, interim director of the Department of Higher Education, gave a legislative update;

- Dr. John Ahlen from the Arkansas Science and Technology Authority and Susan Harriman from the Department of Education updated the Commission on STEM education and the U-Teach program;
- Dr. Kimbrell spoke to the group about the Common Core standards and STEM works;
- Melinda Faubel from AT&T described some ways Arkansas businesses are promoting education through grants and other incentives;
- Dr. Bob Gunter from the Arkansas Department of Career Education updated the Commission on the activities of the department;
- Melissa Jacks from the educator licensure division at the Department of Education spoke about possible changes to teacher licensure regulations;
- Luke Gordy, executive director of the Arkansas for Education Reform Foundation, described the Foundation's work;
- Herschel Cleveland, a former state representative and sponsor of legislation creating the Commission, described the origin and history of the Commission; and
- Megan Witonski, assistant commissioner in the Division of Learning Services at the Arkansas Department of Education, spoke about the Common Core Standards being implemented;
- Stephen Addison, dean of UCA's College of Natural Science and Mathematics, described efforts to promote technology and computer science in education;
- Carman McBride, EAST Facilitator, and students, presented to the Commission various projects in the EAST program at Don Roberts Elementary School;
- Amanda Tucker, Instructional Technology Facilitator at Don Roberts Elementary School described ways the school was providing technology to the teachers and the students;
- Warwick Sabin, executive director of the Arkansas Regional Innovation Hub, spoke to the Commission about the organization;
- Jordan Carlisle, from the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, described Little Rock Startup Weekend;
- Jeff Stinson, director of UALR TechLaunch, gave the Commissions details about TechLaunch's promotion of entrepreneurship;

- Debbie Jones, assistant commissioner for Learning Services at the Arkansas Department of Education updated the Commission on the Common Core State Standards;
- Sarah Argue and Greg Holland from the Arkansas Research Center reported on the progress of the Center;
- James Hendren, chair of the Governor’s Computer Science Task Force, provided an update on the group’s activities to the Commission; and
- Cory Anderson, vice president of ForwARd Arkansas, described the efforts of the initiative to promote education in Arkansas.