

ARKANSAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
and
SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Jimmy Jeffress
Senate Chair

Representative Bill Abernathy
House Chair

November 17, 2010

Senator David Johnson, Co-Chair
Representative Barry Hyde, Co-Chair
Arkansas Lottery Commission Legislative Oversight Committee
One Capitol Mall, Fifth Floor
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Dear Senator Johnson and Representative Hyde:

At their joint meeting on Tuesday, February 23, 2010, the House Interim Committee on Education and the Senate Interim Committee on Education authorized their respective chairs to establish and appoint a Joint Subcommittee on Grade Inflation to review issues associated with the calculation methodology used to determine grade inflation in the public schools under Arkansas Code Annotated 6-15-421. The Subcommittee was to be composed of:

- Three (3) members of the House Interim Committee on Education
- Three (3) members of the Senate Interim Committee on Education
- The Commissioner of the Arkansas Department of Education or his/her designee
- The Director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education or his/her designee
- Three (3) representatives appointed by the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators
- Three (3) representatives appointed by the Arkansas Education Association
- One (1) representative appointed by the Arkansas School Boards Association

The Chair of the House Interim Committee on Education and the Chair of the Senate Interim Committee on Education served as the co-chairs of the Joint Subcommittee on Grade Inflation. The membership of the Subcommittee comprised the individuals listed below:

Representative Bill Abernathy, Co-Chair, District 22, Polk and Pt. Montgomery Counties
Representative Eddie Cheatham, District 9, Pt. Ashley, and Pt. Drew Counties
Representative Monty Betts, District 50, Pt. White County

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Senator Jimmy Jeffress, Co-Chair, District 24, Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Drew, and Pt. Desha Counties

Senator Johnny Key, District 1, Baxter, Marion, and Pt. Boone County

Senator Joyce Elliott, District 33, Pt. Pulaski County

Dr. Tom Kimbrell, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education

Dr. Jim Purcell, Director, Arkansas Department of Higher Education

Dr. Richard Abernathy, Executive Director, Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, and former Superintendent, Bryant School District

Ms. Karen Cushman, Superintendent, Hector School District

Dr. Larry Smith, Superintendent, White Hall School District

Mr. Gerald Harper, Teacher, J.A. Fair High School, Little Rock, AR

Ms. Mary May, Teacher, Hope High School, Nashville, AR

Ms. Janet Johnson, Teacher, Bryant High School North, Little Rock, AR

Mr. Ron Harder, Policy Service & Advocacy Director, Arkansas School Boards Association

The Subcommittee met on the following dates and received testimony from the appropriate staff of the Arkansas Department of Education and persons knowledgeable in statistical methodologies:

- March 31, 2010
- April 27, 2010
- May 24, 2010
- November 15, 2010

At the conclusion of the November 15, 2010 Subcommittee meeting, after reviewing the testimony presented to the Subcommittee at its previous meetings and discussing the issues thoroughly, the Subcommittee adopted the following motion made by Ms. Janet Johnson and seconded by Ms. Karen Cushman:

I move that the Joint Subcommittee on Grade Inflation of the House and Senate Interim Committees on Education recommend to the membership of the House and Senate Interim Committees on Education and the Lottery Oversight Committee that the additional requirement for eligibility as a traditional student for Part II of the Arkansas Academic Challenge

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Scholarship (a.k.a. the Lottery Scholarship) concerning graduation from a school district identified as having “grade inflation” be removed.

This recommendation is based on testimony received by the Subcommittee that the calculation methodology used to determine grade inflation in the public schools under Arkansas Code § 6-15-421 was designed as a measure of systemic performance of a school district. It was not designed to be, nor is it relevant as, a measure of individual student performance or achievement.

In addition, the Subcommittee recommends to the House and Senate Interim Committees on Education that Arkansas Code § 6-15-421 be repealed due to questions regarding the validity and reliability of the current grade inflation calculation methodology.

The motion was adopted with one (1) dissenting vote.

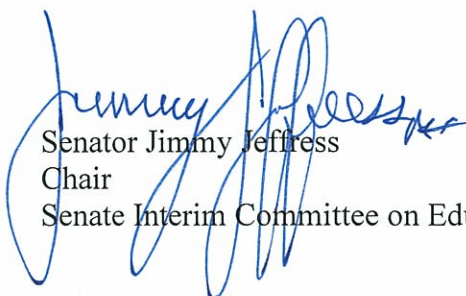
After discussing the need to minimize instances of grade inflation and the need for systemic accountability in those instances where grade inflation can be demonstrated to have occurred, the Subcommittee adopted a second motion made by Mr. Ron Harder and seconded by Dr. Jim Purcell:

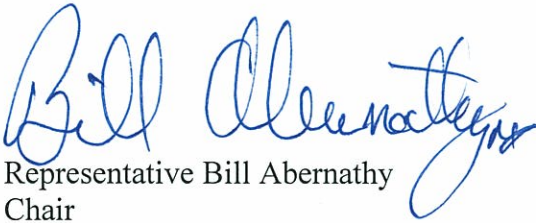
I move that the Joint Subcommittee on Grade Inflation of the House and Senate Interim Committees on Education recommend to the membership of the House and Senate Interim Committees on Education that a study be undertaken to determine the feasibility of developing the appropriate statistical methodology to hold schools and school districts accountable for instances of grade inflation.

Without objection, the motion was adopted.

We hope that you will find this information helpful. Please do not hesitate to call on us if you have any questions or if you need additional information.

Sincerely,


Senator Jimmy Jeffress
Chair
Senate Interim Committee on Education


Representative Bill Abernathy
Chair
House Interim Committee on Education