

ARIZONA STATE LEGISLATURE

SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAM OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

Friday, November 17, 2000

9:00 a.m., Senate Appropriations Room 109

Members Present:

Senator Tom Smith, Cochair
Scharlene DeHorney for Hellen Carter
Janet Lander

Representative Marion Pickens
Fred DePrez

Members Absent:

Senator Joe Eddie Lopez
Alberto Gutier
William Udall

Representative Dan Schottel
Stan Morrow

Staff:

Kimberly Yee, Senate Education Committee Analyst
Kathy Seeglitz, Senate Education Committee Assistant Analyst

Senator Smith called the meeting to order at 9:14 a.m., introduction of the committee was made, and attendance was noted. Attendees Sign-In Sheet (Attachment A).

Senator Smith explained that Proposition 301 passed with a provision that provides approximately \$7.8 million to fund the School Safety Program. The program allocates a Probation Officer (PO) and/or a School Resource Officer (SRO) at designated schools. For the past several years, the appropriation for this program has come from the state general fund. Based upon the monies previously appropriated and the seriousness of the incidents that occurred, the committee provided a SRO and PO at needed schools. The money was specifically used for personnel, training, and the Juvenile Online Tracking System (JOLTS). This system allows officers to contact the juvenile detention centers in order to track juvenile records.

Senator Smith pointed out that one of the positive aspects of the program is that the officers prevent students from missing school, often by showing up at the student's home to encourage their attendance. Most of the officers have volunteered for this program and have made it an extremely successful program. He noted that when visiting some of the presiding juvenile judges and principals, they all commented that this was one of the best programs passed by the Legislature in the past 20 years. Many admitted that they would be willing to give up any program other than the School Safety Program.

Senator Smith suggested that some of the schools reduced their incidents by 70%. He noted that it is important to track the monies to ensure it is being used wisely. With the passage of Proposition 301, there will be an additional \$7.8 million, which should provide an officer in all schools that request one.

Cheri Levenson, Research Consultant, Arizona Department of Education (ADE), explained that based on the recommendations of the report presented on May 31, 2000, this year's program evaluation will focus on the delivery of law-related education at the school site. It will also include both qualitative and quantitative analysis. For the in-depth descriptive portion of the evaluation, seven school districts representing 15 sites, six school resources officers (SRO), and five probation officers (PO) were randomly selected for site visits. The visits will include school-based ride-alongs with the SRO or PO, including interviews and classroom observations. Interviews will be conducted with school administrators and teachers. For the quantitative portion, an additional sample of ten districts consisting of 20 sites, eight SRO, and seven PO were selected. Teachers at all of these districts will be asked to complete a brief confidential survey regarding their views of the safety in the school and their opinion of the program. These interviews and surveys will take place in the next several months.

Ms. Levenson indicated that the November 1999 report was presented on May 31, 2000 based on data gathered in the Fall of 1999. The current report will be presented later in the school year. She pointed out that the most important consideration of the evaluation is to provide useful information for program improvement.

Senator Smith questioned when the report would be available to the Committee. Ms. Levenson replied that it would be completed in the summer. Some of the information could be available sooner; however, the in-depth information would take more time to compile. Senator Smith asked if there was any way to have a report on the 2000-2001 school year prior to making recommendations for improvement of the program for the 2001-2002 school year.

Ms. Lander noted that the Committee usually meets when the Legislative session is concluded, usually in late May or early June. The earlier the Committee can meet, the better it will be for the schools, because the programs start July 1. If the Committee is late in meeting, the program starts before the schools receive their first payment. She suggested that they should receive the evaluation no later than May 1, 2001.

Senator Smith emphasized that if the Committee could receive an evaluation by May, they would be able to make recommendations before the next school year.

Representative Pickens said that she hoped the evaluations could be ready in time to determine what schools will continue to be funded in the next school year.

Senator Smith explained that the Proposition 301 monies would be available in July of 2001. He indicated that the program was started with the expectation that the state would continue to fund the program from year to year. The schools that are currently being

funded will continue to do so; however, additional schools will be funded as the Proposition 301 monies become available.

Ms. Levenson indicated they would ensure that preliminary evaluations would be available by May 1, 2001, to aid in the decision-making process. She stressed that the evaluations will not be looking at the effectiveness of individual schools.

Senator Smith recapped that they will be anticipating the results of an evaluation by May 1, 2001, with a more in-depth report submitted later. He noted that they will continue to fund the programs that are currently in place, and once the Proposition 301 monies are available, they will review the requests for other schools to participate in the program.

Ms. Lander noted that one of the things that has made it difficult to evaluate the program is that neither the Oversight Committee nor the statute has indicated what outcome is expected from the program. She stated that when they evaluate the program, they can determine how well it is working, but they do not have anything that outlines what the outcome should be, such as, decreases in violations. She said that she recommends that the Committee incorporate the outcome objectives into the program. She read from the statute, "The purpose of the School Safety Oversight Committee is to provide a proactive approach to prevent juvenile referrals to the court system of this State and to prevent detention in the State Department of Juvenile Corrections, county jails, and the State Department of Corrections." She pointed out that in reality that is not what the Committee sees this program doing.

Senator Smith explained that staff could provide some recommendations for the Committee to review. Ms. Lander suggested that the School Safety subcommittee could work on those recommendations. Senator Smith agreed.

Ms. Lander stated that this program is so large that she suggested perhaps a biannual evaluation would be easier on Research and Development to do a more extensive evaluation. In addition, if the objectives were in place, it would be much easier.

Brenda Boehler, Program Academy Manager, substituting for Lynda Rando, Arizona Bar Foundation, provided an update on the Law-Related Education Academy. She explained that she was hired three weeks ago and has been spending that time learning the program. She further introduced herself, noting that in 1993 she was an intern for the Senate Transportation Committee. Since leaving the Senate, she taught social studies for five years at Buckeye High School. She noted that she has a history of civic remediation. She was given an opportunity to travel to the Ukraine where she helped develop a civic education curriculum with a civic remediation focus. Upon returning to Arizona, she spent two years at the Department of Juvenile Corrections where she assisted with the development of civic education curriculum. Since joining the Arizona Bar Foundation, they have been focusing their efforts on a needs assessment to determine what the needs are for the academy. To this effort, they recently distributed a comprehensive survey to 180 officers.

Ms. Boehler noted that they also have been working on what facility will be used for the academy. At this time, it appears the selection will be the Arizona State University Mercado site. They have identified the basic courses, which they hope to hold in late February, and the advanced academy courses will be held in March.

Representative Pickens questioned when they expect to have the needs assessment returned. Ms. Boehler replied that the deadline date is November 17, 2000. She pointed out that 20 surveys have already been returned. Representative Pickens suggested that the Committee could also review the information from the needs assessment.

Ms. DeHorney questioned where the assessments were mailed, because she has not seen any come through their office. Ms. Lander replied that the assessments were sent to the officers at the schools. Ms. DeHorney stated that she will be meeting with the officers on November 21st and will ensure that they received the assessment. Ms. Lander suggested that she take copies of the assessment and if any of the officers did not receive one, she could provide them with a copy.

Ms. Lander noted that before Ms. Boehler came on board, the subcommittee was aware the academy could not start until Spring, yet they had approximately 50 new officers that needed training. In October, the Bar Foundation held two mini sessions for new officers to provide a brief overview and get them on the right track.

Senator Smith suggested that it would be important for the Committee to know how many hours an officer spends teaching a law-related course in the classroom.

Ms. Lander provided a Working Group Subcommittee Report (Attachment B), indicating that it identifies the members, meeting dates, and areas of concern. She explained that they are currently working on the guidelines for each of the stakeholders and briefly discussed their roles. She pointed out that the subcommittee still needs to identify the role of ADE and the academy. She stated that the schools have provided feedback that they are pleased with the direction of the subcommittee.

Dr. DePrez explained that he is very pleased with the progress of the subcommittee and noted that they are working toward a system that is more user-friendly for the schools.

Representative Pickens noted that the identification of the failures and barriers allows the subcommittee to provide solutions.

Ms. Lander pointed out that she will need to begin renegotiating the officers' contracts sometime in March. She requested that another meeting be held no later than March to review any revisions to the contract. She noted that the application for the new year will be available in March; however, it is not due until April 15, 2001.

Ms. Yee suggested that the Committee meet sometime after the subcommittee's November 28 meeting to review the recommended legislative changes. Senator Smith asked if there would be any legislative changes. Ms. Lander replied that Mr. Jay Kaprosy,

Legislative Liaison for ADE, would be the one to work on that. Senator Smith said that he would wait for Mr. Kaprosy's reply, and if it was necessary, they would hold a meeting before the end of the year.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:02 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Dager
Committee Secretary

(Tapes and attachments on file in the Secretary of the Senate's Office/Resource Center, Room 115.)