

REPORTER

Fall 2004

Volume 23, Number 1

Tune in to ASBA through Regional Meetings

Fall is in the air, and among other things, it means that it's time for ASBA Regional Meetings. Join colleagues in your region and ASBA staff in Little Rock to conduct the association's business, elect ASBA Regional Directors, and learn about issues facing Arkansas school districts during one of 14 regional meetings to be held Oct 18, 21, & 28.



Meetings You'll get to "tune in" to ASBA, both figuratively and literally, as ASBA staff in Little Rock use compressed interactive video (CIV) to communicate simultaneously with several regional assemblies via television images and microphones. Led by their ASBA Regional Director, each region's evening meeting will follow a set schedule and agenda:

- 5:30 Registration begins
- 6:00 Meeting and dinner begins
- 6:40 Regional business & board service awards
- 6:50 Regional Director elections, where applicable
- 7:00 Move to CIV facility
- 7:15 CIV broadcast begins
- 8:30 CIV ends, meetings adjourned locally

Agenda During the broadcast, Executive Director Dan Farley will

See Regional Meetings on page 6

School Facilities Study is on a Roll

The statewide assessment of Arkansas school facilities initiated by the legislature in the 2003 session is in full swing.

Since June more than 100 people, including 80 architects and engineers, have been visiting school facilities across the state to determine whether they are adequate to meet the State's educational needs. The *Educational Suitability Assessment* will determine what improvements are needed to bring all facilities up to par with the state's educational standards — or in layman's terms, up to "adequate."

Assessment teams are evaluating all public school learning facilities based on eight general criteria, (see

box, page 7). Each facility assessment requires about one-hundred pages to report.

Scores in each category are combined to produce an overall "suitability" score for each facility. Facilities that don't measure up will have to be improved, where economically viable.

In addition to the suitability assessment, the teams also are evaluating the condition of current school buildings, to identify the construction characteristics of all school buildings, and to identify building deficiencies and prioritize repairs that are needed to make buildings

See Facilities Study on page 7

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ASBA New Board Member Workshop to be Enlightening and Entertaining

New board members and current members who could use a quick refresher course on the duties and responsibilities of school boards will want to attend ASBA's annual New Board Member Workshop (NBMW) on Oct. 25 at the Double-Tree Hotel in Little Rock.

The day-long event is a perfect chance to orient yourself to the work of school boards and to network with school board members from around the state. Registration information has been sent to all superintendents and board presidents.

The training agenda will focus on information that you can really use in your position as a school board member, and it fulfills board members' state requirement to receive six hours of board

training.

At 9:00 am ASBA Executive Director Dan Farley will open the conference with a welcome and overview of ASBA, and a discussion of the duties and responsibilities of school boards.

Dr. Tom Kimbrell, superintendent of North Little Rock schools, will provide a primer on school finance.

ASBA General Counsel Paul Blume will help everyone understand boards' legal responsibilities to students and school employees. Staff Attorney Kristen Gould will explain boards' obligations under the Freedom of Information Act.

Springdale Superintendent Jim Rollins and Board President Jim Bradford will share their insights about building good relationships among board members, the superintendent, teachers, and the community.

Following a buffet lunch, Farley and Gould will discuss board ethics using an entertaining video presentation featuring our favorite "bad boy" board member, Andy.

ASBA advocacy guru, Ron Harder, will promote the educational advocacy role of board members. And Gould will educate everyone, using vivid examples, about legal issues that every school board faces.

The day will wrap up beginning at 2:30 with an open-floor question and answer session during which attendees may pose questions to any of the speakers.

Participants will receive a packet of useful materials, including *A Handbook for Arkansas School Board Members*, a Code of Ethics for School Board Members, a copy of the ASBA Standards for Arkansas School Boards, the *Arkansas Freedom of Information Handbook*, and a copy of *Team Leadership for Student Achievement*.

The Doubletree Hotel offers ASBA attendees a special room rate of \$91 per night, and discounted parking for \$3 per day.

To register, contact your local superintendent, call ASBA at (800) 482-1212, or visit our website at www.arsba.org for a downloadable registration form.

IN MEMORIAM

ASBA fondly remembers Beth Buerkle, 49, of Stuttgart, who passed away on August 29 after a long battle with cancer.

Always a dedicated and energetic advocate for public education, Beth served on the Stuttgart School Board for years, despite her personal medical challenge.

As president of the school board she led efforts to update school facilities and bring 21st century technology into the schools and she brought a steady voice of conscience and reason to our work. We fondly remember Beth Buerkle as an example of advocacy and commitment to education that we all can be proud to follow.

Arkansas School Laws Annotated

No school leader's library is complete without a copy.

ASBA has a limited number of 2001-2002 Arkansas School Laws Annotated books, including supplements from the 2003 Sessions, available for purchase.

Order now at a discounted price of \$65.

For more information call the ASBA office at
(501) 372-1415, or 800-482-1212
or email arsba@arsba.org

Law Books and other publications will be available at the New Board Member Workshop

Huntsville Board Operates under ASBA Standards

"If you want to be good, effective, and professional board members, these are the things you need to follow," says Huntsville School Board President Steve Ford, when referring to Huntsville's recent unanimous adoption of the ASBA "Standards for Arkansas School Boards."

In April, while dealing with the recent public and school concerns over annexation of the St. Paul School District, the Huntsville School Board adopted the ASBA Standards. "It was just the tool we needed to re-center the board's focus. It helped us re-orient ourselves to the board's responsibilities, and our own function as individual board members." Even though the Huntsville School Board has a long history of functioning effectively, according to Supt. Dana Samples,



The Huntsville School Board

operating by the Standards is helping the Board be even more effective.

"During the successful, albeit unpopular, annexation of the St. Paul School District, it would have been easy to get bogged down in personal and territorial interests. But operating by the ASBA Standards helped the board and

the district stay focused on working together to help students' achievement. We might argue over mascots or school colors, but we won't argue about having high standards and about serving the needs of all children."

The Standards create a stable,

See Standards on page 7

Honor Your Best: The 'Dr. Dan' Award

Every community has those outstanding advocates for public education that inspire us all. Honor that outstanding person in *your* community by nominating him/her for ASBA's highest citation, the Dr. Daniel L Pilkinton Award for Outstanding Service to Public Education.

The "Dr. Dan Award," as it is affectionately known, is named for the first executive secretary of the ASBA, who exemplified the caring, committed, and involved advocate for education that we all aspire to be.

Awarded at the ASBA Conference in December, the Dr. Dan Award recognizes the dedication, hard work, and accomplishments of an outstanding board member, administrator, teacher, principal, school employee, or community member whose service to public schools deserves special attention.

School boards, superintendents, or individual school board members may nominate special individuals by completing a brief nomination form and submitting it to ASBA by Oct. 31. Nominations will be reviewed by a special committee of the ASBA board, and an award winner will be selected.

Nomination forms for the award have been sent to all ASBA-member board presidents and superintendents. Nomination forms are also available on the ASBA website at www.arsba.org, or by calling staff at (800) 482-1212.

**"Dr. Dan" Award
Nominations due to ASBA
Offices by October 31!**

School Board BRIEFCASE

- ▲ Oct. 5, "From Documentation to Termination" training
- ▲ Oct. 18, 21, 28; ASBA Regional Meetings
- ▲ Oct. 25, New Board Member Workshop
- ▲ Oct. 30, Deadline for ASBA resolutions for conference
- ▲ Oct. 31, "Dr. Dan Award" nominations due
- ▲ Nov. 4, Speak Up! Arkansas on Taxes
- ▲ Nov. 9, "Board Meetings from A to Z" training
- ▲ Nov. 30 - Dec. 2, ASBA Annual Conference
- ▲ April 16-19, 2005; NSBA Conference, San Diego, CA

Annual Conference is Right Around the Corner

The school year is in full swing and autumn is quickly approaching. Every ASBA member knows what that means — no, not leaf raking... The 51st Annual ASBA Conference is right around the corner, so start marking your calendars now!

Scheduled for November 30 - December 2, this year's conference will follow ASBA's long tradition

What: ASBA Annual Conference
When: Nov. 30 - Dec. 2
Where: Peabody Hotel

of providing board members and school officials from around the state with relevant, valuable training and networking opportunities. With all the new initiatives in education and all the new standards for schools coming up, this conference is a real "don't miss" event.

The conference will be held at

the Peabody Hotel and Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock. A block of rooms with a special rate of \$119 per night (single & double) has been reserved for ASBA.

Conference registrations and other materials will be mailed to all ASBA members beginning in early October, but you can start making your travel and lodging plans now. To get the special hotel rates, just mention the ASBA Conference when you reserve your hotel room (800-PEABODY).

For additional information about the conference refer regularly to the ASBA webpage at www.arsba.org.

ASBA Set to Adopt New Bylaws

After more than a year of study and work, the ASBA Board of Directors has approved a major revision of the association's Constitution & Bylaws, merging the existing two governance documents into one, which will be called the *ASBA Bylaws*. The Board will bring the proposal to the ASBA Delegate Assembly on Dec. 1 for its consideration and adoption.

ASBA Region 1 Director Cathy Allen of Rogers chaired the Board's Bylaws Committee. The work began in June 2003. The other committee members were: Jack Gardner of Centerpoint, ASBA President; Arnell Washington of Dumas, ASBA Secretary-Treasurer; Vonda Cranford of Malvern, Region 10 Director; Region 4 Director Perry Newman of Lavaca, and former Region 8 Director Judy Magness of Little Rock.

Attorney and parliamentarian Jim Slaughter of Virginia, who is a regular at ASBA's annual conferences, provided guidance to the Board throughout its work. Slaughter and others who work with non-profit organizations have said the trend in such governance documents has moved toward use of a single document that defines the organization and its work.

A final draft of the proposed new Bylaws was adopted unanimously at the Board's regular meeting on Sept. 9. The proposal is available for your inspection on the ASBA web site at www.arsba.org. Copies also will be mailed to all member boards and to those persons who will serve as delegates at this year's Delegate Assembly meeting during the annual ASBA Conference.

Prepare ASBA Resolutions Now

The ASBA Delegate Assembly will meet on Dec. 1 as part of ASBA's annual conference. At that time, the Assembly will consider reports and resolutions submitted by local boards, the ASBA Board, and/or a Resolutions Committee.

If you wish the Assembly to act on a report or resolution, you must submit the report or resolution to the executive director at least 30 days prior to the meeting of the Assembly. This year, that means by Oct. 30.

Proposals not submitted on time may only be considered if two-thirds of the delegates present vote to consider them.

All ASBA-member boards must appoint a board member to represent them at the Delegate

Assembly. Each board should report its delegate to the ASBA office by Oct. 30, as well.

Copies of proposed beliefs and resolutions received by Oct. 30 will be posted on the ASBA website, and they will be mailed to all member-board presidents for advance consideration.

What is a Resolution?

A formal statement expressing the will, intent or opinion of the ASBA can be considered by the Delegate Assembly. The Assembly will vote whether to support such resolutions. Resolutions can be proposed by any member of the ASBA.

It's a New World: Using Data for Decision-making

By James Gilson

It was a different world in 1971. I received my first standardized test score report from school. It was covered with bars and graphs, and numbers galore. According to the Iowa Basic Skills Test, I was above average in most every way. I was proud; my parents were proud; my teacher, Miss McGinty, was proud. But within a few days that small, wrinkled paper report was forgotten by all...

But no more! It's a new world. When my young son brings home *his* first standardized test score — whether to be celebrated or to be mourned — it will not be the same. I will pore over the scores to determine if my kid is “ok”, if I have done enough as a parent, if the school is educating my son properly.

The teacher will analyze the class scores to see if she has any “star” pupils, if she has done a good job teaching, to compare herself to the other 4th grade teachers.

The principal will anxiously review classroom and school scores to evaluate the school's academic programs and teaching methods, to worry whether the school can attract students, to see if the school will be on probation next year.

The superintendent will be nervously study the scores to determine whether the school district met federal and state requirements for student achievement, whether the principal is performing as an instructional leader, whether the district will be sanctioned by the Department of Education, whether his contract will be renewed.

The school board will look for meaning in the scores to know

whether they have made the right decisions, whether parents will complain, whether they'll be re-elected.

The newspaper will publish the scores for all to see, making comparisons between students, schools, districts, states, and nations.

Parents will carefully read the newspaper reports to justify sending their kids to private schools or to public schools, to brag on their schools, or lament the state of education.

Elected officials and public policymakers will use the scores to defend their politics or attack someone else's, to find fodder for a stump speech, or to propose a new policy or initiative to “fix” perceived problems in the schools.

It really *was* a different world in 1971, when that small, seemingly inconsequential report was lost to the world after my tiny celebration.

Only a few decades ago strategic decisions were based on “hunches” from leaders. Lee Iacocca's correct “hunch” that the public would love the Ford Mustang made him the darling of the business world, while Edsel Ford's hunch made him the laughing stock. It's a new world now: when Ford launches a new vehicle, the ideas are tested first with focus groups, consumers, and marketers before production begins. Nowadays the stakes are too high, and hunches just aren't enough.

Virtually every element of our society, including education, uses

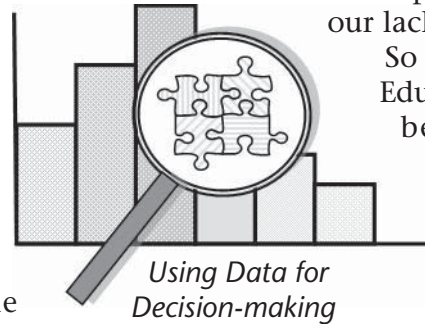
information and data for decision-making as never before. Technological advances — primarily computers — enable us to collect, manage, and analyze data that would have been impossible a few years ago. Our national obsession with the “bottom line” drives us to seek data that proves our success, or our lack thereof.

So it is with education. Education data can now be made readily available to the public, school leaders, and elected officials in detail that invites their analysis.

The public once trusted schools to use their best judgment — their hunches — to educate children. Back then, teachers were revered, and the school was “always right.” Now the public expects proof that the schools are doing a good job with their kids. Once schools were expected to evaluate their own operations and improve education when necessary. Now everyone wants to evaluate the schools and propose their own improvements to education.

Yes, it was a different world in 1971. But the “new” world is not to be feared, but embraced. We now have more opportunities than ever to improve our service to our children. We know so much more than ever before. We're motivated so much more than ever before.

Using education data appropriately can help all of us make better decisions about students, schools, and educators. Using data wisely can help us understand our own education systems to know if we're really doing right by our children. And using and sharing data can help



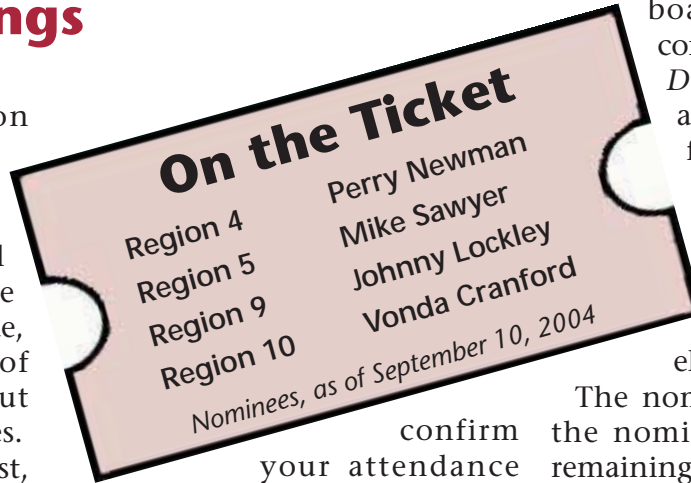
Regional Meetings

Continued from page 1

bring you up-to-date on association programs and activities. Sen. Shane Broadway, co-chairman of the Joint Committee on Educational Facilities, will talk about the facilities study and Mark McBryde, executive vice president of Stephens Inc., will talk about financing future school facilities.

As in last year's CIV broadcast, regional attendees will be able to ask live questions and join the discussion via the automated television cameras and microphones present at each meeting site.

Registration To ensure that your regional meeting can accommodate you, including providing you with a meal, please



confirm your attendance with your Superintendent. ASBA staff will be sending detailed materials to each regional meeting host to organize the events.

Elections Regions 4, 5, 9, & 10 will be electing Regional Directors to serve on the ASBA Board. Each region has nominees slated for the election. Other school board members interested in seeking

board positions should complete an *ASBA Regional Director Nomination Form*, and submit copies of the form to ASBA President Jack Gardner, with a copy to Executive Director Dan Farley, at least 14 days prior to that regional election.

The nomination requires that the nominee have ample time remaining on his/her local board term to fulfill the ASBA Board obligation, and that the nominee be supported in his/her candidacy by a majority vote of the local school board.

Nomination forms are available on-line at www.arsba.org, or by contacting Paulette Walker at 501-372-1415, or 800-482-1212.

ASBA Regional Meetings

OCTOBER 18

Region	Location
1	U of A Reynolds Center, Rm. A 145 N. Buchanan, Fayetteville
8	Brewer-Hegeman Center, Rms. 5A-5B Univ. of Central Arkansas, Conway
9*	Great Rivers Educ. Co-op 100 Campus Drive, Helena
10*	Caplinger Hall, Rm. 213 Henderson State Univ., Arkadelphia
13	Arkansas Health Education Center 460 W. Oak, El Dorado
14	Southeast Ark Educ. Co-op 1022 Scoggin Drive, Monticello

OCTOBER 21

Region	Location
2	The Little Theater, NACC - South 1515 Pioneer Drive, Harrison
3	Northeast Arkansas Educ. Co-op 211 W. Hickory, Walnut Ridge
5*	Arch Ford Educ. Co-op 101 Bulldog Drive, Plummerville
7	West Memphis School District H.S. 501 W. Broadway, West Memphis
11	Arkansas River Cooperative 912 West 6th Street, Pine Bluff
12	U of A Community College 2500 South Main Street, Hope

OCTOBER 28

Region	Location
4*	Western Arkansas Educ. Co-op 3010 E. Hwy. 22, Branch
6	Student Center Cafe., Rms. 126 & 133 Ark State University, Beebe

**Denotes elections of regional directors to ASBA Board.
If you are unable to attend your regional meeting, please attend another nearby meeting.
Regional meetings count as 2 hours of training toward state training requirements.*

ASBA Standards

Continued from page 3

open, positive, deliberative, and professional atmosphere at board meetings. The structure and guidance keeps the board focused on its proper roles and proper function, and keeps the board from getting “off track,” according to Samples. The Standards also help the board and superintendent operate as a team.

Both Ford and Samples acknowledge other benefits of adopting the Standards and the ASBA Code of Ethics. They are helping new Huntsville Board members understand their roles, so that the board can continue effectively even when faced with election turnover. Both believe that operating by the standards helps the board build its credibility among citizens. Notes Samples, “The community trusts the board more, knowing that the board operates based on professional, well-defined standards.”

In short, the Standards have

helped the Board be more effective in the community, or as Board President Ford describes, “They keep us doing the things we should be doing, and not doing the things we shouldn’t be doing.”

“In a way, the Standards have become the job description for the Board and individual board members,” observes Samples.

ASBA developed the Standards for Arkansas School Boards in 2002, after combining input and analysis of about 900 of the state’s school board members, the ASBA Board of Directors, and the ASBA Delegate Assembly. The Standards outline effective ways that boards can meet their obligations to the community and its local schools by managing its

- Vision/Philosophy,
- Board Organization,
- Board Operations,
- Board Development,
- Personnel Operations, and
- Staff & Community Relations.

Both Ford and Samples expressed their appreciation to ASBA for developing the standards. “The

ASBA researched, developed and fine-tuned the guidance. It would be hard, if not impossible, for a local school board to independently develop such operating standards—and if we did, who knows if we would really get it right,” says Ford. “The fact is, we trust ASBA’s research, decisions, and guidance in this area.”

Why adopt additional standards when the board seems to already be functioning well? Ford responds, “The Huntsville School Board is serious about improving education in our community. We always want to get better.” Adds Samples, “The Huntsville School Board had the foresight to adopt good standards. It’s a new starting point for making good, sound decisions that support our reason for being here — helping students learn and achieve.”

ASBA encourages other boards to adopt standards for their operations and reap the benefits, as Huntsville has. ASBA Standards are available from the ASBA website, www.arsba.org, or from the ASBA office by calling 800-482-1212.

Facilities Study Nears Completion

Continued from page 1

stable, safe and comfortable (*ie*: “adequate”).

The *Building Condition Assessment* evaluates buildings’ structural, architectural, mechanical, plumbing and electrical systems, in accordance with statewide construction standards for educational facilities.

The overall study, called the Arkansas School Facilities Adequacy Assessment, combining the two assessments mentioned above, is right on schedule. The full 82 million square feet of existing Arkansas school space has been pre-assessed, and about 75% of that space had been fully assessed by the end of August. All

Arkansas School Facilities Adequacy Assessment

Educational Suitability Assessment measures schools’

Capacity	Support for programs
Technology	Security and supervision
Instructional aids	Physical characteristics
Learning environments	Relationship of spaces

Building Condition Assessment measures schools’

Structure	Plumbing Systems
Architectural Design	Electrical Systems

of the facilities data is being entered into a massive database that will be used by the state and local districts to monitor the adequacy of school facilities for years to come.

The draft report of the Facilities

Study is scheduled to be sent to the Joint Committee on Educational Facilities by Oct. 31, with the final report due to the legislature by Dec. 1—just in time for the upcoming legislative session.

JACK GARDNER ASBA PRESIDENT

Democracy and Public Schools, We can all make a Difference



Our nation's founding fathers were creative, dedicated, responsible intellectuals who recognized and supported what was once, and in many parts of the world still is, a novel and subversive idea: that government should function to serve the needs of its citizens and its society.

Our founding fathers established a revolutionary new system in which government became responsible to its citizens, and took on the new role of serving its citizens. Government by the

people and for the people...

Democracy is such a prized possession that we've fought wars to defend it and to expand it in the world. And while everyone, from the innocent child to the grizzled veteran, supports and defends the democratic ideal, we squander it at the same time when we fail to be a full participant. We fail democracy and hence ourselves when we fail to step forward to hold government responsible to *us* — government's owner and constituents. In recent

decades, I think that has become more and more true.

But we're not without hope. We've seen recent successes in democracy right here in Arkansas as local citizens openly and forcefully voiced their concerns about legislative and executive education proposals.

A new legislative session is nearly upon us, and we must once again step forward to exert our

See Democracy... on page 11

DAN FARLEY ASBA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Elections, Orientations, and Other Stuff for Fall



It's fall again (how did that happen so quickly?), the nation is preparing to hold a presidential election, and in Arkansas, we are bracing once again for the biennial session of the General Assembly.

We at ASBA are highly conscious of all of the above and we're focused on a number of activities we have planned for this fall. With school elections upon us, we are preparing for our annual New Board Member Workshop, which will be held at the DoubleTree Hotel in Little Rock on Oct. 25. With new rules, tougher standards, and significant new dollars going to public education, it has never been more important for school board members to be in the know. With the demands of accountability alone, board members must know how to work

together and with their superintendent, how to plan, involve their communities, and provide the support necessary to bolster academic achievement for all students. It's not an easy job, but the potential rewards are huge. As elected officials, school boards represent the very essence of American democracy.

On the November ballot we'll be facing several ballot initiatives, including proposed Constitutional Amendment 1 to lengthen the term limits for Arkansas legislators. The ASBA Board supports Act #1, and encourages ASBA members and others to support the amendment, as well. The ASBA supports term limits for legislators, but in recent years it has become clear that the current, restrictive limits (three two-year terms for

representatives; two four-year terms for senators) do not allow lawmakers enough time to become more skilled and fully-functioning, effective legislators.

Everyone, including our schools and our children, are hurt by the lack of experienced, well-informed, effective legislators. Under proposed Amendment 1 representatives could serve up to six two-year terms, and senators could serve up to three four-year terms. ASBA believes that Amendment 1 is a reasonable compromise between the desire to have term limits for elected officials and the need for knowledgeable, experienced legislators to set public policy into law.

See Elections... on page 11

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*Championing excellence in public education
through training, advocacy, and service
for local school boards.*



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PAUL BLUME ASBA GENERAL COUNSEL

Once Again to the Subject of Grievances



Let us return once again to those thrilling days of yesteryear! Oh, wait. No. That was the Lone Ranger.

Instead, let us return to the subject of grievances. Or, as Mary Margaret puts it, "Grrrrr!" There have been recent changes in the law, and you need to be aware of them.

The grievance law is located in your supplement to the Green Law Book on pages 75-76, at A.C.A. §6-17-208. It defines a "grievance" as "any concern related to personnel policy, salary, federal or state laws and regulations, or terms or conditions of employment raised by an employee." That's much broader than the previous definition, but it still leaves a bunch of stuff that does not constitute a grievance. Most important, an evaluation or any other performance-related matter is not a grievance.

Gripes about a bad evaluation or writeup are the most popular subject for grievances, but they never should be heard as a grievance, and your administrators always should respond at their grievance levels that way. However, even if a grievance is dismissed as a non-grievance at the administrative level, if the employee requests a hearing at the Board level, the Board must first give the employee a hearing to decide whether the designation as a non-grievance is correct. If so, the hearing ends. If not, then there is a hearing on the grievance.

Whether a grievance is properly brought will depend on how well it fits into the definition of a grievance, as stated above; or, for that matter, how well it fits into your own definition contained in your local grievance policy.

Assuming that the employee has brought a legitimate grievance, the hearing begins. First, you request of the employee whether he wants the hearing to be open or closed to the public. (He probably will want it open. The choice used to belong to the employee *or* the superintendent, but now that choice is only the employee's. At a legislative committee on this issue, it was pointed out that the inability of the administration to decide on whether a hearing was to be open would afford some—probably many—grievants an opportunity to lambaste the principal in a public

See Grievance... on page 18

Study Circles Can Assist Communities Building Bridges for Early Learning — Birth to School

Our children are our future. As parents and family members who spend time nurturing and caring for our young children, this message truly hits home. Especially in the early formative years, we work to teach them and provide them with experiences that will help them develop into caring and productive citizens. The welfare of small children is an issue of obvious importance to families, but the readiness of all children — specifically their ability to be successful in school when it is time to enter kindergarten — is also a public issue that affects all of us.

All children are born “ready to learn.” However, many children are not coming to kindergarten healthy and equipped with the attitudes and abilities they need to succeed in school. Research has shown conclusively that children who are “ready to learn in school” when entering kindergarten will do better in school, and have a leg up on life to become more stable, happy, contributing members of society. Being “ready to learn in school” means more than knowing letters, numbers and colors. It is just as important, perhaps more so, for children to feel healthy, safe, and able to participate socially, emotionally, and physically in school.

As a community we must be supportive of our young children. You can help build that caring community by sharing your ideas and concerns about early care and

education in small group discussions called study circles. These discussions are being sponsored by the Arkansas Study Circles Project (ASCP), in partnership with Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF) and the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) Department of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.

To ensure that all children in Arkansas have the opportunity to start school eager to learn and



ready to succeed, DHS is launching the Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative.

DHS will spend the next few years facilitating the creation of a system that will maximize existing investments in early childhood. They have brought together early childhood practitioners, health care providers, advocates, researchers, parents, government agencies, and other key stakeholders to identify gaps in services and other barriers that hinder the well-being of children and families. Their goal is to create an integrated system to deliver important early childhood services.

Representatives from these groups will meet over the next year in five focus areas: Family Health Services, Social-Emotional Health, Early Care and Education,

Family Support, and Parent Education. Ultimately, DHS hopes to build a bridge from birth to school for all of the children in Arkansas.

As part of this initiative, the ASCP will coordinate discussions on early care and education throughout the state. Study circles will bring people together to discuss and look for solutions to challenges concerning young children and their families. The ACSP has developed a new discussion guide, *Building Bridges for Early Learning – Birth to School*, to help begin discussions about early care and education. During these discussions communities will talk about:

- who’s taking care of and teaching our children at an early age;
- what children need to know to be ready for school;
- why so many children are not ready when they start school;
- how quality early care and education should look;
- how we can work together to ensure that every child starts school eager to learn and ready to succeed.

Study circles are small, diverse groups of 10-12 people who meet in two-hour sessions for four weeks to discuss issues of common concern about young children. Study circle sessions are guided by a neutral facilitator, a recorder, and a printed discussion guide. ASCP provides free training and technical support for organizers, facilitators, and recorders. The project also provides free discussion guides and materials.

If you would like to have study circle discussions in your community, please contact Diane Vibhakar at 800-482-1212, email studycircles@arsba.org or Connie Whitfield at 501-371-9678, email connie.whitfield@aradvocates.org. We hope to hear from you soon!

Democracy and Public Schools

Continued from page 8

democratic rights and responsibilities to ensure that *new* plans for education represent the interests of all citizens and are sensitive to the needs of children in every community. Now is the time to prepare for the upcoming task.

ASBA and the ASBA Board have long played a role in the democratic process by having ASBA staff track legislation and inform legislators in Little Rock on behalf of Arkansas school boards, school districts, and children. As the stakes get higher and the educational proposals come faster, sometimes ASBA staff efforts are just not enough.

The ability of staff to effect legislation positively would be greatly enhanced with a few well-placed telephone calls from community and education leaders from “back home” to help legislators understand proposed

legislation’s impacts on schools, communities, and children. They are asking for our help.

During this next session when more assistance is needed, ASBA staff will contact ASBA Board

Our system of public schools is the most democratic institution in America. Who better to exercise their democratically endowed powers than teachers, administrators and local leaders of our public schools?

members and other volunteers, called Key Legislative Communicators (KLC), requesting that they personally contact legislators on specific issues. ASBA staff will provide KLCs with talking points and other assistance as needed to fully inform and influence legislators.

A few weeks ago each of you received a packet from your Regional Director requesting your

assistance for those times when extra effort is necessary to impact legislation.

Please join us on the front lines of democracy and educational advocacy by becoming an ASBA Key Legislative Communicator (KLC). Please volunteer a small amount of your time and influence to improve education in Arkansas by completing the questionnaire that was enclosed in the packet and submitting it to the ASBA offices.

About 450,000 children are directly affected by educational decisions made by the legislature. Although we may not muster one advocate for every child, surely we can get enough thinking, caring representatives — like you — to ensure that every child’s needs are accounted for in the legislative process.

If you have questions, please contact your Regional Director, or ASBA Staff Attorney Kristen Gould at 1-800-482-1212 or e-mail kristen@arsba.org.

Elections, Orientations, etc.

Continued from page 8

Because of the success of the 2003 Regional Meetings, we will again be using compressed interactive video (CIV) to conduct our meetings this fall. The meetings will be held on three nights: Oct. 18, 21, and 28. ASBA Regional Directors will preside at the meeting sites. The program will be interactively broadcast so that you may ask questions in real time. Participating board members will receive two hours of ASBA Boardmanship credit. You will soon be receiving more information via mail about the Fall Regional Meetings.

We believe it’s very important for Arkansas citizens to come together and talk with one another about

issues that affect their lives. When people are meaningfully engaged, good things can result. In light of the fiscal pressures that the state faces, including the mandate for state government to provide an equitable and adequate education to all children, Arkansans will be best served if they understand the state’s tax system

Toward that end, the Arkansas Study Circles Project will launch “*Speak Up, Arkansas on Taxes!*” on Nov. 4 with a live, two-hour broadcast on the Arkansas Educational Television Network. Details are included in an article on page 17 in this issue of the Reporter.

We hope to have at least 1,000 participants meeting in study circles around the state. It is our

hope that Arkansans will truly “speak up” and get involved. I can’t think of anything more American than that! If Arkansans have a better understanding of our tax system as a result of these discussions, then we will have provided an important service.

The annual ASBA Conference this year will be held Nov. 30-Dec. 2 at the Peabody Hotel and Little Rock Convention Center. We will have some outstanding speakers (including the dynamic NSBA President George McShan of Texas), a number of thought-provoking breakout sessions, and some special workshops. We’ll keep you posted as we finalize plans, but mark your calendars now and make plans to attend.

Practical Training for Board Members and School Administrators

ASBA will offer two of our most popular training seminars for school board members and school administrators. Staff Attorney Kristen Gould will host the seminars from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the ASBA Board Room. Attending board members receive 4 hours training credit. Each session costs \$60. Lunch is provided.

From Documentation to Termination - October 5

Board members, superintendents and school administrators can learn practical, proper, legally defensible ways to document — and then correct — unacceptable employee conduct. Or, if that doesn't work, how to properly terminate an employee.

Board Meetings from A to Z - November 9

Board members and superintendents can review their obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, discuss parliamentary procedure and how to manage public meetings, learn how to set proper board agendas, and study the reasons and legalities of these and just about every other practical aspect of school board meetings.

For more information about these courses, or to register, contact ASBA at (800)482-1212 or (501) 372-1415, or visit our website at www.arsba.org.

Using Data...

Continued from page 5

us restore the public's trust in the public schools.

So it is that we begin a regular feature in the Reporter, "Using Data for Education Decision-making." In each issue we'll offer at least one article that helps board members access, understand, analyze, and use data for sound decision-making. Just look for the "using data" logo (see page 5) to identify such articles. Our first "using data" article, *2004: A Report on American's Attitudes about Public Education*, appears in this issue.

Please let us know what information you need to help you use education data. We will try to provide relevant, helpful articles through the Reporter. Contact James Gilson at (800)482-1212 or e-mail jgilson@arsba.org with your ideas and needs.

ASBA Welcomes New Employee

James Gilson joined the ASBA staff on Aug. 9 as special assistant to the executive director. He comes to the association with an array of skills, assuming many duties previously performed by Kathy Morledge, who is now the Principal Leader of the Arkansas Leadership Academy's Master Principal Program.

James is a former high school math and science teacher, who for the last eight years has worked for the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality. His most recent position there was chief of the outreach, education and assistance division. During his tenure there, he managed numerous programs and oversaw a staff of 15. He developed training and marketing materials, developed long-term plans, and analyzed and proposed legislation



James Gilson

and programs relating to environmental policy.

He has assumed the position of editor of The Reporter and has immediately begun working on several ASBA teams. He will

oversee association communications, help plan meetings, workshops and conferences, and work closely with the executive director on all association programs and activities, including the Risk Management Program and the Workers' Compensation Trust.

He also will be working closely with other ASBA staff to improve and expand the association's use of technology for management and communications.

A strong public education advocate, James and his wife Laura have one son, David, who is a second-grader at Carver Science and Mathematics Magnet School in Little Rock. Both James and Laura are very active and involved at their son's school and with its PTA. (Laura presently serves as Carver PTA President.)

ASBA Workers' Compensation Seminars Ahead

School district superintendents, fiscal managers, human resource managers, safety managers, principals, and other school administrators will want to attend one of ASBA's upcoming Workers' Comp Seminars being presented through the state's education service co-ops.

Worker injuries and workers compensation claims cost us all – from the pain and discomfort of the injured employee, to the staff who fill in during the employee's absence, to the administrators who juggle everyone's responsibilities, to the board and community that pay more for workers comp premiums.

Risk Management Resources (RMR), the administrator of the schools' workers compensation program is offering an informative and helpful seminar. The name says it all, "Controlling Your Risks at School."

Be certain to set aside time in your staff's schedule to attend the seminar at your local education

co-op, or another nearby co-op. For more information, contact Dwayne McAnally at RMR, (501)

614-1555; or ASBA's Rhoda Parsons at (800)482-1212, or e-mail insure@arsba.org.

FALL 2004 ASBA WORKERS' COMPENSATION SEMINAR

Controlling Your Risks At School

Presented by:

RISK MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

Date*	Educational Co-op	City
Tues. Sept. 28	Ozarks Unlimited	Harrison
Wed. Sept. 29	Arkansas River	Pine Bluff
Thurs. Sept. 30	Northwest Arkansas	Springdale
Fri. Oct. 1	Western Arkansas	Branch
Wed. Oct. 6	Northeast Arkansas	Walnut Ridge
Thurs. Oct. 7	Crowley's Ridge	Harrisburg
Fri. Oct. 8	Wilbur Mills	Beebe
Tues. Oct. 12	Great Rivers	West Helena
Tues. Oct. 19	North Central Ark.	Melbourne
Wed. Oct. 20	Arch Ford	Plumerville
Fri. Oct. 22	DeQueen-Mena	Gillham
Fri. Oct. 29	Dawson	Arkadelphia
Wed. Nov. 3	Southwest Arkansas	Hope
Thurs. Nov. 4	Southcentral Arkansas	Camden
Fri. Nov. 5	Southeast Arkansas	Monticello

* All seminars begin at 8:30 a.m.

Schools Saving Big with TAPS

The Texas-Arkansas Purchasing System, best known by its acronym, TAPS, is saving schools more money than ever. The cooperative purchasing program that combines the buying power of hundreds of school districts across Texas and Arkansas is negotiating with more vendors for better prices on behalf of schools.

The ASBA offices have been flooded with testimonials from the roughly 70 participating Arkansas districts about their savings this school year, already. In the ASBA offices alone, we purchased a building air conditioning unit through TAPS at a savings of \$1000

under the nearest local bid, and we recently saved more than 80% off the "education" advertised price of 20 copies of office software.

ASBA will soon be offering more seminars and training sessions to help Arkansas districts utilize TAPS. Watch for TAPS seminars and training sessions in your area, or attend the TAPS breakout session at the annual ASBA Conference in December. If you're impatient, or want to start saving now, contact ASBA's Mickey McFetridge at (870)257-4118, or e-mail mmmcfatridge@centruytel.net to take advantage of the TAPS opportunities.

Contact Us!

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 Staff Attorney: kristen@arsba.org
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 Study Circles: heather@arsba.org
 TAPS: mmmcfatridge@centruytel.net
 Property Insurance: insure@arsba.org
 Workers Comp: insure@arsba.org
 Office Technology: jason@arsba.org
 Webpage: arsba@arsba.org

Talk at the Top

An interview with Arkansas Director of Education, Dr. Ken James

After successful stints as superintendent of schools in Batesville, Van Buren, and Little Rock, Dr. Ken James returned to Arkansas this summer from Lexington, KY, to become the Director of Education at the Arkansas Department of Education. ASBA's James Gilson recently interviewed Dr. James about his return to Arkansas and his perspective on education issues in the state.

Following is the first half of a two-part article that covers the interview.

Dr. James, what brought you back to Arkansas to lead the Arkansas Department of Education?

The honor of coming back to my home state and helping the state move forward on educational issues was an opportunity I couldn't resist. As one of only 50 such positions in the entire nation, the Director of Education in any state is in a prime position to affect and improve education. My entire career has been about improving education, so I felt compelled to take on the challenge and opportunity.

It is a great time to be Director of Education in Arkansas. We are poised at a pivotal point in time — new money is being injected into the state's education system; there are new standards of accountability for

students, schools and elected officials, and the commitment to equitable and adequate education is swelling throughout the state.

The stars are aligned for all of us to have a great, positive impact on kids in Arkansas and throughout

the nation. Many creative solutions to education issues are being proposed and implemented in Arkansas, and we need to choose wisely the solutions we accept to help our students achieve.

It is incumbent on everyone, including myself, that we take advantage of this wonderful opportunity. And I want to do all I can leading the Arkansas Department of Education and working with everyone to make the most of this chance — it is an historic opportunity that we can't squander.

What is your focus and direction for the Department of Education?

My goal for the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) is to be the very best advocate for good education, and the best supportive and accountable agency we can be. I want to keep our staff focused on our real mission and our highest calling — our kids. At the end of the day, we all need to be able to look back and see what we have done for our children. If we can't do that, we need to change what we're doing.

"The stars are aligned for all of us to have a great, positive impact on kids in Arkansas"

I intend to lead an agency that is responsible and credible. I am aware that there have been situations in which inconsistent messages and interpretations have been given to various schools. I am already working with my staff to help resolve those internal inconsistencies. That is not how



Dr. Ken James

we want to operate, and it is especially important to be consistent because the stakes — for students, schools, school boards and policy makers — are higher than ever.

Here at ADE we believe that when folks know what the rules are and what the expectations are, they will meet those standards. So it's important to us to let folks know what those rules are.

What do you see as the biggest recent and near-future challenges facing the Arkansas Department of Education?

Most recently I think that the department's efforts, in concert with the legislature in the last two sessions, to involve various stakeholders in the challenging and sometimes controversial discussions about the legislative and regulatory responses to the Lakeview decision has been a big accomplishment. Public policy discussions like those of the Blue

Continued on next page

Ribbon Commission, the State Board Advisory Commission and “Speak Up, Arkansas!” began a new atmosphere of open dialogue, and we are now benefiting from that openness. Although the dialogue has been difficult at times, it is very important that we engage each other and find common ground on the educational challenges we face. I think the dialogue that has begun will be the basis for future cooperative and collaborative efforts to address the challenges we still face.

In the next year, the Arkansas department faces a two-part challenge of tweaking the accountability standards initiated in recent legislative sessions while being diligent not to back off of the standards and their intent to make everyone in the education community accountable for student achievement.

It is absolutely *essential* that we have strong accountability standards for Arkansas education. It is necessary to keep us all focused on our ultimate responsibility — student achievement, and it gives us a way to demonstrate whether our efforts are paying off or not.

We no longer have the luxury of being narrowly focused on the skills and education that made previous generations successful. We are in a national and international competition for jobs and resources, and the only way Arkansas children will successfully compete is if they have an education that competes on the world market. We can't prepare our kids to stay home and carry on like we and our parents did — we have to prepare them for jobs and opportunities that we can't even imagine. Having high education standards is the only way that we can make that

happen.

Recent legislative sessions have been charged with emotion; sometimes the focus shifted from our primary mission, student achievement, to other issues that distracted our efforts. In the upcoming session, we hope the focus will remain on student achievement and that we can tweak some of the accountability standards that are not working as well as first envisioned. But we cannot back off of the standards — to do so would be to fail our children and their futures.

Based on recent Arkansas Department of Education and Arkansas Board of Education decisions, the ADE appears to be more regulatory and punitive than ever before. What is your perspective?

The ADE plays a dual role in education. It is both a support agency that provides resources to schools to help them educate students, and it is a regulatory agency that is required to set and impose standards of performance for Arkansas public schools. Both roles are essential to providing all children in Arkansas with an equitable and adequate education as mandated by the constitution. While some actions might appear to be punitive, they are intended to just uphold the standards mandated by the constitution, the courts, and the legislature.

There has been a real shift in the direction of national and statewide educational policy and laws. Laws like No Child Left Behind, the Omnibus Act, and Act 35 of the Arkansas General

Assembly are more prescriptive than ever. They have very specific provisions about how to implement the intent of those laws. As a consequence, ADE and others have very little flexibility in how we administer those laws.

For example, when the Arkansas Board of Education recently placed schools on probation for not meeting standards, some of which were minor infractions, the State

Board had no choice but to make those gut-wrenching decisions because there was no

flexibility in the law.

I think some of those laws *had* to be prescriptive in order to work. In the past, the ADE and Arkansas Board of Education have been criticized, and rightly so, for sometimes being too lenient in some situations. Although imposing these standards may be a bitter pill to some, it may be just the medicine we need at this moment.

The good news is now that we have started implementing the standards, we are learning what needs to be tweaked. It is a natural process: you try something new, you learn from your mistakes, you tweak the system, and you move forward. In the same way that we expect schools to strive to constantly improve their student achievement, we will strive to constantly improve the rules that govern education — beginning in the upcoming legislative session.

In November's Reporter, Dr. James' interview continues in which he focuses his attention from the challenges facing the ADE to the challenges facing the legislature, schools, and school boards.

“It is absolutely essential that we have strong accountability standards for Arkansas education.”



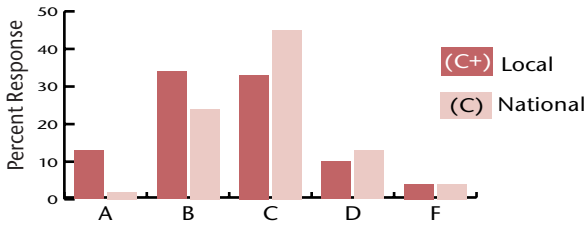
2004: A Report on Americans' Attitudes about Education

For 36 years the international association and honor society for educators, Phi Delta Kappa (PDK), has surveyed Americans' attitudes about public education. This year's survey reveals interesting comparisons and trends that can help us all better understand and respond to the public's expectations for public schools.

Below are conclusions from 7 of the survey's 42 questions. We hope that board members and other education leaders may find these helpful as we all work toward garnering citizen support for public education.

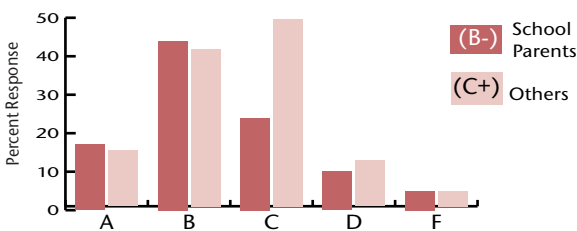
1. Using an A, B, C, D, F grading scale, Americans rate their local public schools better than schools nationally. This has been true for years. This difference may be due to the fact that people rate their local schools based on firsthand experience, whereas they rate schools nationally based on reports from the media.

Rate Local & National Schools



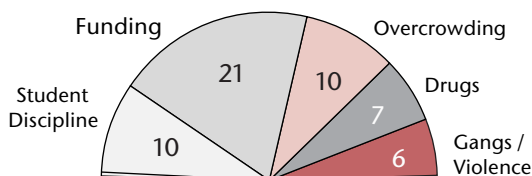
2. Similarly, parents with children in public school consistently rate schools higher than adults with no children in school — probably due to the fact that parents have more firsthand knowledge of schools.

Rate Your Local School



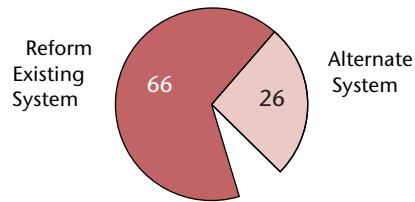
3. Americans identified a wide variety of problems facing public schools. This may be why it is hard to get enough public support for *specific* education reforms — there is no majority consensus.

Problems Facing Schools



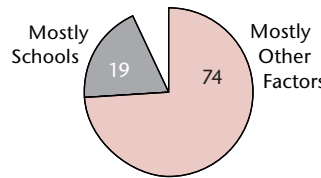
4. Americans still support our system of public schools, preferring to improve the current system rather than to develop an alternative education system (like vouchers, for example).

How to Improve Schools

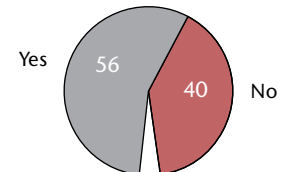


5. A vast majority, 88%, of the public believes that it is important to close the achievement gap between white students and black and Hispanic students. While few people believe the gap is caused by schools, many people believe that schools should take the lead in closing the gap.

Cause of Achievement Gap

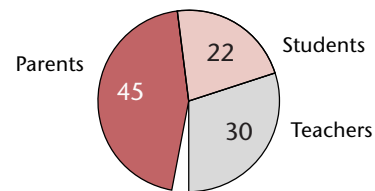


Should schools be responsible for closing the achievement gap?



6. Two-thirds of Americans believe that the actions of parents and students are most important to determining how well students perform in schools.

Most Important to Student Performance



As community leaders, board members are always trying to enlist the public's involvement in schools. The Phi Delta Kappa survey can be a tool to consider the public's opinions about schools when developing your plans to solicit support from the public. We encourage everyone interested in public education to explore the survey further.

The complete PDK/Gallop Poll, including data from previous years, is available for viewing and printing at www.pdkintl.org.

Hear ye! Hear ye!

"Speak Up, Arkansas on Taxes!"

Town criers once rallied citizens with the call "Hear ye! Hear ye!" Similarly, the Arkansas Study Circles Project in partnership with the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service (CES) call on citizens throughout the state to be a part of *Speak Up, Arkansas on Taxes!* Arkansans are invited to come together for two nights in their community to talk about how taxes and tax funded services affect them and how they can be a part of building a successful tax system.

On Nov. 4 the Arkansas Education Television Network (AETN) will kick off *Speak Up, Arkansas on Taxes!* with a live, two-hour television broadcast at 8:00 p.m. A panel of educators, financial experts, government officials and others will discuss the status of the tax system in Arkansas, and consider whether the current tax system should be changed. A live audience in the studio and citizens watching throughout the state may ask direct, live questions of the diverse panel of people charged with making decisions that affect the state's tax structure. The broadcast also will include an informative pre-taped segment demonstrating

how taxes and tax-supported services affect the daily lives of Arkansans.

The AETN broadcast will be followed on November 11 and 18 with small, democratic, and highly participatory tax discussions called study circles. The study circles, hosted in over 15 communities throughout the state, will allow groups of 8-12 people to meet during two consecutive weeks to share their experiences and perspectives on taxes and Arkansas'

tax structure. Each site may have several groups participating simultaneously.

People from many viewpoints and backgrounds will come together for honest and open discussions and a chance to find common ground in the tax debate. Citizens' ideas and conclusions will be compiled by trained study circle recorders, and a report summarizing citizens' discussions will be prepared and provided to the Governor, the members of the Arkansas General Assembly and made available to the general public.

Each local study circle will be guided by a trained, neutral facilitator and a recorder, using a

printed guide to structure the discussion. UA-CES faculty is preparing an unbiased "Citizens Guide to Arkansas Taxes" to be used in the study circles to help participants better understand the state tax structure and the services supported by taxes. Also, at least 15 CES County Agents will be coordinating study circle programs in their communities.

These discussions will provide a great way to voice your opinion and hear from others on if or how we should improve our current tax structure. The Arkansas Study Circles Project staff understands and appreciates that there are many different viewpoints on taxes, and takes no official position in the debate. The only goal of the *Speak Up, Arkansas on Taxes!* initiative is to give citizens the opportunity to come together to learn more about state taxes and talk with others in their community about what they believe should be done, if anything, to our current tax structure.

Tax Discussion Sites*



*as of September 10

The Arkansas Study Circles Project is looking for individuals who want to coordinate study circles in their communities. We also are looking for citizens who would like to be neutral facilitators and recorders for the individual circles. If you would like to be a part of this statewide event, please contact Heather Detherow at 800-482-1212, or e-mail heather@arsba.org.

ASBA Reporter - Tell us what you need!

We here at ASBA want to serve the needs of school boards and school board members. We want to provide you with information and ideas that you can use to im-

prove education in your community. So, what do you need? Please contact James Gilson with your ideas and requests at (800) 482-1212, or e-mail jgilson@arsba.org.

Grievance Law

Continued from page 9

meeting. One legislator assured us that no one would use a grievance for such a purpose. [Suppressed derisive laughter]. He then said that “the public has a right to know.” To know what wasn’t expressed. I expected that the next thing would be an assurance that it was “for the children,” somehow). So, when you are told whether the hearing will be open or closed, proceed to direct the employee (and/or his representative) to proceed. (If the grievant requests a closed hearing, ask all but administrators, the grievant and their representatives to leave.)

Since the employee is bringing the grievance, he has the burden of convincing you that his grievance has some merit. You should direct the employee (and/or his representative) to tell you two things at the beginning: (1) Precisely what he is complaining about; and (2) what he wants you to do about it. If you can get him to do that, it will shorten the hearing a lot, or, at least, help you understand what the heck is going on. (Most grievances are very vague and very, very poorly worded). Good luck with that.

Start the clock. The law requires that a grievant be allowed a minimum of 90 minutes for the presentation of his grievance. Now, there isn’t a legitimate grievance that can’t be explained in 20 or 30 minutes, tops; but we still have to allow a minimum of 90 minutes. That time includes time for questioning of the grievant and his witnesses, also. It would be the extremely unusual grievance which would necessitate increasing the presentation time to beyond that 90 minutes. Tell the grievant that he has ninety minutes from now. Designate someone to keep time.

When the grievant (and any other witness) has completed his statement, the board may question the grievant, as may the administration. But

remember: Questions! Not speeches! Questions!

When the grievant has completed his presentation, or when his 90 minutes have expired, the administration begins its presentation. Now, the administration has 90 minutes, just as the grievant does, but let’s hope that your administrators have it together so that they don’t keep you there another hour and a half. (I’ve never seen an administration presentation go much beyond 30 minutes. Usually less.) And, no, if the administration doesn’t use all of its ninety minutes, the grievant does not get the rest of it. He’s done.

The grievant or (not AND) his representative may question each administrator making a statement, followed by the board’s questions. Again, only questions, not statements or speeches. That goes for the grievant and his representative, too. You may put Attila the Hun in charge of enforcing that rule. (In fact, statements or speeches from the Board should be more closely enforced than for the grievant; but, in either case, it extends the meeting, gets nothing done substantively and—here’s the kicker—a Board member might say something that we’ll regret when we go to court.)

Okay. Let’s say that the hearing has concluded. Then what? Well, that depends on whether the hearing has been open or closed. If open (and assuming that the subject of the grievance is not something that falls into one of the executive session categories of the Freedom of Information Act), you sit there and decide whether you wish to discuss the grievance in front of everyone. There is no requirement that a discussion take place before a motion and vote. Usually, it is best to just make a motion and second in that circumstance. (More on that in a minute).

If the hearing has been closed at the request of the grievant, then the board should excuse everyone but the board members (yes, the superintendent, too) and discuss the grievance. Then, when the matter has been decided, go into public session for the motion, second, and vote.

How do you make a motion? Well, that depends on what the grievant is asking for. If you haven’t been able to get a good answer as to what he wants (see above), then you might not have any choice but to deny the grievance. If he has told you clearly what he wants (by the way, you can’t direct anyone to make an apology, okay?), then decide whether the grievance has any merit and whether you want to grant that request. Just make a motion to state what the board wants to do. If you want to deny the grievance, then make a motion saying that. If you want to grant the grievance and the requested relief, make a motion saying so. Also, you may grant the grievance but grant relief different from what the grievant requested. Keep it simple (both the motion and the relief, if any). Then, if you don’t have anything else on the agenda, adjourn. Now.

In addition, I have provided a “script” for conducting your own grievance hearing (school board level, of course) should you decide to conduct a hearing without having a lawyer present. (Warning: Danger, Will Robinson! If the employee is going to be represented, whether by a lawyer or a union representative, consider spending the money for representation. Those can get, well, uncomfortable). That “script” is located on our website at www.arsba.org.

Well, I have to go. Mary Margaret is lobbying for a treat simply because, as she puts it, “I’m wonderful and beautiful.” No, Mary Margaret, I don’t think that’s a reasonable basis for a treat. You have to actually DO something.

What do you mean, “Grrrrr”?

ASBA Corporate Members 2004-2005

ASBA corporate members provide services and materials to schools and school boards throughout Arkansas.

A.C.C., Inc. 97 Gunn Place Russellville, AR 72802 (479) 890-3884	Cobb and Suskie, Ltd. P.O. Box 21675 Little Rock, AR 72221 (501) 225-2133	LifeTrack Services, Inc. 845 Port Way Clarkston, WA 994013 1-800-738-6466	Resun Learning 8200 Warehouse Road Little Rock, AR 72205 (501) 568-8866
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Bailey & Associates, Architect P.O. Box 251756 Little Rock, AR 72225 (501) 224-7406	Educational Benefits, Inc. 320 W. Capitol, # 700 Little Rock, AR 72201 (501) 378-3337	Midwest Risk Management Services, Inc. P.O. Box 155 Bentonville, AR 72712 (479) 271-7475	Stephens Inc. 111 Center Street, # 2300 Little Rock, AR 72201 (501) 377-2306
Beardsley Public Finance 3600 Cantrell Rd., Ste. 303 Little Rock, AR 72202 1-800-965-4844	David H. Frieze Associates, Inc. P.O. Box 8398 Hot Springs, AR 71910 (501) 922-9704	Morgan Keegan & Co., Inc. 100 Morgan Keegan Drive, Suite 400 Little Rock, AR 72203 (501) 671-1334	TKI Computer Center 103 N. East Street Benton, AR 72015 (501) 778-4869
Brazil, Adlong, Murphy & Osment Bank of America Building 719 Harkrider, Suite 201 Conway, AR 72032 (501) 327-4457	Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. P.O. Box 9390 North Little Rock, AR 72119 (501) 375-1000	Musco Sports Lighting, LLC 575 Round Rock W. Drive, Suite J380 Round Rock, TX 78681 (512) 246-9211	Trane Arkansas 1501 Westpark Drive, #9 Little Rock, AR 72204 (501) 661-0621
Brown & Brown Insurance 2120 Riverfront Dr., #200 Little Rock, AR 72202 (501) 372-2232	Handwriting Without Tears, Inc. 8001 MacArthur Boulevard Cabin John, MD 20818 (301) 263-2700	NEARK Adjustment Company P.O. Box 223 Blytheville, AR 72316 (870) 838-0097	USable Life 320 W. Capitol Ave, #1600 Little Rock, AR 72203 (501) 378-3362
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	Laidlaw Education Services TCBY Tower 425 W. Capitol, #1566 Little Rock, AR 72201 (501) 372-5343	Pacheco Outdoor Equipment 11324 Arcade Drive, #3 Little Rock, AR 72212 (501) 225-1218	Wittenburg, Delony & Davidson, Architects 400 West Capital, #1800 Little Rock, AR 72201 (501) 376-6681

Are You “Committed to Education?”

It's the ultimate education bumper sticker – the Arkansas “Committed to Education” specialty license plate. Teachers, parents, board members, and other education advocates across the state testify to the world every day their support for public education – using the back of their cars. The Arkansas Committed to Education Foundation (ACEF) uses proceeds from the sale of the specialty plates to purchase computers to reward elementary school students who meet high standards for attendance and academic performance.

The ACEF is sponsoring a statewide art contest for 3rd-5th grade students to design a new *Committed to Education* plate to give Arkansans *another* option for making their public education statement on their cars. The Foundation will accept only one

student design from each Arkansas elementary school. Teachers and administrators are encouraged to sponsor a contest in their own schools to help students focus



their efforts on designing a license plate that truly reflects our commitment to, and appreciation of, public education. The student who produces the winning design will win his/her very own computer, with a year of internet access.

Encourage your local schools and students to develop and submit designs. The ACEF will accept designs until Oct. 15. The entries will be judged and the winner

announced at a special awards event in November. Entries must be submitted on the ACEF license plate design template, and must be submitted to the ACEF. The entry form, license template, and complete rules are available at the ACEF website, www.committedtoeducation.org.

What better way to show your support for education than by sporting a “Committed to Education” license plate? The one-time fee of \$35 to purchase a plate is a small price to pay for helping reward students, while showing the world that you value education. When re-licensing your car, please replace your ordinary license plate with one that really makes a statement. And just to think, soon there will be two designs to choose from! Details are available at www.state.ar.us/dfa/your_vehicle.html.

Arkansas School Boards Association



REPORTER

808 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive
Little Rock, AR 72202-3646

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