



House Select Committee on An Education System for North Carolina's Future
Monday, February 21, 2022, at 1:00 PM
Room 544

MINUTES

The House Select Committee on An Education System for North Carolina's Future met at 1:00 PM on February 21, 2022, in Room 544. Representatives Blackwell, Hurley, Shepard, Torbett, Willis, and Zenger attended.

Representative John A. Torbett, Senior Chair, presided.

Introduction of Sergeant-at-Arms.

Representative Torbett welcomed everyone and explained the protocol for the future meetings.

The next meeting will be held at South Asheboro Middle School, Monday, March 7, 5pm to 7pm. The first hour will be presentations, questions, and answers, from local school officials.

The second hour will be public comment. Please sign up to speak on the NCGA website portal that will be available on Monday, February 28, beginning at 1pm. A link to the portal will be in the committee notice. You may also sign up to speak the night of the committee, however, those that sign up online will be given priority. Each speaker will be given 2 minutes to speak.

Written comments will also be accepted. Also, starting Monday, February 28 at 1pm a portal to allow public comments online will be made available. The link to the portal for public comment will also be provided in the committee notice. After Randolph County, we will be going to Union, Gaston, and Carteret. This will be coming up to short session.

The first presenter was Amanda Fratrik, Fiscal Analyst, Fiscal Research Division, with a presentation on Public School Funding System-2021-23 Biennial Budget (see attached and on committee website)

Representative Hurley: Do you know anything yet about the ADM for this year?

Amanda Fratrik: Yes, so the funded ADM was determined last year, because, as Eric talked about, that is the best 1 or 2 months and then the projection. The funded ADM fell between last year and this school year by about 7,000 students, however, the actual ADM, at least for month 4, so it's measured every month, and then at the end of the school year, we get a final number, is up by about 17,000 students. It is up this year from last year, but it is still down from where it was 3 years ago before the pandemic.

Next was Ideas for an Education System for North Carolina's Future presented by Eric Davis, Chair, State Board of Education (see attached).

Representative Willis: As a leader of the state school board, would you share your thoughts around what role each of the different stakeholders in this have to play?

Chairman Davis: As our constitution says, I think it is appropriate and right for the General Assembly to control the appropriations for public education in this state and to set the laws upon which the state board of education determines policy and takes actions to implement those laws. I think it is also very helpful for our students and teachers to have a state board of education, which is not subject to the swings every 2 years of the electoral process, but has some continuity, because, as anyone who has run a successful business knows, continuity around leadership is

important to create the sustained change that is needed in a successful organization, school, or otherwise. Then I think it is important to have someone to implement, or some team to implement the laws that you pass and the policies that the state board passes consistent with those laws, and that is where I feel the department of public instruction has an important role in supporting local districts, in fact, I feel as a state board member, my job, in addition to adhering to the law that the legislature passes, to sum it in one sentence is to support our students in local districts in the schools. Anything we do short of that; we are missing the mark. I think it is also a strength of ours to have local school districts who have control over how the curriculum is chosen and how the education is delivered. I think they often need greater support from us. The availability of cross districts is both a blessing and a challenge for delivering the kind of education that our entire state needs. If there is one thing, I might offer for consideration to changing, in terms of our governance, I'm mindful of how some states have the opportunity to choose a professional career long educator to serve as the implementer of state laws and state policies, and I think that is worthy of our consideration.

Representative Willis: I agree whole heartedly with what you just said, but I think the reality of what we see today is far from that. In a system where the board is appointed in a political fashion, whether or not, directly elected or not, there is distinct partisanship within that and there was a recent resignation from the board that noted just as such. How do we take it from where it is today, which we must admit isn't optimal, and remove the politics from that and get to exactly what you laid out in your vision?

Chairman Davis: I would say this about my colleagues, we do a pretty good job of representing the diverse views across our state and that comes with some political differences, but where we move beyond that, and that's the key point, where we tend to move beyond that is in keeping the child in the center of our work and listening to each other and appreciating each other's points of view. If we tend to disagree, we work to understand what those differences are, but we are unified around trying to do what's in the best interest of our students. Anything we can do to depoliticize and to remove as much of the divisiveness and polarization that affects our public school system will certainly benefit our students.

Representative Blackwell: I'm curious as to judging the effectiveness of how we are doing with students. I think you are aware that for all our eleventh-grade students in North Carolina, we require them basically to take the ACT test. What's your view of the validity of the ACT as an indicator of whether those students are career or college ready?

Chairman Davis: I'll answer that not as a professional educator, but as a professional engineer, in that, I recognize you can't improve what you don't measure, but you always have to scrutinize the quality of the measurement that you are taking. Measure twice, cut once? I think the ACT today serves us well for a large number of students, determining their college and career readiness. I'm not sure it's entirely appropriate for all students, nor should it be relied upon as the single indicator, but it should be one of multiple measures to determine the student's readiness for whatever their endeavor is beyond high school. I also think the important thing about measurement is that it needs to be in a way that informs the student and the teacher how well they are doing, so the student can adjust, and the teacher can adjust, and we get continuous improvement throughout the school year, as opposed to at the end of the year.

Representative Blackwell: With reference to the science of reading. I understand from Amanda's remarks, we are using this program to train teachers in the science of reading. As of this point of the teachers that have been trained, how many of those are middle school teachers and what is the schedule as it relates to training middle school teachers in the science of reading?

Chairman Davis: I don't have a precise number, but I would say that the read to achieve, excellence of public schools' act is focused on K-3 reading. If we are training K-3 teachers in a particularly proven endeavor of how to train literacy, perhaps we should consider that same proven structure and program for grades beyond k-3. It is important that we have a consistent statewide program so that our education preparation programs are training our teachers in a successful and proven literacy structure, we're developing teachers while they're in the classroom, we're providing support to them, particularly given the way that teachers and students move from district to district across our state.

Representative Blackwell: As the head of our policy making education board, we're going to train the elementary teachers first and we'll get to 4-12 later? We'll just let them continue on with whatever they got out of the old K-3 system and at some point, we'll get to 4-12 later. Is that essentially what the state board's position is?

Chairman Davis: I would agree with everything you said, except the word later. I feel a great degree of urgency to move that progress through all grades and we owe you a program to show how we would accomplish that objective.

Representative Blackwell: You mentioned in your vision, the three things that you outlined, I think maybe the third was a team of superintendents and I'll call them super educators, to transform certain school districts. Back some years ago we had race to the top and as a part of race to the top, DPI was going to transform certain school districts in North Carolina. I think one was Halifax County. What is your understanding of the degree of success we had there and what does it tell us about the prospects for success of the new transformation team?

Chairman Davis: What you are asking is, are we a teaching and learning organization ourselves? Are we learning from our past experiences and applying them to the present? I wasn't on the state board during that time, but a couple of things that I observed after that time is while we could have a short-term effect on the performance of the district and expect sustained and long-term impact was difficult to achieve unless you continue to provide either the support or transform from the inside out, the performance of the district. It's really very similar to turning around a private company or corporation in that respect. The approach we've taken more recently, I'll give 2 school districts as examples, Robeson County is one, where we work closely with that local board of education, understanding their issues, as well as coaching them, particularly on items they needed to adjust and the helping them recruit a highly competent and effective superintendent, and I'm confident that that board and superintendent is on the right path. We took a slightly different approach in North Hampton County, where we had to use more aggressive action and essentially replace the superintendent, because the district and its schools were low performing, and they weren't making the progress. We now have a superintendent in there that is working closely with the board and is making progress. I would answer in short, that transforming a school or district is a complex, long-term, time-consuming process that must be done as quickly as possible, as it involves HR, finance, all the systems, but most of all it involves talent. I'm confident we'll learn lots of things from the Rowan-Salisbury renewal district process that they are going through and would advocate that that would also be an opportunity to learn from.

Representative Zenger: It seems to me that one of the wild cards in education, which is really difficult, is parent involvement. It has a direct impact on the education of the child. One of the bright spots that we are seeing now are the charter schools. Parent involvement is a huge part of that, so I just wanted to know, what is your opinion on how the charter system is working right now and what role does that pay in the future, and then lastly do you have any ideas of how we can incentivize or encourage or entice, parents to be more actively involved?

Chairman Davis: I believe our charter schools are performing consistent with schools across the state, in that we have some charter schools that are performing extremely well, some in the middle, and some that we've had to take action to address. Charter school teachers and principals are highly dedicated and focused on improving the life of their students. I do see, in terms of your parent engagement point, that because parents have to take an active role in moving their child to a charter school, that does tend to create a situation where the parent is engaged. I actually found a similar situation when I served in a local district board of education, a district that offered a healthy level of magnet schools and choice options that went far beyond anything that our charter schools currently offer and that too helped build parent engagement and community support. I am also impressed by the degree of parental involvement in traditional schools. It starts with those of us in this room. I think people are drawn to an organization that has a positive, can-do, visionary spirit that deals with its differences and demonstrates that we are a winning team, we believe in each other and we're moving forward together and because we believe in each other you should send your child to our organization because we can best serve you and then in times when we are falling short of your needs, we want to know about it.

Representative Willis: I read an interview that you provided late last year to Ed NC where you talked about the importance of us admitting there were some issues with the school system, and it was going to be a hard thing to do, and we needed to kind of embrace the hard and take that on. I appreciated that comment, and as a product of North Carolina public schools and with 3 children in North Carolina public schools, it feels like we just keep putting band-aids and rebranding the same old things over and over and over. As a parent and an education advocate, when are we really going to do that? That hard conversation starts with reading, writing, and math. If our kids can't read or write, nothing else matters. We talk about the future of the whole child, about doing all these other services and all these other things that these children may need, and I think to Representative Zenger's point, a lot of that comes back to family involvement, which we can't and will never be able to legislate. How do we then have that real dialogue about what the real problem is? If our kids aren't reading and our test scores, you go back decades, in 2011 when common core came around, we were not great, so this wasn't just a covid issue that brought this to the forefront, it's been happening for a very long time, but our scores started to decline in some areas and stay stagnant, really for the last decade. Rebranding another initiative or rebranding something else or putting some of these programs in place, is not going to solve what we all know to be true, but don't seem to want to really address. At what point in time are we going to get back to the mission of helping these children to learn and to grow and to reach their individual levels of success, but it's got to start with reading and writing, and if they can't do that then none of this other stuff matters. We've known for far too long that we are failing these kids and I'd look for the leadership within this room and the leadership directly with you, for those that have been involved with this for a long time, when are we going to have that conversation?

Chairman Davis: I couldn't agree with you more that we need to have that hard conversation, in fact, I think that's the beauty of this committee. If we are going to imagine the future, we've got to get in a room together and have that conversation. I would phrase it slightly different, as opposed to rebranding programs, I think we have success occurring in our public schools today. I'll use an example, Sugar Creek in Charlotte, which does a great job of educating children from some of our most challenged neighborhoods. We have other traditional schools in the same district that are doing the same thing, but what we failed to do is take those success stories and bring them to scale. I think we have got to recognize that, and I take full responsibility for the performance of the k-12 system within our state, but there are factors that a child experiences before and outside of the k-12 system that does impact their education. We've done a lot to try to address that. I'm not sure we've ever had the kind of conversation that you are describing to look deeply at those issues and figure out as a whole community, how are we going to do that. I

see a lot of communities in our state that are committed to moving in that direction, so there's a potential there. It is both one of the most frustrating and rewarding aspects of education that we've not been able to get across the goal line, but it's one I'm determined to get there and I'm looking forward to doing that in partnership with you.

Representative Willis: Going back to the previous conversation, removing the partisanship nature of this, I mean, when we have groups or advocacy groups, and I'll be polite in how I phrase some of the other groups, but, out here marching and pushing things that are purely political and not educational involved and have absolutely nothing to do with the success of the child, the success of their student educational outcome, then we lose focus on what's most important and it has to be the child. It has to be their success in school or their failure in school, and if we are not willing to talk about that, then debates over curriculum, debates over social agendas, debates over all of this other stuff need to take a back seat.

Chairman Davis: Couldn't agree more. We can't be distracted by that noise, by things that are going on around us, we have to stay focused on the child. I absolutely agree with you.

Representative Willis: I'll be the first to raise my hand and say I'm willing to have that conversation and to bring that lens to the table, but we need the state board, we need the governor, we need everyone else involved willing and committed to doing the same thing, and I'll admit I'm skeptical.

Chairman Davis: I'm optimistic if for no other reason, that the situation you just described is exactly what we are able to achieve around k-3 literacy. Let's build on that, let's move forward on that.

I know it's going to be tough and we're going to have our situations where we may not agree, but boy, I like your vision.

Representative Hurley: I'm going to go to curriculum. I very concerned and I know it's put out there and we've added so many other jobs and other responsibilities to teachers that we are being told lots of times that they don't have time to teach certain things that they need to know. I know they call be the guru on cursive writing and it is a law, but it's not being taught. I've done everything I know to do to get it done, because I do know it helps students to learn and it would help with their reading and everything else. What can we do, what can be done to have the teachers, I know, I was told that the teachers are given a choice to teach it or not, and that's why it was being stopped? That should not be an option for our children. Our children are the ones that are losing out. My grand niece told me this week, they're not teaching it, I'm in the third grade Aunt Pat and they're not teaching it. I get so frustrated because I know what works. I know what has worked and I know it helps the child. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are the basic foundation that our children need to succeed.

Chairman Davis: So perhaps the place for us to start is to identify the burdens that get in the way of their teaching and to determine ways to remove those burdens. Besides talent, the most precious resource we have is time and that's what covid has robbed from us.

Representative Blackwell: Going back to your vision, and the importance of having effective, the right kinds of teachers and leaders, those folks are produced by our schools of education. As we talk about transformation, what's the state boards view of what transformations, if any, need to take place in our schools of education, if we are going to get to employ in our k-12 schools, the kinds of teachers and leaders that you are advocating?

Chairman Davis: Before getting to our partners in our universities, private college, and community college system, I'd say one thing we need to do is tap into the talent in North Carolina of candidates who can teach who may not come through those traditional programs, particularly with life experiences and business and otherwise and have skills needed to teach our students, particularly in the upper grades. Part of that licensure comment that I made earlier is focused directly on that. For me it starts with changing my own mindset. I believe that we're doing in preparing students to graduate from high school is really preparing the next generation of our teachers. Seeing that it's a system that goes from kindergarten throughout employment, back to our districts and schools as teachers and it is up to us to produce the best possible candidate to go into our university system preparations programs. I think we need to work closer together to align the instruction that's needed in our classrooms with the preparation that the teachers are being given in the colleges of education, offering more apprenticeships and internships and experiences. Education Corp being a great example and I'd lift up literacy as an example of how we are aligning the type of teaching we need in our k-12 schools with the preparation in our colleges of education. A much tighter, a more collaborative, a much more focused teamwork between the colleges of education in our public and private universities and our own system as well as tapping into the ability of our community colleges to prepare more students to become teachers.

Representative Willis: One of the things that you, yourself, have been advocating for, and I hear from teachers across the state on, is discipline and their ability to manage the classroom. We look at what's happening, obviously covid has had a tremendous negative impact on that. We see kids in high school displaying middle school behavior. It's cost these kids significantly, maturity wise, and teachers are having a harder and harder time just managing the day-to-day operations of classroom, let alone being able to do what they do best which is teach. We've got to take a hard look at the classrooms, and I think there is an approach out there that I think in some cases works and, in some cases, don't. We need to admit when it doesn't, which is grouping students together based on every level of ability. If the teacher is focused on the students that are behind, they don't have time to focus on the students that are flying ahead. Then you see behaviors from those students and vice-versa. How do we remove as many of these obstacles and barriers to learning and to teaching, to allow are teachers to do what they do best, from those classrooms, control the classroom, control the school, so the kids in the classroom feel like they are in a safe environment? Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools has been in the news quite a bit, in terms of violence, guns, fights, and other things that are happening. To that point, nobody can learn, nobody can teach. How to we return discipline in an approach that's going to be something we can all get on board with statewide and from a policy perspective, what's the state board prepared to do about it.

Chairman Davis: I firmly believe that our schools reflect the communities that our schools are in and vice-versa. Part of that is creating safe communities for our schools to exist in and our students to live in. It starts from that standpoint and then ensuring that we as polity makers provide protections from things being brought onto our schools that will be detrimental to our children's education. That also includes providing the, particularly, health supports for students that are anxious, depressed, trauma, which then manifest themselves in behaviors that are judged to be disrespectful and otherwise, which then disrupts the education of other students. One particular teach that I heard directly from, she was bringing her children back from the playground. When she got back from the playground, one student had made it back first, a student that actually had needed some health support, and he turned over all the desks. She got all the other children to run the desks back over and she literally had to hold onto that child for the rest of the day in order to teach everyone else. Come to find out, that child wasn't getting the medication he needed to control that situation. I just use that as one example, how, if we took a

broad view and provided the supports that our students need, that would be one big step towards freeing our teachers to educate our students.

Representative Willis: That's a very broad step and well beyond the scope of this conversation and the board of education. I'd like to know what the board of education is prepared to do.

Chairman Davis: We're prepared to advocate for what our students need, both what we can do and what you can do and to address our own policies that might be creating those consequences that burden our teachers and to look for ways to relieve our teachers of the burdens that get in the way of their teaching.

Informing the Future of North Carolina was then presented by Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson (see attached and on committee website)

Representative Blackwell: I want to ask 2 questions that are primarily focused in the discipline and order area. One of the things that you mentioned was empowering teachers and administrators to essentially maintain order. In saying that that is needed, to what extent is that empowering something that requires action by the legislature because of statutes, action by the state board because of policy, or to what extent is it a local school system-controlled matter?

Lt. Governor Robinson: For the legislature, I think what, from my vision, what I imagine is this. The legislature needs to strengthen law enforcement and social services, as key, because, as I said, when the teacher has that problem in the classroom, the teacher should not have to deal with that issue. The teacher should be able to get on the phone with the principal. The principal should be able to get on the phone with the proper authorities and the proper authorities should have the resources that they need to be able to respond correctly. As far as the state school board, I think what really goes a long way is setting that standard. Just be honest, set the standard that bad behavior is not going to be tolerated in the classroom. Does that mean we're going to take you and toss you into the street, no, but bad behavior will not be tolerated. That's a standard that I believe, all of us need to set across the board. The state school board needs to make that plain. That we're not going to make excuses for you, we're not going to say, that because you didn't get enough cookies last night at home or because XYZ problem exists, that you can come to school and disrupt the class. All of that again, goes back to empowering the teacher. A teacher is much like a police officer, when a police officer is on the street and he knows he has the backing of the city council, he's going to be able to do his job with much more confidence. When a teacher is in the classroom and he or she knows there going to have the backing of administrators, they are going to be much more effective and feel safe in the classroom. Those are the ways we do that.

Representative Blackwell: With reference to the state and the funding or providing of social workers, law enforcement, or other resources, to sort of take the discipline problems out of the classroom and refer them. I don't think I have a quarrel with that, my question is more along the line of whether you have information that you are in a position to share that that is not happening know because social services and law enforcement are declining to take on those roles, thereby, forcing the kids to stay in the classroom, or is it something else?

Lt. Governor Robinson: In some instances, it's just simply that the students are not being removed for one reason or another. In saying what I said before about the state examining those social works and working with law enforcement, if we're going to do that, that's what we need to be looking at. We need to be looking at shortfalls, if there are any shortfalls that are keeping those agencies from being able to carry that mission out.

Representative Hurley: Do we really have surveys for the teachers to have? Are we doing that in the schools now?

Lt. Governor Robinson: I don't know how much of that. We have some of that, but I think it could be expanded a great deal. I think it needs to be much more expansive and I think we need to use the information a little bit better.

Representative Hurley: I think with our committee going across the state, maybe that will help.

Representative Blackwell: I want to go back to the discipline again. It's a tough issue to talk about, but I'm interested in trying to understand your view a little better. You mentioned that we need to focus more on the root causes of discipline and order problems. My question is partly the same as my first question. Who is it that needs to identify and focus on those root causes, is that something for the legislature to study, is it something for the state board, is it something to be done by the folks who are actually dealing with the individuals involved and can you give us any sort of advice, if you will?

Lt. Governor Robinson: We were talking about this issue in the state school board meeting and somebody mentioned the fact that one of the statistics about black males being overwhelmingly higher in this percentage and one of the board members made some comments and I listened to him and I thought, and I actually asked this question during the meeting, has anyone talked to the black principals and teachers about this issue, about why so many black students are being suspended. The response was that we talked to all of them. That was not my question, my question was have you talked to the black teachers and administrators about this issue. Guys, let me tell you something, there is a world we want to live in. The world that I dream about and I'm sure you dream about, where stuff like this doesn't matter. Unfortunately, we don't live in that world. In this world, if I take 20 teachers, 10 white and 10 black and put them in a room and ask them questions, the answers are going to be much different, than if I take 10 white teachers and put them in room alone and 10 black teachers and put them in a room alone. We all know it and that's one of them hard conversations we don't want to have. We all know it, but nobody wants to say it and I think when we talk about getting down to the root cause of it, I think that is one of the things that has not been asked that needs to be asked and needs to be examined. If the school is being accused of being racists and the teachers are black and the principal is black, and the students that are being suspended are black, how are we saying that the school is racist? We've got to answer that question and right now we're not answering the question for some reason.

Representative Zenger: In my experience, I think that the vast majority of our discipline problems does have one source and that's fatherless homes. If you track fatherlessness over the last 60 years, I don't care what race it is and you look at discipline issues, they mirror each other. It's out there and we don't talk about it, we need to start talking about it.

Lt. Governor Robinson: Hard conversations is becoming a catch phrase, but not many of us are willing to do it.

Representative Shepard: Are any of these statistics, do they point that these discipline issues are worse in any certain area of the state?

Lt. Governor Robinson: I have received a tabulation of probably 12 to 14 very bad fights involving multiple people and I have them from rural counties to Mecklenburg County. It's a systemwide problem.

Representative Willis: It is time to have those hard conversations and we have to sit back and collectively hold that mirror to our face and say, what role did I play in this and what role am I going to play in fixing it. Unless we are willing to have those uncomfortable conversations, we're never going to fix this. As someone who kind of likes to tinker in woodworking, I learned a long time ago, you measure twice and cut once. If we are not looking and really being realistic about what's happening in our schools and how that impacts our schools, how that impacts our students, and our families. We talk about disciplinary issues and it's not something that's happening in one LEA or another, it's happening across the board. What we have to figure out is what role is society playing in that and what role do those agencies outside of our school system have to play and what roles are our schools going to play, because our schools can't be everything. We can't ask our teachers to take on more than what we've asked them to do and that's to teach and educate these young men and women to prepare them in whatever curriculum that is that they're working on.

Lt. Governor Robinson: It starts with us as so-called leaders sitting the standard. The place where I used to work, they came out and when I first went everybody was smoking. You just had to go outside. Then the place said, well you can't smoke on our property. Then everybody went out on the street to smoke, and they went out to their cars to smoke. No more smoking at all on our property, even in your own car and no more going off the property on break times. People started to balk, and they started complaining, saying this is not fair. Guess what happened, you think people quit their job, no they stopped smoking. 18 people I know, including me stopped smoking because our company set a standard that said you shouldn't smoke cigarettes. I submit to you if we set a standard for our schools that bad behavior will not be tolerated, folks will stop acting bad.

Representative Willis: We talked a lot about the kids and what's happening, and I think we look at what's happening, and we look back at what's happened with the raise the age piece and we talk about some of the things that are happening. We've seen, I'll use Mecklenburg County, cause it's right in our back yard, kids just getting slapped on the wrist and sent home for not just petty crimes anymore, but because of covid, for serious issues. We had a young man in Union County, 17-year-old male, driving a car, high rate of speed across 2 counties that got stopped by the police finally, luckily there were not accidents or damage, but found a gun in the car, called juvenile services, and they said, he doesn't have enough points, give him back to his parents. Sent him back home and I guarantee you that kid was in the school the next day, if he was still in school. To that point, we've got to look at the issues and what part of the problem that we are playing and what we can do to fix it, because the schools can't fix those problems. We can't fix the fatherless piece with legislation. We can't fix some of these other things, but we've got to take a hard look in the mirror of things that we can fix and the unintended consequences of the actions that we do have here and how we are responsible for that. One of the pieces we talked about in assessing our students and how we get back to that. Going to your slide 4, similar to something I had brought forward earlier, we have amazing teachers around this state. When we say we need tools to let our teachers know where our students are at any given point in time, I would contend that that teacher already knows. They know if that kid is failing math. What we need is a system and partnership between our public schools, our community colleges, and our university system to say we are going to stop doing the same things. The conversation earlier we had about the ACT, we're going to stop doing the same things over and over again that we know don't necessarily provide results and we're going to educate children on the subject matter that have and not rely on some outdated test score at the end of the year. We need data to be able to show where these kids are. Accountability has got to come back in the conversation, we've got to stop with some of these policies that I think are still in place because of covid, where we are not allowing children to fail. That's got to stop, they've got to be held accountable. Our teachers need to be held accountable, but they need to be held accountable to what's actually

within their scope and the things that they can accomplish. What can you do, how can you teach as a teacher and not get to the end of the year and waste 6 weeks teaching the test prep.? Have they learned everything they need to learn by the end of the year and are they on grade level, then let's move those kids along, if not then let's have a very direct conversation about what that child needs to do to get to that point? But until we get to the assessments that allow us to do that and our community college system and our university systems are accepting of that, we're never going to solve this problem.

Lt. Governor Robinson: It's really simple. What you said about teachers, it's absolutely true. When I was in school, you know how teachers knew what students could read and couldn't read, because she read with them, and she listened to them read and the ones that struggled are the ones she focused on and helped and the ones that were doing well were the ones that she gave advanced materials to so they could continue to move upward. It goes back to giving teachers the ability and the skills that they need, the training they need to manage a classroom to make sure they can do those things. It goes back to taking away things that are taking away from that.

Representative Blackwell: This question is first for the Lt. Governor, but I also, if it's possible would appreciate maybe some response from our staff? It seems to me it is important to identify what the obstacles are to getting discipline in the classroom so that the instruction can take place for those who are not causing the problems. You mentioned in your presentation that we ought to get the federal government out of our hair. That hasn't happened. There're all sorts of federal dollars that are just flowing. Do you know and he can say what he will and then I'm going to ask our staff? To what extent is it perhaps the case that regulations from the US Department of Education, that come to us in various forms, but certainly has strings attached to monies that we get are dictating what may be required by say of disciplinary actions in our schools.

Brian Gwyn, Staff Committee Council: I'm not aware of specific programs that are tied from the federal government that are tied to discipline, however, in general federal education requirements are usually based on funding programs that are tied to the spending clause of the U.S. Constitution, since there is not an explicit federal authorization for education involvement, it's always based on the spending clause, so it's going to be tied to money of some sort.

Lt. Governor Robinson: I believe there is something called the promise program that came out of Washington D.C. One of these things that said the kid could promise not to do it again and you let them stay in school. Anything that comes down from the federal government of that nature, it just needs to be simply discarded and ignored. If you don't want to give us money because we don't allow bad actors to stay in school, you can just keep your money. We should not allow dollars and cents to affect doing what's right in our classroom. That's totally unacceptable.

Representative Zenger: On a comment that you said about we can't fix fatherlessness, and this may even fall under social engineering, I think that what we need to do is, we need to, you know for years we have emasculated men, we've not held people up to be honorable. One of the things we're going to have to do, I think it's really supposed to be the role of the parents, we're going to have to do some things to teach young men how to be young men. You know I've got 4 kids and I've spent a lot of time teaching my boys how to be a man and I've also tried to teach my girls what a man is like. My daughter called me from App and said there is no man on this campus. At some point, you've got to step back in and say, you know what, a good man is a man that stays the course, a good man is a man that hangs in there with his family, a good man is a man that's responsible. Our culture has been redefined what manhood is to a situation, and we've got a real mess. I did urban ministry in the city for a while, so it can be, we can address it.

Lt. Governor Robinson: It goes back to the school system. The way we address that issue is by setting that standard. You set that standard of behavior, you set that standard of discipline and you lay it at the parent's feet. If we do that there are many parents not doing it now that will pick it up and do the right thing.

Representative Willis: I think it would be great to see what some programs around the state, around the county have done really well in addressing discipline and addressing male mentorship, fatherless homes within the schools. I think we saw during covid, there were a lot of young men at home that were prevented seeing positive male role models, teachers, coaches, etc.

Representative Shepard: A few years ago, we were doing some research in what helped discipline in certain schools. There were some schools here in North Carolina that basically took the approach they were going to bring uniforms in. Almost every one of those schools that did that, their discipline improved as well as their test scores improved. Why don't we do more of it.

Representative Torbett: The next meeting will be held at South Asheboro Middle School, Monday, March 7, 5pm to 7pm. This is located at 523 W Walker Avenue in Asheboro, please park in the S Park Street Parking lot. The first hour will be presentations, questions, and answers, from local school officials. The second hour will be public comment. Please sign up to speak on the NCGA website portal that will be available on Monday, February 28, beginning at 1pm. A link to the portal will be in the committee notice. You may also sign up to speak the night of the committee, however, those that sign up online will be given priority. Each speaker will be given 2 minutes to speak. Written comments will also be accepted. Also, starting Monday, February 28 at 1pm a portal to allow public comments online will be made available. The link to the portal for public comment will also be provided in the committee notice. After Randolph County, we will be going to Union, Gaston, and Carteret. This will be coming up to short session.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 PM.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 PM.

Representative John A. Torbett, Senior Chair
Presiding

Viddia Torbett, Committee Clerk