

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETS

By Michelle Boyd Waters
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Monies for staff development funding previously held up by a veto from Gov. Frank Keating are now being distributed to schools statewide, said Sandy Garrett, state superintendent, at the State Board of Education meeting Thursday.

The gubernatorial veto of SB 1100 prevented \$4.3 million from being paid to school districts earlier, Garrett said.

Two bills, SB 800 which allocated funds for staff development, and SB 1100 which included the designation of the monies for staff development, were sent by the 45th legislature to the Governor last June. Keating signed SB 800, but vetoed SB 1100.

Earlier this month — in response to a request by Garrett — the attorney general's office said that the Board may expend the money to fund an existing program, even though amendments to the program were vetoed by the governor.

The staff development funds are being

distributed to schools in three payments based on average daily attendance, Garrett said. Schools will receive the first installment on Nov. 25.

"We are happy to be providing schools with funds to help their teachers learn more about their specialty areas," Garrett said. "Professional development is important for the continued progress we're making in education in Oklahoma."

However, \$1.65 million for arts and stipends for the Great Expectations program, which were included in SB 1100, cannot be distributed because the money was to be used for programs not yet established, according to the attorney general's opinion.

In other business, the board approved a request to submit a proposal to the legislature regarding criteria for the identification of High Challenge/Low Performing schools.

The board tabled a resolution requesting funding for local teachers' retirement until further information could be obtained.

Board members also approved a request to set hearings for Jan. 23, concerning permanent rule changes to parts of Title 210.

Garrett called an executive session to discuss William Grant v. The State Board of Education, a case pending in Oklahoma County District Court.

The board allowed members of the public to express views on proposed full competencies for licensure and certification. Teachers from across the state, including the Moore, Putnam City and Bartlesville school systems, spoke about their concerns.

Copies of materials distributed at the meeting are available from Legislative Information Network/Capitol Network News. Call, fax or e-mail your request.

OCCY DISCUSSES SYSTEM OVERHAUL

By Michelle Boyd Waters
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Following an extended executive session Thursday, members of the Commission on Children and Youth tackled several of the complicated issues and concerns shared by the members and the public regarding an apparent breakdown in the current system responsible for addressing child abuse and foster care problems.

"The best we can hope to do is fix pieces and hope it results in a systemic change," Thomas S. Kemper, director of the Commission, said.

Members agreed that the juvenile system which handles child abuse cases needs to be changed to eliminate situations like the death of Shane Coffman from occurring again.

Coffman was the boy authorities found buried in a freezer after suffering injuries from a severe beating. Kemper said the Coffman case was an example of each person involved doing only what was minimally required of them by law.

The case slipped through the cracks until Coffman's death because the authorities and citizens involved had no way to compare their information and see all of what was happening.

Details of the recommendations from the Governor's task force on overhauling the juvenile system will be discussed by the commission at its Dec. 19 meeting.

The Governor's Task Force was called to make specific changes in the system to help

prevent each agency and individual from making decisions without having the benefit of all the information available in a given case.

"We talk a lot and frequently don't act ... systemic changes need to be made," said Thomas Walker, District Judge and member of the commission and the Justice Advisory Committee.

In other business, the commission appointed John Brown, a representative of the Department of Human Services, to the Child Abuse Prevention Training and Coordination Council.

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chairman Roach suggested that the Committee consider if a better solution would be to only let a mother give consent after a doctor has said she is capable. This would allow consent to be given before 72 hours, or extended if needed, depending on the patient's condition. Michael Normura with Dillon International, Inc. suggested the possibility of the time period being set at 24 hours after a doctor discharges the new mother.

A final recommendation was made addressing hospitals practice of withholding discharge of a child for non-payment. The Committee unanimously agreed that "holding the adoptee hostage" is unacceptable. Propositions to remedy the problem ranged from creating a statutory tort of false imprisonment of a child to criminal sanctions. The suggestion of statutory language making it clear that pre-adoption expenses remain the responsibility of the natural parents or a framework for reimbursement of adoptive parents by natural parents if the adoption is not completed seemed to be the most plausible answer.

The Adoption law Reform Committee will reconvene on December 12th to discuss further recommendations including discussion of the limits on expenses paid by adoptive parents to the biological parents.

