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New Committee Appointed By State To Work With St. Louis Schools

By Patricia Hawke

In July, St. Louis schools' Superintendent Creg Williams abruptly resigned. Since then, many

members of the community, government officials, and parents have called for various types of intervention for the St. Louis schools. The law allows for such consideration at different levels of the public school system. Thus, the state has appointed a new committee to oversee, work with, gather information for, and make recommendations to the St. Louis schools and state education officials.

The committee will be co-chaired by Civil Rights Attorney Frankie Freeman and Washington University Chancellor emeritus Dr. William H. Danforth. Other committee members are St. Louis American Publisher Donald M. Suggs, University of Missouri-Columbia Deputy Chancellor Michael Middleton, and Ned Lemkemeier, a well-known St. Louis attorney, who has been civically involved for many years.

It is hoped that this appointment will give the new St. Louis schools administration and the school board some breathing room. They currently must concentrate on stabilizing the St. Louis schools and preparing for the first day of school on August 28th. Diana Bourisaw is filling in as interim superintendent, until the St. Louis schools can hire a permanent administrator.

Three of the new committee members also are part of the St. Louis Community Monitoring and Support Task Force. Freeman and Danforth co-chair and Lemkemeier is a member at large. The task force was created by the federal court after a 1999 settlement agreement in the St. Louis desegregation case. It oversees the implementation of this settlement and has received much cooperation from the St. Louis schools, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Voluntary Inter-District Choice Corporation. Danforth is hopeful that the new committee will see as much cooperation from these same groups, especially the St. Louis schools.

The new committee has been charged with finding solutions to the current St. Louis schools problems. These include:

- The overall academic performance of the St. Louis schools;
- The St. Louis schools regaining full accreditation and the issues involved;
- Desegregation settlement issues;
- Governance issues of the St. Louis schools;
- The financial condition of the school system; and
- The primary concerns of

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parents and the community over the administration and operation of the St. Louis schools.

The committee also will develop recommendations for potential changes to state law, concerning the state's involvement with the school system.

Danforth was quick to point out that the committee was not there to assess the merits of either the last or present superintendent, nor to review or criticize the actions of the past or present St. Louis schools board.

President of the St. Louis schools board Veronica O'Brien has made no comment about the committee appointment by the state, nor have any other board members.

Patricia Hawke is a staff writer for Schools K-12, providing free, in-depth reports on all U.S. public and private K-12 schools. Patricia has a nose for research and writes stimulating news and views on school issues. For more information on St. Louis schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk-12.com/Missouri/Saint-Louis/index.html>

Law School Accreditation

By David G. Hallstrom

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Accreditation and what it means to you. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary the definition of accreditation is "to recognize (an educational institution) as maintaining standards that qualify the graduates for admission to higher or more specialized institutions or for professional practice." Law schools generally fall into three categories of accreditation, American Bar Association (ABA) accredited, state accredited or unaccredited.

ABA accreditation – According to the American Bar Association, "Law schools approved by the American Bar Association (ABA) provide a legal education which meets a minimum set of standards as promulgated by the ABA. Every jurisdiction in the United States has determined that graduates of ABA-approved law schools are able to sit for the bar in their respective jurisdictions. The role that the ABA plays as the national accrediting body has enabled accreditation to become unified and national in scope rather than fragmented, with the potential for inconsistency, among the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and other territories. The Council of the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar is the United States Department of Education recognized accrediting agency for programs that lead to the first professional degree in law. The law school approval process established by the Council is designed to provide a careful and comprehensive evaluation of a law school and its compliance with the Standards for Approval of Law Schools."

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State accreditation – Most states have their own accreditation process and in most cases give accreditation status to ABA accredited schools. However, there are many law schools that for one reason or another do not meet all of the ABA accreditation requirements. Some of these schools, however, do meet the states requirements. Note: State requirements can vary by state. If a school meets state requirements it can apply to that state for state accreditation.

Unaccredited – According to the California Bar Association "An unaccredited law school is one operating as a law school in the State of California that is neither accredited nor approved by the Committee, but must be registered with the Committee and comply with the requirements contained in Rules XIX and XX of the Admission Rules, applicable provisions of the California Rules of Court and relevant sections of the California Business and Professions Code. A law school operating wholly outside of California is unaccredited unless it has applied for and received accreditation from the Committee or is provisionally or fully approved by the American Bar Association." Rules in many other states are the same.

Most states require that you meet certain requirements prior to being eligible to take their bar examination. The California Bar states "To be eligible to take the California Bar Examination, one must have completed at least two years of college before beginning the study of law or must have passed certain specified College Level Equivalency Program examinations before beginning law study and must have graduated from a law school approved by the American Bar Association or accredited by the Committee of Bar Examiners of The State Bar of California or have completed four years of law

study at an unaccredited or correspondence law school registered with the Committee or studied law in a law office or judge's chambers in accordance with the Rules Regulating Admission to Practice Law in California." Most states have similar requirements.

The foregoing suggests that many states will not allow, non ABA accredited out of state law school graduates to take their bar examination, unless they attended school in that state or a school that is certified by that state. Therefore students graduating from non ABA accredited law schools may not be allowed to practice in any state other than the state they attended school. Note: Some states have reciprocal agreements with other states allowing attorneys registered in one state to become a member of the bar in another state without taking a bar examination in the new state.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, there are many fine law schools in this country that are not ABA accredited. Additionally, many ABA accredited schools do not offer night time or part time classes. Finally, there are many more applicants that spaces available in ABA accredited schools, forcing many good students to attend other schools. Therefore, accreditation should not be your only criteria in choosing a law school or in deciding whether or not to hire a particular law school graduate.

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