

WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

Capitol Building 6, Suite 600
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Charleston, West Virginia

MINUTES

August 12, 2026

I. Call to Order

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mr. Dunlevy. Vice President Victor L. Gabriel called the meeting of the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) to order at 9:00 a.m. on August 12, 2026, in Capitol Building 6, Suite 600, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Charleston, West Virginia.

The following members were present: Vice President Victor L. Gabriel, Robert W. Dunlevy, Cathy L. C. Justice (via remote), James D. Paul, F. Scott Rotruck, Dr. Christopher A. Stansbury (via remote), Nancy J. White (via remote), Gregory F. Wooten (via remote) and ex officio member Michele L. Blatt, State Superintendent of Schools, West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE). President L. Paul Hardesty and ex officio member Sarah Armstrong Tucker, Chancellor, West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education, were absent.

II. Approval of Agenda

Vice President Gabriel called for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Dunlevy moved, and Mr. Rotruck seconded, that the agenda be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

III. Delegations

Ms. Christy Black discussed challenges facing students with disabilities and the need for increased resources and support for public schools. Ms. Susan Parsons read from the Bible and expressed appreciation for educators and public education. Ms. Kim Randolph of Education WV expressed support for public schools and emphasized collaboration on school funding, efficiency, and educational improvement. Mr. Seth DiStefano, West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, discussed administrative spending in public education, school closures, and public-school funding issues. Mr. Mickey Blackwell, West Virginia Principals Association, encouraged support and recognition for school personnel and highlighted the association's "Project Joy" initiative.

IV. School Safety Report

Mr. Micah Whitlow provided a school safety update focused on three key principles for school safety preparedness: 1) Culture (emphasizing trust and shared responsibility), 2) Awareness (encouraging recognition and reporting of concerning behaviors), and 3) Urgency (stressing the importance of immediate action and continuous vigilance regarding safety matters).

V. State Superintendent Reports

Superintendent Blatt reported on the following:

- The SAIL Summer Conference, which attracted more than 1,000 participants over three days.
- Partnership efforts with Education Alliance to support the Bridging the Future middle school initiative.
- Planned back-to-school visits in Cabell, Pleasants, and Wood counties.
- Creation of the WVDE Super STARS Council, a student advisory council comprised of 15 students selected from more than 80 applicants. Superintendent Blatt emphasized the importance of incorporating student perspectives into educational discussions and policy considerations.

VI. Consent Agenda

Vice President Gabriel called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Prior to approval, discussion occurred regarding a proposed waiver related to Policy 6204, School Closings and Consolidations, extending the deadline for county school closure proposals from December to February. Mr. Paul asked for unanimous consent to remove Item 13 from the Consent Agenda so that it could be considered separately. Excluding Item 13, Mr. Dunlevy moved, and Mr. Rotruck seconded, that the remaining items on the Consent Agenda be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote. The consent agenda items approved simultaneously included:

- Approved the WVBE minutes of the June 30, 2026, meeting of the Subcommittee on State Superintendent Goals and the July 8, 2026, meeting of the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE).
- Approved the employment of substitute teachers in areas of critical need and shortage policy for the West Virginia Schools of Diversion and Transition, Boone County, Braxton County, Hampshire County, Morgan County, Pleasants County, Preston County, and Raleigh County.
- Approved the employment of bus operators in areas of critical need and shortage policy for Boone, Braxton, and Raleigh counties.
- Approved West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission (WVSSAC), Series 1 (*Constitution*) with an effective date 30 days from final filing.
- Approved WVSSAC Series 2 (*Athletics, Provisions Governing Eligibility*) with an effective date 30 days from final filing.
- Approved WVSSAC Series 3 (*Provisions Governing Contests*) with an effective date 30 days from final filing.
- Approved WVSSAC Series 4 (*Provisions Governing Conduct*) with an effective date 30 days from final filing.
- Approved WVSSAC Series 6 (*Violations of Rules*) with an effective date 30 days from final filing.
- Approved Moreland University's TEACH-NOW Option 3 Educator Preparation Program Request to Add Autism Endorsements by Addendum.
- Approved Davis & Elkins College of Education's Art Education Program Revision.

- Approved Shepherd University College of Education's Multi-Categorical Special Education K–12 Endorsement.
- Approved the appointment of Jason Massie and Kayla Benson to the West Virginia Commission for Professional Teaching Standards (WVCPTS).
- Approved the following WVBE Statutory Units/Liaison Appointments: Nancy J. White to the West Virginia Educational Broadcasting Authority and The Education Alliance; Robert W. Dunlevy to the School Building Authority of West Virginia; Gregory F. Wooten to the County Board Member Training Standards Review Committee; Victor L. Gabriel to the Commission on Holocaust Education; and Cathy L. Justice to the WVCPTS.
- Approved the appointment of Dr. Eddie Campbell, Monongalia County Schools Superintendent, to an unexpired term on the WVSSAC Review Board ending June 30, 2028.

Next, Item 13 on the Consent Agenda (Statewide Waiver of WVDE Policy 6204, School Closings or Consolidations, §3.4) was considered separately. Following discussion, Mr. Rotruck moved, and Mr. Dunlevy seconded, that the statewide waiver be approved and the deadline for completing school closure procedures during the 2026-2027 school year be extended to February 26, 2027. At Mr. Paul's request, a roll call vote was conducted that resulted in the motion carrying with six yeas, one nay, and two members absent and not voting (6-1-2). The members voted as follows: Mr. Gabriel, Mr. Dunlevy, Mrs. Justice, Mr. Rotruck, Mrs. White, and Mr. Wooten voted in the affirmative; Mr. Paul voted in the negative; and Dr. Stansbury and Mr. Hardesty were absent at the time of the roll call and did not vote.

VII. WV Impact+ Coaching Initiative

Vice President Gabriel then recognized Ms. Kelly Griffith, who presented information regarding the WV Impact+ Coaching Initiative, a statewide coaching framework supporting implementation of the Third-Grade Success Act. Ms. Griffith highlighted the program as follows:

- The participation of 22 local education agencies.
- The deployment of 50 state-funded coaches, including 24 literacy coaches and 26 numeracy coaches.
- The use of a student-centered coaching model based on the Diane Sweeney framework.
- The launch of the West Virginia Impact Coaching Academy to support coaches, principals, and district staff.
- Ongoing professional development and monitoring focused on improving student outcomes.

Afterward, members expressed support for the initiative and requested progress updates during the school year.

VIII. 2026 Summative Assessment Results

Mr. Vaughn Rhudy, Director of Assessment, presented statewide accountability assessment results for School Year 2025-2026. Key points included:

- Statewide proficiency in mathematics increased slightly.
- English Language Arts proficiency remained stable.
- Science proficiency declined by one percentage point statewide.
- Overall proficiency levels in ELA and mathematics met or exceeded pre-pandemic statewide performance levels.
- Assessment results would be publicly released through ZoomWV on the day of the meeting.

Board discussion focused on grade-level trends, middle school and high school performance, subgroup analysis, graduation rates, WVDE strategies for improving academic achievement through initiatives such as Ready, Read, Write; Unite for Numeracy; Bridging the Future; and STRIVE.

IX. Logan County Schools Intervention Update

Mrs. Alexander Criner, Director of the Accountability Office, reminded the Board of the issues that warranted an intervention into the school system and then introduced Logan County Superintendent, Sonya White, to report on the district's progress, which included the following:

- Response and recovery efforts following a fire at Logan Elementary School.
- Budget reductions and personnel restructuring to maintain fiscal stability.
- Increased numbers of certified teachers in classrooms.
- Efforts to address declining enrollment and plans to pursue school closures due to financial and operational concerns.
- Expanded career and technical education opportunities through partnerships with higher education institutions and industry partners.
- Development of a Superintendent's Community Council to strengthen community engagement.

After discussion, Vice-President Gabriel asked Superintendent Blatt for a recommendation. Superintendent Blatt recommended returning authority for federal program administration to Logan County Schools. Mr. Rotruck moved, and Mr. Dunlevy seconded, that the recommendation be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

X. Wyoming County Schools Special Circumstance Review Report

Ms. Criner summarized findings from the special circumstance review conducted in Wyoming County Schools. Findings included concerns related to:

- County Board governance and compliance with open meetings requirements
- Leadership and communication practices
- Personnel procedures
- Financial management and staffing decisions
- Procurement processes

- Operational efficiency and facility utilization

XI. Marion County Schools Update

Next, Mrs. Criner provided an update regarding Marion County Schools. Mrs. Criner explained that in February 2026, the Office of Accountability received concerns from Marion County stakeholders regarding the local Board of Education's handling of the superintendent's contract. Although the superintendent's contract was later renewed for one year, the concerns prompted an on-site review of Marion County Schools. The review included interviews with Board of Education members, selected central office staff, and school principals. Following the review, the Office of Accountability issued a report identifying findings and requiring the development of a corrective action plan. Marion County Schools submitted the plan, which was approved after one revision. Since the plan's approval, additional developments have occurred, leading the WVBE to place the discussion of Marion County Schools on its meeting agenda. Due to the sensitive nature of the issues involved, Mrs. Criner recommended that any discussion regarding Marion County Schools be held in executive session. Afterward, Mr. Paul asked about county board member training, including laws relating to open government meetings.

XII. Executive Session to Discuss Wyoming County Schools and Marion County Schools.

Mr. Dunlevy moved, and Mr. Paul seconded, that the Board enter executive session for the discussion of Item D (*Wyoming County Schools Special Circumstance Review Report*) and Item E (*Marion County Schools*) on the agenda as permitted under W. Va. Code §6-9A-4(b)(2)(A) [personnel exception] and/or §6-9A-4(b)(6) [privacy exception]. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote. The Board entered executive session at 10:48 a.m.

The Board returned from executive session at 12:00 p.m. without taking any action. Vice President Gabriel then asked Superintendent Blatt for a recommendation regarding Wyoming County Schools. Superintendent Blatt recommended that the Board approve the following:

- The WVBE declare a state of emergency exists in Wyoming County Schools under W. Va. Code §18-2E-5(m)(2);
- The WVBE establish thirty days for the Wyoming County Board of Education members and superintendent to create a comprehensive plan to correct identified deficiencies with prioritized support from the WVDE;
- All members of the Wyoming County Board of Education and the superintendent be required to work collaboratively with WVDE staff to provide a viable proposal for operational costs, staffing, maintenance, and long-term facility planning.
- All members of the Wyoming County Board of Education be required to attend an additional training session provided by the West Virginia School Board Association and approved by the WVDE, focused on board of education member roles, expected meeting decorum, Open Meeting requirements, and fiduciary responsibility;
- All members of the Wyoming County Board of Education be required to follow established protocols and procedures for communication with central office leadership,

staff, students, parents, and the school community that respect the chain of command regarding complaints and personnel matters;

- A WVDE-approved liaison be established to address identified deficiencies in leadership, communication, and culture and to provide periodic updates to the WVDE;
- The WVBE receive a progress update from the WVDE and Wyoming County Schools at the December 2026 meeting and take action based on the report, including, but not limited to, an extension of the State of Emergency or immediate intervention in the operation of the Wyoming County school system.

Afterward, Mr. Rotruck moved, and Mrs. White seconded, that the recommendation be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

Next, Vice President Gabriel asked Superintendent Blatt for a recommendation regarding Marion County Schools. Superintendent Blatt recommended that the WVBE direct her to appoint a liaison to ensure that the corrective action plan for Marion County Schools is implemented in the best interest of the students. Mr. Paul moved, and Mr. Dunlevy seconded, that the recommendation be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

XIII. WVBE and WVDE Personnel Matters.

Next, Vice President Gabriel called for a motion to approve the WVBE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment. Mr. Dunlevy moved, and Mr. Rotruck seconded, that the WVBE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote. Vice President Gabriel then called for a motion to approve the WVDE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment. Mr. Dunlevy moved, and Mr. Rotruck seconded, that the WVDE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

IX. WVBE Member Updates and Requests for Information

Mr. Paul requested information concerning WVDE actions related to a recent federal Dear Colleague letter addressing educator misconduct and employee discipline reporting and evaluation of opportunities for federal flexibility through Returning Education to the States waivers and Ed-Flex authority. Mr. Rotruck reported attending the National Boy Scout Jamboree and discussed positive interactions with educators involved in student activities outside the classroom.

X. Superintendent Blatt's Back-to-School Comments

Superintendent Blatt emphasized that, as the new school year begins, the focus of education leaders must remain on students and their success. She noted that while considerable time and effort have been devoted to addressing challenges and concerns within county school systems over the past year, there is too often a greater focus on the actions and disagreements of adults than on the needs of children. Additionally, she expressed concern about the significant number of underprivileged students in West Virginia and stressed that meaningful progress will require all education stakeholders, including county board members and superintendents, to follow

established laws, policies, and procedures. Superintendent Blatt urged educators and leaders to set aside personal disagreements and politics, work collaboratively, and make decisions based on what is best for students. She concluded by emphasizing that keeping children at the center of every decision is essential to achieving the positive change desired for West Virginia's education system.

XI. Future Meetings

Vice President Gabriel announced that the next regular meeting would be on October 14, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in Charleston, West Virginia.

XII. Adjournment

Vice President Gabriel called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Paul moved, and Mr. Rotruck seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. Upon the call for the question, the meeting was adjourned at 12:09 p.m. on a voice vote.

Minutes approved by the Board on October 14, 2026

L. Paul Hardesty, President

Victor L. Gabriel, Vice President

NOTE: All agendas, attachments, materials distributed during the meeting, and audio recordings are available through the WVBE website or office pursuant to Policy 1241, *Notice and Conduct of Meetings*.

Minutes were recorded by:

Tina Payne, Board Secretary

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