

Rebuilding Nicholas County Schools Mediation Process

Public Update: April 30, 2018

The mediation team – representatives of the West Virginia Board of Education and the Nicholas County Board of Education – met in Charleston, WV on April 30 to discuss the elements of a workable plan for the rebuilding of Nicholas County schools. The representatives discussed public input received at a public workshop held on April 12, 2018, including public comment cards, index cards, and sticky notes placed on posters, as well as via email at ncschoolsmediation@cbi.org. The following are components of a potential configuration that the parties will consider.

Guiding Principles

The mediation team offered the following priorities as desirable outcomes of the mediation process (presented here in no particular order):

- Construction begins expeditiously to provide for permanent schools for all students
- Nicholas County School District is fiscally healthy and financially sustainable
- The unique cultures and characters of the schools and communities in Nicholas County are honored and sustained
- Students and families have options to meet their educational needs and can participate in their educational process
- Students are being prepared for career and college:
 - Increased availability and participation in career and technical education, with more students graduating with certifications and readiness for work
 - School facilities and programs foster learning, educational success, and social and emotional well-being
 - Improved test scores and high school graduation rates
 - Increased academic opportunities and success (e.g. AP, IB, STEM)
- Communities support their schools and trust their school boards

School Locations and Configurations

The mediation team discussed that the plan for rebuilding Nicholas County's schools should attempt to include the following:

- A community school(s) serving 6 – 12th grades in Richwood, located within a 3-mile radius of the former Richwood High School. The school(s) should include distinct spaces for middle and high school students – even if co-located on a shared campus – and should preserve the current school names, team names, mascots, and school cultures of schools located in Richwood. The facilities should include academic, athletic, and extracurricular facilities that are safe, sanitary, and functional, including an auditorium, a band room, a gymnasium, cafeteria, and athletic fields.
- A middle school and comprehensive high school located near the geographic center of Nicholas County, with an integrated career-technical education program and facility. The school should include distinct spaces for a middle and high school – even if co-located on a shared campus – and should preserve current school names, team names,

mascots, and school cultures. The facilities should include academic, athletic, and extracurricular facilities that are safe, sanitary, and functional, including an auditorium, a band room, a gymnasium, cafeteria, and athletic fields.

- Participation in career and technical education (CTE) will be available for all students in Nicholas County regardless of which high school they attend. The Nicholas County Board of Education will strive to foster CTE enrollment through efficient structuring of transportation to minimize disruption for students' schedules, consideration of distance learning opportunities, and other options that NCBOE can explore with the support of available resources.
- Athletics, arts, and other extra-curricular programming are highly valued elements of education for all students in Nicholas County. NCBOE will strive to provide athletics, arts, and other extra-curricular programming and facilities for all students who are interested, regardless of which school they choose to attend.

Families and students would be empowered to select the middle and high school that best meet their educational needs. To the extent possible, schools would be sized to allow flexibility for family choices, and would be designed to be scalable to meet future demographic and enrollment changes.

Specific locations for these schools would be determined through a deliberate site evaluation process, utilizing criteria drawn from federal, state, and local requirements, to meet FEMA's needs to establish cost reasonableness.

Next Steps

The next steps following the April 30 mediation session are anticipated as follows:

- Monday, April 30: NCBOE receives an update from NCBOE mediation team members about the mediation process and progress, including review of the public statement from the April 30 mediation session released by the mediation team. Based on discussions at the meeting, NCBOE proceeds with preparation of an amended CEFPP.
- Monday, May 7: NCBOE considers the amended CEFPP and votes to accept or reject.
- Wednesday, May 9: Pending the vote of the NCBOE, WVBOE considers Nicholas County's amended CEFPP and votes to accept or reject.
- Thursday, May 10: Pending the vote of the WVBOE, WV School Building Authority (SBA) will meet to consider approval of Nicholas County's amended CEFPP and votes to accept or reject.