

WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

MINUTES

February 12, 2025

I. Call to Order

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, Vice-President Victor L. Gabriel called the meeting of the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) to order at 10:00 a.m. on February 12, 2025, in Capitol Building 6, Suite 600, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Charleston, West Virginia.

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

II. Approval of Agenda

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

III. Recognitions

Dr. Amelia Courts, President/CEO of The Education Alliance and Mr. Greg Hoyer, Vice-President of Hope Gas, a business partner of The Education Alliance, were recognized to announce the Hope for the Future School Business Partner of the Year Award program. The program will include eight annual winners from the four designated STRIVE regions.

IV. Delegations

Mr. Dan Bucher addressed the Board regarding Harmon and Pickens School in Randolph County. Ms. Tara Raymo addressed the Board by reading from the Bible. Mr. David Gladkosky, Executive Director, West Virginia Professional Educators Association, discussed the organization's 2025 Legislative Goals, Kristie Skidmore, President of the American Federation of Teachers-West Virginia and Dale Lee, President of the West Virginia Education Association, jointly addressed the Board regarding assistance in encouraging the West Virginia Legislature in stabilizing the Public Employees Insurance Agency, and, Dr. Mickey Blackwell, Executive Director, West Virginia Principals

Association, addressed the Board regarding the Principal's Conference and the importance of having a full-time principal and counselor in every school.

IV. Consent Agenda

Vice-President Gabriel called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Sullivan moved, and Mr. Wooten seconded, that the Consent Agenda be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote approving the following agenda items:

- Approved the WVBE minutes from December 11, 2024.
- Approved the Employment of Substitute Teachers in Areas of Critical Need and Shortage policies for Cabell, Greenbrier, Hancock, Jefferson, Lewis, Nicholas, Roane, and Summers counties.
- Approved the Employment of Retired Bus Operators as Substitutes in Areas of Critical Need and Shortage policy for Jefferson County.
- Approved the affidavits listed in the agenda attachment for the Employment of Substitute Teachers and Bus Drivers in Areas of Critical Need and Shortage for submission to the Consolidated Public Retirement Board.
- Approved Cabell County School's request for a waiver of §9.1.h. Uniform Grading Scale of Policy 2510.
- Approved Jacob Ruddle and Jennifer Turbanic's appointment to serve on the Alternative Certification Educator Preparation Program Review Board.
- Approved Martinsburg High School and Wheeling Park High School be designated as a demonstration school.
- Approved a waiver of §10.5.a.4, §10.5.b.2, and §10.5.b.4 of Policy 5202, Minimum Requirements for the Licensure of Professional/Paraprofessional Personnel and Advanced Salary Classifications, until the policy is revised.

V. West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission (WVSSAC) Series 3, Provisions Governing Contests, Provisions Governing Conduct.

Ms. Cindy Daniels, Assistant Executive Director, of the WVSSAC, answered questions regarding the proposed rule. Mrs. Sullivan requested that the WVSSAC look at a more equitable balance between larger schools and smaller schools and consider a two-year reclassification process instead of a four-year process. After discussion, President White moved, and Mr. Wooten seconded, that WVSSAC Series 3, Provisions Governing Contests be rejected and returned to the WVSSAC for further deliberation including, but not limited to, §127-3-10 and Appendix 1 of the proposed rule. Upon a call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

VI. Nicholas County Schools' Closure and Consolidation of Summersville Elementary School, Glade Creek Elementary School, and Summersville Middle School.

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Superintendent Terrence Beam, Nicholas County Schools, provided the Board with information supporting the closure of Summersville Elementary School, Glade Creek Elementary School, and Summersville Middle School and their consolidation into a new Summersville Academic Complex designed to serve students in pre-kindergarten through 8th grade. Mr. Whitlow confirmed that all applicable WVBE policies were reviewed and followed, and documents were available for public inspection for the required amount of time in accordance with Policy 6204, School Closings and Consolidations. After discussion, Dr. Stansbury moved, and Mr. Wooten seconded, that the closure of Summersville Elementary School, Glade Creek Elementary School, and Summersville Middle School and its consolidation into the new Summersville Academic Complex be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

VII. Amendment of Tyler County Board of Education’s 2020-2030 Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan (CEFP)

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Superintendent Shane Abram Highley (via remote), Tyler County Schools, provided the Board with information supporting the amendment to the Tyler County Board of Education’s 2020-2030 CEFP. Mr. Whitlow confirmed that all applicable WVBE policies were reviewed and followed, and documents were available for public inspection for the required amount of time as required by Policy 6204, School Closings and Consolidations. Mr. Wooten asked who makes the recommendation to the Board on actions involving school closures and a discussion ensued regarding the proper amendment and closure process. Kelli Talbott, General Counsel, provided guidance regarding the process. After discussion, Dr. Stansbury moved, and Mrs. Sullivan seconded, that Tyler County Board of Education’s request to amend their CEFP be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

VIII. Tyler County Board of Education: Closure and Consolidation of Arthur I. Boreman Elementary School and Sistersville Elementary School

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Superintendent Shane Abram Highley (via remote), provided the Board with information supporting Tyler County Board of Education’s request for the closure of Arthur I. Boreman Elementary School and Sistersville Elementary School and their consolidation into the new Tyler Consolidated Elementary School. This closure was not contingent on any other actions and is proposed to occur at the end of the 2026-2027 school year. Mr. Whitlow confirmed that all applicable WVBE policies were reviewed and followed, and documents were available for public inspection for the required amount of time in accordance with Policy 6204, School Closings and Consolidations. Additionally, Mr. Whitlow explained that the Tyler County Board of Education had also requested a waiver of Policy 4336 for creating bus routes that will exceed the recommended duration of transportation time for elementary students. Mr. Wooten questioned the appropriateness of the counties having school closure hearings before the CEFP is approved by the Board. After discussion, Dr. Stansbury moved, and President White seconded, that the closure and consolidation of Arthur I. Boreman Elementary School and Sistersville Elementary School into a new Tyler Consolidated Elementary School and the related Policy 4336 waiver be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote. Mr. Wooten abstained from voting.

IX. Policy 8400, Charter Public Schools Stimulus Fund

Ms. Kelli Talbott, General Counsel, explained that the new policy is a result of the West Virginia Legislature giving the WVBE the responsibility of adopting a policy to implement the provisions of W. Va. Code §18-5G-17 which creates a Charter Schools Stimulus Fund. She explained that the fund was established to allow grants of appropriated public funds to be made to assist with charter school start-up costs and will be administered by the West Virginia Professional Charter School Board with oversight by the Board. Policy 8400 addresses eligibility criteria for grant awards; allowable and non-allowable costs for grant funds; the process for applications for grant awards; the process by which determinations on grant applications shall be made; standards for the expenditure of grant funds; standards for the granting of extensions of time to spend grant funds; and, transparency and reporting requirements that the Professional Charter School Board is required to follow. The policy also establishes accountability for the award and expenditure of public dollars for eligible charter school start-up costs. At the October 9, 2024, meeting, the Board approved that proposed Policy 8400 be placed on public comment for 45 days. During the comment period, 22 comments were received resulting in two sections being modified. After discussion, Mrs. Sullivan moved, and President White seconded, that Policy 8400 be approved and effective 30 days from final filing. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

X. Logan County Schools and Upshur County Schools Intervention Updates

Mr. Jeffrey Kelley, Assistant Superintendent for the Division of Accountability and Assessment, provided the Board with information relating to the progress of the Board's intervention in Logan County Schools and Upshur County Schools. First, Mr. Kelley reminded the Board that they had intervened in Logan County Schools on October 27, 2022, after the State Superintendent requested that the Office of Support and Accountability conduct an unannounced special circumstance review after receiving complaints regarding county board governance. Mr. Kelley explained that at the time of the intervention, two hundred students were on homebound status in Logan County and that the number seemed excessive. A goal was set to return those students to the school setting and now only fifty students are on homebound status in Logan County. Next, Logan County Schools Superintendent Jeff Huffman informed the Board of improvements relating to student learning, student facilities, culture, and the county board of education. Superintendent Huffman then answered questions from Mr. Wooten regarding staff development progression, including grant opportunities for teachers to continue their education.

After a short necessary break, Mr. Kelley updated the Board on the status of the Upshur County Schools intervention. Specifically, Mr. Kelley explained that Superintendent Christie Miller interviewed 8th graders about their middle school experiences. The students talked about teacher kindness, recommended that the schools establish deadlines and stick to them, the importance of utilizing cell phones responsibly, the relevance of class lessons to real-world applications, and CTE options for middle school students. Mr. Kelley complimented Superintendent Miller's performance in resolving several issues in Upshur County Schools. Next, Superintendent Miller explained to the Board that she believes that student achievement is improving and that she has high expectations for Upshur County Schools. Superintendent Miller also expressed concerns regarding low efficiency levels in reading and math and explained a plan to improve academic efficiency. Mr. Kelley and Superintendent Miller then responded to questions from board members.

XI. Hampshire County Schools Special Education State of Emergency Review

Ms. Alexandra Criner, Director, Office of Accountability, provided a six-month progress update on the Hampshire County Schools Special Education State of Emergency review. Ms. Shelia Paitsel, Director, Office of Special Education, informed the board of the county's participation in several trainings that included topics such as instructional practices, co-teaching, addressing overages in alternative graduation tracks, and disciplining students with disabilities. Additionally, Ms. Paitsel informed the Board that the WVDE has noted growth in providing special education services including making significant improvements and systemic change in their multi-tiered systems of support. Specifically, the WVDE monitoring team noted that there was more academic rigor, high expectations, better classroom management, and improved instructional practices in standards-based instruction. Hampshire County Schools has also improved in providing the least restrictive environment for special education students. Hampshire County Superintendent Jeffrey Pancione (via remote) thanked the WVDE staff for their assistance in resolving special education issues in Hampshire County Schools and reiterated the county's commitment to not only continue improvements but also become a leader in special education services at the state level. After discussion, Mr. Wooten moved, and Dr. Stansbury seconded that Hampshire County Schools be released from the State of Emergency status for Special Education, provided the school district agrees to maintain the protocols and practices necessary to support continued improvement be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

XII. Special Circumstance Review Report: Pocahontas County Schools

Ms. Alexandra Criner, Director, Office of Accountability, explained that a special circumstance review of Pocahontas County High School was conducted at the request of Pocahontas County Schools Superintendent Lynne Bostic that began on October 22, 2024. A report from the special circumstance review report was provided. Ms. Criner informed the Board of five areas of key findings that included: 1) Comprehensive School Counseling Plan not being current; 2) grading transcription and scheduling inaccuracies beyond clerical errors; 3) lack of leadership expertise and communication to support capacity building; 4) discipline and school safety issues; and, 5) special education issues that included lack of completed paperwork and the principal's ability to view camera footage captured in self-contained classrooms. After which, Dr. Stansbury moved that the Board enter into Executive Session under the personnel, privacy, and attorney-client privilege exceptions authorized by W. Va. Code §6-9A-3 for discussion of both items I (Pocahontas County Schools Special Circumstance Review) and J (WVBE and WVDE Personnel Matters and discussion of school law with legal counsel) on the agenda. President White seconded the motion. Upon the call for the question, the Board entered into Executive Session at 1:08 p.m. on a voice vote.

The Board returned from Executive Session at 2:03 p.m. Superintendent Blatt was asked for a recommendation regarding the Pocahontas County Schools Special Circumstance Review: Superintendent Blatt recommended the following:

1) The Board declare that a State of Emergency exists in Pocahontas County Schools under W. Va. Code §18-2E-5(m)(2);

2) The Board establish a six-month period for Pocahontas County Schools to correct identified deficiencies with prioritized support from the WVDE;

3) The WVDE Office of Special Education be required to conduct a comprehensive monitoring and review to ensure all policies and procedures regarding the provision of special education services comply with state and federal regulations;

4) Pocahontas County Schools be required to continue to investigate the unauthorized transcription of inaccurate credits and grades and take personnel action based on the results of the investigation;

5) Pocahontas County Schools be required to contract with a WVDE-approved consultant to provide support and build leadership capacity at the central office and schools;

6) The WVDE Office of School Finance be required to conduct a comprehensive review of local accounting practices and financial transactions including, but not limited to, compliance with local procedures regarding employee contracts and stipends; and,

7) The Board receive a six-month progress update from the WVDE and Pocahontas County Schools at the August 2025 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 Pocahontas County school system.

Vice-President Gabriel called for a motion to accept the recommendation as presented by Superintendent Blatt. Mr. Wooten moved, and President White seconded, that the Board accept the recommendations of Superintendent Blatt. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

XV. WVBE and WVDE Personnel Matters

After discussion, Vice-President Gabriel called for a motion to approve the WVBE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment. President White moved, and Mr. Dunlevy 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. Dr. Stansbury moved, and Mr. Wooten 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.

XVI. WVDE Reports

Superintendent Blatt informed the Board that since the pandemic, Harvard University's Center of Education Research has been conducting a status study relating to the states in recovery in math and reading. Superintendent Blatt shared that the covid recovery efforts from 2022 to 2024, ranked

West Virginia 6th in math recovery and 11th in reading recovery. Superintendent Blatt said that it is exciting that West Virginia is being recognized at the national level for their efforts. Next, Adam Canter, Director, Office of Career Technical Education, provided an overview of the Junior Reserves Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) statewide program. Members asked questions and complemented the program.

XVII. WVBE Member Updates and Requests for Information

Mrs. Sullivan informed the Board that she attended the Christmas show at Rock Branch Elementary School and the Teacher of the Year car presentation. She also attended the Educator's Rising Board Meeting and a principal's meeting in Summers County. President White reported that she and Vice-President Gabriel had attended both the West Virginia Association of School Administrators Legal Seminar and the groundbreaking ceremony for the Anna Jarvis Elementary School. Mr. Rotruck attended the WVPC Board Meeting and a Teachers in STEM Network dinner in Morgantown.

XVIII. Future Meetings

Vice-President Gabriel announced that the next regular meeting of the WVBE will be held March 12, 2025, in Charleston, West Virginia.

XIX. Adjournment

Vice-President Gabriel called for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Stansbury moved, and Mrs. Sullivan seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. Upon the call for the question, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m. on a voice vote.

Minutes approved by the Board on March 12, 2024

Nancy J. White, 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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