

# WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

## MINUTES

November 13, 2024

### **I. Call to Order**

After swearing in First Lady Cathy L. C. Justice as the newest board member, the meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, President Nancy J. White called the meeting of the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) to order at 10:00 a.m. on November 13, 2024, in Capitol Building 6, Suite 600, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Charleston, West Virginia.

The following members were present: President White, Vice President Victor L. Gabriel, Robert W. Dunlevy, L. Paul Hardesty, Cathy L. C. Justice, F. Scott Rotruck, Debra K. Sullivan, Christopher A. Stansbury, Gregory F. Wooten, and ex officio Michele L. Blatt, State Superintendent of Schools, West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE). 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**

Prior to approval of the agenda, President White announced changes to the posted agenda. Specifically, Item No. 9 - *West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission (WVSSAC) Series 3, Provisions Governing Contests, Provisions Governing Conduct proposed rule* on the Consent Agenda was removed, Item F – *Update on the Martinsburg North Middle School Intervention* was moved to the top of New Business, and Item G – *School Safety and Security Report* was removed to allow members more time to review the report. After the announcements, President White called for a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Hardesty moved, and Dr. Stansbury seconded, that the amended agenda be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried unanimously.

### **III. Recognitions**

Gilmore Elementary School (Jackson County), Kellogg Elementary School (Wayne County), and Pleasant Valley Elementary School (Marion County) were recognized for being named a 2024 National Blue Ribbon School.

#### **IV. Delegations**

Ms. Tara Raymo addressed the Board by reading from the Bible. Mr. David Gladkosky, Executive Director, West Virginia Professional Educators, addressed the Board regarding the concerns of teachers. Dr. Mickey Blackwell, Executive Director, West Virginia Principals Association, addressed the Board regarding student discipline and the need to fund school safety measures. Mr. Bryan Daugherty with Teachers for Students & Better Public Schools addressed the Board about teacher retention, recruitment and the ongoing nationwide teacher shortage. Mr. Bruce Cox, Ms. Christina Williams, Ms. Tresa Howell, Maeve Cox, and Ms. Eliza Payne addressed the Board regarding school closures proposed by the Kanawha County Board of Education. Ms. Adrian Stewart read a letter from Senator Mike Stuart and Ms. Becky Basham read a letter from Senator Rupie Phillips regarding the proposed Kanawha County school closures. Ms. Madaline Leggett and Principal Julie Gibson addressed the Board regarding the closure of Fairplains Elementary School in Wood County.

#### **V. Consent Agenda**

President White 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 unanimously approving the following agenda items:

- Approved the WVBE minutes from October 9, 2024.
- Approved the Employment of Substitute Teachers in Areas of Critical Need and Shortage policies for Berkeley, Kanawha, Lincoln, Marion, Mercer and Mineral counties.
- Approved the Employment of Retired Bus Operators as Substitutes in Areas of Critical Need and Shortage policies for Berkeley, Kanawha, Lincoln, Marion and Mineral counties.
- Approved the affidavits listed in the agenda attachment for the Employment of Substitute Teachers in Areas of Critical Need and Shortage and submission to the Consolidated Public Retirement Board.
- Approved the dual credit policies for Hardy and Wirt counties and the embedded credit policies for Logan, Upshur, Raleigh and Wyoming counties.
- Approved Randolph County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan to include additions and renovations to Tygarts Valley Middle/High on its project priority list.
- Approved the Tucker County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan to include interior and exterior renovations at Davis Thomas Elementary/Middle School as the top prioritized project.
- Approved the Wood County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan to add a Bus Loop / Drop Off Improvement Project to its project priority list.
- Approved the West Virginia Educator Preparation Program Review Board's request for Bluefield State University to maintain a Certified Teacher of Record Agreement with Nicholas County Schools, Summers County Schools and Wyoming County Schools.

## **VI. Martinsburg North Middle School (Berkeley County) Intervention**

Assistant State Superintendent Jeffrey Kelley, Kelly Massinople, County Superintendent Ryan Saxe, and Principal Kevin Pittsnogle provided the Board with a status update on the Martinsburg North Middle School Intervention. Board members were informed of the implementation of new programs and various changes designed to improve school culture and promote student achievement including hiring a new principal and encouraging parent involvement. County Superintendent Saxe recognized the school staff and the county board for their commitment to improving the environment at Martinsburg North Middle School.

## **VII. Amendment of Kanawha County Board of Education's 2020-2030 Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan (CEFP) and school closures**

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Dr. Tom Williams, Kanawha County Superintendent, provided the Board with information supporting Kanawha County Board of Education's need to amend their CEFP to change the priority list and include additional mergers and consolidations. If approved, the CEFP would include a provision that Belle Elementary School, Malden Elementary School, Mary Ingles Elementary School, and Midland Trail Elementary School be consolidated into a new Eastern Kanawha Elementary Center, pending a successful grant application to the SBA as a top priority. The proposed amendment also included the closure and merger of McKinley Middle School into Hayes Middle School and the closure and merger of East Bank Middle School into Dupont Middle School. The proposed middle school closures are expected to occur at the end of the 2024-2025 school year. Dr. Williams explained that the changes are proposed due to a decrease in state aid funding driven by a decrease in student enrollment.

After discussion, Mr. Gabriel moved, and Mr. Rotruck seconded, that Kanawha County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 CEFP be approved. The motion carried.

Next, the Board considered the following school closures and/or mergers/consolidations:

Mr. Hardesty moved, and Mr. Gabriel seconded, that the closure and consolidation of Belle Elementary School, Mary Ingles Elementary School, Malden Elementary School, and Midland Trail Elementary School be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried.

Mr. Wooten moved, and Mr. Dunlevy seconded, that the closure of East Bank Middle School and its merger into DuPont Middle School be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried.

Mr. Dunley moved, and Dr. Stansbury seconded, that the closure of McKinley Middle School and its merger into Hayes Middle School be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried.

After the Board approved the school closures and/or consolidations proposed by Kanawha County Board of Education, President White made a statement regarding the difficult decisions county boards are forced to make due to the decreasing enrollment in West Virginia's public schools, the importance of special relationships between communities and local schools, the pain associated with school

closures, and the statutory requirements for county boards of education to be financially responsible. President White explained that county boards of education cannot sustain operating at previous capacities in an environment of continual decreasing enrollment. President White explained that while the Board sympathized with those affected by school closures, the Board must support actions that provide secure and sustainable financial footing for West Virginia's educational systems.

The Board then took a 30-minute break and returned at 1:17 p.m. to complete its agenda.

### **VIII. WVBE and WVDE Personnel Matters**

After discussion, President White called for a motion to approve the WVBE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment. Mr. Dunlevy moved, and Mr. Gabriel seconded, that the WVBE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried.

President White then called for a motion to approve the WVDE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment. Mr. Wooten moved, and Mr. Hardesty seconded, that the WVDE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried.

### **IX. Appointment to School Building Authority (SBA)**

President White called for a motion to appoint Mr. Dunlevy to the SBA to fill the unexpired term vacated by Dr. Daniel Snavely ending September 4, 2025. Upon a call for the questions, Mr. Wooten moved, and Mr. Gabriel seconded, that Mr. Dunlevy be appointed to the unexpired term. The motion carried.

### **X. WVDE Reports**

Superintendent Blatt provided the Board with an update on certified enrollment. She reported that West Virginia has 241,024 total public school students, a decrease of 4,023 from last school year. Additionally, there are 10,174 students participating in the Hope Scholarship Program; 24,502 homeschooled students; and, 12,766 non-public school students. Superintendent Blatt also informed the Board that there are 1,523 certified teachers working in the public schools that are assigned outside of their content area – a decrease from last school year. The Board discussed option pathways designed to encourage students to pursue the education field as a career. The Board also discussed the status of homeschool students turning in statutorily required assessments.

### **XI. WVBE Member Updates and Requests for Information**

Mr. Wooten requested information relating to the decline in student population such as school choice vs. population loss and information relating to the layout of the 26 projected school closings. Specifically, Mr. Wooten asked if the school closures are widespread or appear to be clustered. Dr. Stansbury reported attending the Veteran's Day Parade in Charleston and enjoying the JROTC Program. He also requested information on the status of the statewide JROTC Program. Ms. Sullivan participated in the Community in Schools planning meeting, the Common Ground Compact Signing,

the US Senate Youth Program candidate interviews, and attended the Veteran’s Day Program at Rock Branch Elementary. Ms. Sullivan also requested an update on the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (WVSDB). Mr. Rotruck reported that he spoke at the Keystone State Collaborative in Pittsburgh, PA and stressed the importance of being part of the space economy. Mr. Rotruck requested information regarding how students are doing after they graduate. First Lady Cathy Justice reported that she read to elementary school students in Lewisburg as part of a book donation from the Department of Arts, Culture and History. Mr. Dunlevy reported he will be attending the upcoming SBA meetings regarding proposed school projects and funding, along with Mr. Gabriel and Mr. Hardesty. Mr. Gabriel and President White attended the WVASA meeting that included a workers’ compensation presentation relating to accidents occurring on school grounds. President White discussed participating and speaking at the Common Ground Compact signing.

## **XII. Future Meetings**

President White announced that the next regular meeting of the WVBE will be held December 11, 2024, in Charleston, West Virginia.

## **XIII. Adjournment**

President White called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Wooten moved, and Dr. Stansbury seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. Upon the call for the question, the meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

**Minutes approved by the Board on December 11, 2024**

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**Nancy J. White, President**

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**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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