

# **WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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

## **MINUTES**

December 11, 2024

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

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 December 11, 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 (via remote), Cathy L. C. Justice, F. Scott Rotruck, Debra K. Sullivan, Christopher A. Stansbury, Gregory F. Wooten (via remote), 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 were present.

### **II. Approval of Agenda**

President White called for a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Dunlevy moved, and Mrs. Sullivan seconded, that the amended agenda be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

### **III. Delegations**

Ms. Tara Raymo addressed the Board by reading from the Bible. Dr. Mickey Blackwell, Executive Director, West Virginia Principals Association, addressed the Board regarding the Principals Conference held at the Greenbrier Resort, Community in Schools, and Culture Building. Mr. Dale Lee, President, West Virginia Education Association, addressed the Board regarding discipline issues in elementary schools. The following persons spoke in opposition to the proposed school closings in Wetzel County: Mr. Rodney McWilliams, Ms. Carol Roberts, Ms. Karen Longwell, Ms. Rachel Hutton, Ms. Stacey Yoho, Mr. Bill Bell, Mr. Charles Goff, Ms. Charlene Curry, Mr. Abe Morris, Ms. Courtni Cecil, Ms. Jennifer Morris, Mr. Mike Turner, Ms. Abby Tennant, Ms. Beverly Van Scyoc, Ms. Amanda Lippencott, Ms. Megan Gorby, Mr. Austin Hayes, Ms. Alana Minor, and Mr. Chris McGinnis. Mr. Vincent Monseau spoke in support of the proposed Wetzel County school consolidations.

#### **IV. Consent Agenda**

President White called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Sullivan moved, and Dr. Stansbury 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 Clay, Gilmer, Hardy, Harrison, Marshall, and Wood counties.
- Approved the Employment of Retired Bus Operators as Substitutes in Areas of Critical Need and Shortage policies for Gilmer and Marshall counties.
- Approved the affidavits listed in the agenda attachment for the Employment of Substitute Teachers in Areas of Critical Need and Shortage for submission to the Consolidated Public Retirement Board.
- Approved the Techniques to Effectively De-Escalate Conflicts During Board of Education Meetings training recommended by the Training Standards Review Committee.
- Approved the Educator Preparation Program Review Board's request for West Virginia University to maintain a Certified Teacher of Record agreement with Braxton County Schools.
- Approved the West Virginia Universal Pre-K 2023 Annual Report.
- Approved the West Virginia Licensure Testing Directory.

#### **V. Policy 5202, Minimum Requirements for the Licensure of Professional/Paraprofessional Personnel and Advanced Salary Classifications.**

Mr. Robert Hagerman explained that Policy 5202 establishes the requirements regarding licensure of educators to work in the public schools of West Virginia. At the October 9, 2024 meeting, the Board approved that proposed Policy 5202 be placed on public comment for 30 days. During the comment period, 53 comments were received resulting in 13 sections being further modified. After discussion, Mrs. Sullivan moved that Policy 5202 be approved and effective 30 days from filing, Mr. Gabriel seconded the motion. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

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

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Superintendent Phillip Dobbins, Clay County Superintendent, provided the Board with information supporting Clay County Board of Education's need to amend their CEFP to include the closure and consolidation of Clay County Middle School into Clay Elementary School, Big Otter Elementary School, and Clay County High School. This closure is contingent upon West Virginia School Building Authority funding for an addition to Clay County High School 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 or Consolidations. After discussion, Mr. Gabriel moved, and Mr. Dunlevy seconded, that Clay County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 CEFP be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote. Mr. Gabriel then moved, and Mrs. Sullivan seconded, that the closure of Clay Middle School and its consolidation into Clay Elementary School, Big Otter Elementary School, and Clay County High School be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

The Board then took a necessary 15-minute break until 11:45 a.m.

**VII. Preston County Board of Education: Closure of Fellowsville Elementary School and its consolidation into South Preston School**

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Superintendent Bradley Martin, Preston County Superintendent, provided the Board with information supporting Preston County Board of Education's request for the closure of Fellowsville Elementary School and its merger into South Preston School. This closure was not contingent on any other actions and is proposed to occur at the end of the 2024-2025 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 as required by Policy 6204, School Closings and Consolidations. Additionally, Mr. Whitlow explained that the Preston County Board of Education has revised its requests for a waiver of Policy 4336 for creating bus routes that would have exceeded the recommended duration of transportation time for elementary students. After discussion, Dr. Stansbury moved, and Mrs. Sullivan seconded, that the closure of Fellowsville Elementary School and the related revised Policy 4336 waiver, be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

**VIII. Preston County Board of Education: Closure of Rowlesburg School and its consolidation into Aurora School**

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Superintendent Bradley Martin, Preston County Superintendent, provided the Board with information supporting Preston County Board of Education's request for the closure of Rowlesburg School and its consolidation into Aurora School. This closure was not contingent on any other actions and is proposed to occur at the end of the 2024-2025 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 Preston 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. After discussion, Mr. Dunlevy moved, and Mr. Gabriel seconded, that the closure of Rowlesburg School and the related Policy 4336 waiver be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

**IX. Amendment of Wetzel County Board of Education's 2020-2030 Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan (CEFP)**

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Superintendent Cassandra Porter, Wetzel County Superintendent, provided the Board with information supporting Wetzel County

Board of Education's need to include the closure and consolidation of multiple schools within the county. It was proposed that Hundred High School be consolidated into Valley High School and Paden City High School be consolidated into Magnolia High School and New Martinsville School. The closures are proposed to occur at the end of the 2024-2025 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. After discussion, Mr. Dunlevy moved, and Mr. Gabriel seconded, that Wetzel County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 CEFP be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

**X. Wetzel County Board of Education: Closure of Hundred High School and its consolidation into Valley High School**

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Superintendent Cassandra Porter, Wetzel County Superintendent, provided the Board with information supporting Wetzel County Board of Education's request for the closure of Hundred High School and its consolidation into Valley High School. The closure was not contingent on any other actions and is proposed to occur at the end of the 2024-2025 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 as required by Policy 6204, School Closings and Consolidations. After discussion, Dr. Stansbury moved, and Mr. Rotruck seconded, that the closure of Hundred High School and its consolidation into Valley High School be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

**XI. Wetzel County Board of Education: Closure of Paden City High School and its consolidation into Magnolia High School and New Martinsville School**

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Superintendent Cassandra Porter, Wetzel County Superintendent, provided the Board with information supporting Wetzel County Board of Education's request for the closure of Paden City High School and its consolidation into Magnolia High School. The closure was not contingent on any other actions and is proposed to occur at the end of the 2024-2025 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 as required by Policy 6204, School Closings and Consolidations. After discussion, Mr. Dunley moved, and Mr. Stansbury seconded, that the closure of Paden City High School and its consolidation into Magnolia High School be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

**XII. Amendment of Wood County Board of Education's 2020-2030 Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan (CEFP)**

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Superintendent Christie Willis, Wood County Superintendent, provided the Board with information supporting Wood County Board of Education's request for approval to remove the consolidation of Fairplains Elementary School and Franklin Elementary School and replace that proposed action with the merger of Fairplains

Elementary School into Martin Elementary School. 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, Mr. Gabriel moved, and Mrs. Sullivan seconded, that Wood County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 CEFP be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

**XIII. Wood County Board of Education: Closure of Fairplains Elementary School and its merger into Martin Elementary School**

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Superintendent Christie Willis, Wood County Superintendent, provided the Board with information supporting Wood County Board of Education's request for the closure of Fairplains Elementary School and its merger into Martin Elementary School. 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. After discussion, Mrs. Sullivan moved, and Mr. Gabriel seconded, that the closure of Fairplains Elementary School and its consolidation into Martin Elementary School be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

**XIV. Wood County Board of Education: Closure of VanDevender Middle School and its merger into Jackson Middle School and Hamilton Middle School**

Mr. Micah Whitlow, Director, Office of School Facilities and Superintendent Christie Willis, Wood County Superintendent, provided the Board with information supporting Wood County Board of Education's request for the closure of VanDevender Middle School and its merger into Jackson Middle School and Hamilton Middle School. 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. After discussion, Mr. Dunlevy moved, and Dr. Stansbury, that the closure of VanDevender Middle School and its merger into Jackson Middle School and Hamilton Middle School be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

The Board then took a necessary break for approximately thirty minutes.

**XV. 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. Rotruck 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 on a voice vote.

President White then called for a motion to approve the WVDE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment. Mr. Gabriel moved, and Dr. Stansbury 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 the high school graduation rate was 92.6%, the same as the previous school year. The 5-year graduation cohort increased to 93.5% compared to 92% percent the previous school year. Dr. Sonya White presented the benchmark data collected in compliance with the provisions of House Bill No. 3035—The Third Grade Success Act. Dr. Erika Klose informed the Board on the success of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Country Roads Codes at the Capitol Day that was held on Monday, December 9, 2024.

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

Mrs. Sullivan reported that she attended the West Virginia Public Broadcasting Board meeting, the West Virginia Commission for Professional Teaching Standards meeting, and a middle school ribbon-cutting in Summers County. Mrs. Sullivan requested that the Board consider undertaking a cost adequacy study. Mr. Rotruck concurred that a cost adequacy study may be helpful. Mr. Dunlevy reported that he will be attending the West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission meetings later in the week. First Lady Justice reported that she participated in the “A Joyful Night” celebration with Governor Justice and that she recently presented a therapy dog in Putnam County. President White reported attending the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Country Roads Codes Day at the Capitol. President White also toured the new Herbert Hoover High School and enjoyed watching the Career and Technical Education students (CTE) in action. Additionally, President White and Mr. Rotruck attended the Ed Talks event at the Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center.

## **XVIII. Future Meetings**

President White announced that the next regular meeting of the WVBE will be held January 8, 2024, in Charleston, West Virginia.

## **XIX. Adjournment**

President White called for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Stansbury moved, and Mr. Gabriel seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. Upon the call for the question, the meeting was adjourned at 2:36 p.m. on a voice vote.

**Minutes approved by the Board on January 8, 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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