

WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

MINUTES

October 1, 2025

I. Call to Order

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mrs. Sullivan. President L. Paul Hardesty called the meeting of the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) to order at 9:00 a.m. on October 1, 2025, in Capitol Building 6, Suite 600, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Charleston, West Virginia.

The following members were present: President Hardesty, Vice President Victor L. Gabriel, Robert W. Dunlevy, Cathy L. C. Justice, F. Scott Rotruck (via remote), Debra K. Sullivan, Dr. Christopher A. Stansbury, Nancy J. White, Gregory F. Wooten, and 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.

II. Approval of Agenda

President Hardesty called for a motion to approve the agenda. Mrs. Sullivan moved, Dr. Stansbury seconded, that the agenda be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

III. Delegations

Mr. Jerry Payne, Ms. Amanda Beach-Burge, Ms. Danita Nellhaus, Dr. Kate Waldeck, spoke about the importance of upholding the vaccination statute established in West Virginia law. Ms. Susan Parks read from the Bible. Mr. Billy Reeves addressed the board regarding the emergency closure of Verdunville Elementary School in Logan County. Mr. Dale Lee, Co-President, Education West Virginia, thanked the Board for standing strong on the vaccination issue and Mrs. Sullivan for her service. He also encouraged everyone to come together to promote the positive aspects of public schools.

IV. Special Remarks by President Hardesty

Next, President Hardesty addressed the public regarding the severe misconceptions surrounding traditional (brick and mortar) public schools. Specifically, President Hardesty demonstrated the unlevel playing field in regard to traditional public schools vs. school choice options such as homeschooling and public charter schools by not only displaying hard copies of the 2025 School

Law book that traditional public schools must abide by, but also displaying the mandatory minimal regulations for other school options. President Hardesty explained that the West Virginia Legislature is the government body with the authority to make statutory changes to alleviate the burdensome regulation of county school systems. He called on the West Virginia Legislature to make the necessary statutory changes that include the ability to effectively manage the school employee workforce and amend the Public School Support Plan (PSSP) funding formula to compensate for the additional costs county systems incur to educate the State’s most vulnerable students. President Hardesty explained that the Board and the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) would be willing partners if the West Virginia Legislature decides to seek a meaningful solution to the issues. He also stated that he is willing to demonstrate the inequities between traditional public schools and school choice options at every meeting if necessary to make the point that it is time to level the playing field.

V. Superintendent Reports

Superintendent Blatt updated the Board on the Balanced Scorecard results. Specifically, she highlighted that 86% of the schools improved their English Language Arts (ELA) performance indicator, 83% of the schools improved in the mathematics performance indicator, and there was a 76% reduction in the chronic absenteeism measure. Superintendent Blatt also informed the Board that 68% of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) students who took the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) exam met, or exceeded, the proficiency goal or score to pursue the career that the student had just completed the coursework to pursue—an increase of 4% from last year’s results. Additionally, the passage rate for students who took the Advanced Placement test increased by 6.8% when compared to last year.

Next, Superintendent Blatt recognized Hugh Roberts, a teacher at Cabell County Career and Technical Center, who won a Harbor Freight Tools for Schools Excellence in Teaching Award and received a \$100,000 check for the achievement. A portion of the monetary award is allocated to Mr. Roberts personally, while the other portion is designated for the school. Superintendent Blatt said that the award is one of only five distributed nationally.

Last, Superintendent Blatt and Micah Whitlow provided an update on school safety. Superintendent Blatt informed the Board that they had just attended a School Safety Conference in Mason County that included several county school representatives and law enforcement officers. Mr. Whitlow said it was nice to see everyone come together at the conference and discuss the many ways they deal with keeping students safe. He said it was clear that every incident is investigated and that they are prioritizing immediate threats. Mr. Whitlow then updated the Board on the implementation of House Bill No. 3166, which required school mapping to be completed by September 1, 2026. To date, Mr. Whitlow said about 20 counties have applied and are currently in the process of receiving funding for school mapping. Additionally, one of the topics of the School Safety Conference was the importance of acquiring consistent floor plans to provide critical information to first responders. Mr. Whitlow and Superintendent Blatt answered questions from members relating to available funding and the effect recent policy changes have had on school safety, such as other methods to report safety issues when the use of cell phones is banned during class time.

VI. Consent Agenda

President Hardesty called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mrs. White moved, Dr. Stansbury seconded, that the Consent Agenda be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote approving and/or accepting the following:

- Approved the WVBE minutes from August 13, 2025.
- Approved the employment of substitute teachers in areas of critical need and shortage policies for Boone, Clay, Lincoln, Mineral, Mingo, Monongalia, Morgan, Putnam Raleigh, Randolph, and Wetzel County.
- Approved the employment of substitute bus operators in Boone, Lincoln, Mineral, Putnam, and Raleigh County.
- Approved Logan County Schools' request for an emergency waiver of Policy 4336 for creating bus routes that will exceed the recommended duration of transportation time for elementary students.
- Approved a statewide waiver request of Policy 4336 for transporting students to alternative education sites.
- Approved Mingo County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan (CEFP).
- Approved Cabell County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 CEFP.
- Approved Webster County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 CEFP.
- Approved Monongalia County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 CEFP.
- Accepted the 2024-2025 West Virginia Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children Annual Report.
- Accepted the amendment and approved the West Virginia Licensure Testing Directory, as revised.

Ms. Sullivan requested an update regarding the letter sent to the Professional Charter School Board (PCSB) relating to complying with the childhood immunization statutory requirements. Superintendent Blatt said that a letter was sent, but that there had not been any response from the PCSB. Additionally, she reported that Mr. Jeff Kelley had talked to several public charter schools, which indicated that they are not accepting religious exemptions for their students.

VII. Approval of the Board Meeting Schedule

President Hardesty called for a motion to approve the State Board's meeting schedule for September 2025 through August 2026. Mr. Wooten moved, Mr. Dunlevy seconded, that the proposed schedule be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

VIII. Annual County Board of Education Accountability Report

Ms. Alexandra Criner presented the 2025 County Approval and Accreditation Report, produced to ensure that each county board of education is providing a thorough and efficient education for its students. The process includes reviewing county scorecards and efficiency profiles and determining approval statuses based on multiple measures of student performance and county operational efficiency. Ms. Criner explained that operational efficiency indicators are determined by different offices at the WVDE based on multiple measures, and that statuses are defined as either Meets Requirements or Needs Assistance. Ms. Criner said that nearly half of all counties met requirements for all operational effectiveness indicators; however, transportation, finance, county board of education member effectiveness, and facilities were common areas in which counties were designated as needing assistance. The Balanced Scorecard indicators were based on student performance and success. Counties are then identified as either On Watch, Support, or Intensive Support based on three consecutive years of district-level accountability data. Identified districts work with the WVDE staff to implement action plans and receive targeted technical assistance. The report showed that Math Achievement was the most frequently flagged indicator across all categories, especially under Intensive Support. Altogether, 27 districts were identified for math achievement. Additionally, the report indicated that there was a reduction in the number of counties identified for ELA Achievement from 2024-2025; however, seven districts were identified this year as either On Watch or Support for ELA Achievement. Attendance also remained prominent in both On Watch and Support designations, with 19 of the 20 districts identified as needing Support in 2024 showing a reduction in chronic absenteeism in 2025. Overall, the average rate of chronic absenteeism statewide declined from 29.08% in 2022 to 22.76% in 2025. Ms. Criner answered questions from members relating to developing and monitoring action plans, etc., for counties identified as needing support.

IX. Executive Session

Mr. Gabriel moved, Mr. Dunlevy seconded, that the Board enter executive session under the attorney-client privilege exemption, authorized by W. Va. Code §6-9A-3 for discussion of item C (Discussion of Legal Matters) on the agenda. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote. President Hardesty announced that the Board was entering executive session at 9:56 a.m. The Board returned from executive session at 11:20 a.m. without taking any action.

X. WVBE and WVDE Personnel Matters

President Hardesty called for a motion to approve the WVBE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment. Mrs. Sullivan moved, 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 Hardesty then called for a motion to approve the WVDE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment. Mr. Wooten moved, Mr. Gabriel 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.

XI. Special Recognition of Debra K. Sullivan, Board Member

With Mrs. Sullivan's current term expiring on November 4, 2025, she was recognized by President Hardesty to deliver remarks. Mrs. Sullivan said that she knew when she accepted an appointment to the Board that it was an important responsibility and that it was one that she had not taken lightly. She talked about the importance of the advice she received from many individuals who guided her through her time on the Board and the opportunity to work with a revolving group of board members with different backgrounds and perspectives. She recognized that the public schools have challenges, but stressed that they should never be viewed as a problem because they define our future and should be given the credit they deserve as the bedrock of our communities. Mrs. Sullivan said that it has been painful to watch the methodical unraveling of support for public schools, which is contrary to the constitutional promise to our children of a thorough and efficient education. In conclusion, Mrs. Sullivan said that she did not know what she would do next, but that she knows that she will continue to be involved in schools and push for what can be done to give West Virginia children the best opportunities imaginable.

Next, President Hardesty commented that Mrs. Sullivan had been a tremendous asset to the Board and would be sadly missed. He complimented her on a very successful, glorious career in education and thanked her not only for what she has done but also for what she will continue to do for the children of West Virginia. After which, Mrs. Justice, Mr. Gabriel, Mr. Dunlevy, Dr. Sansbury, and Mr. Wooten all thanked Mrs. Sullivan for her service and contribution to education. President Hardesty then asked Mrs. Sullivan to join the members at the podium for a presentation. Mrs. Sullivan was presented with a Certificate of Service and gifts made by CTE students.

XII. WVBE Member Updates and Requests for Information

Mr. Wooten thanked President Hardesty for his earlier remarks during which he called on the West Virginia Legislature to alleviate the burdensome statutory regulations placed on traditional public schools. Mrs. Sullivan echoed Mr. Wooten's comment regarding President Hardesty's remarks. Additionally, Mrs. Sullivan reported that she had attended the West Virginia Public Broadcasting Board meeting and various executive sessions, the Professional Standards Commission meeting, the Teacher and Service Personnel of the Year Celebration, and visited classrooms. Mr. Rotruck thanked Mrs. Sullivan for her service and reported that he attended the West Virginia School Board Association Training Standards Review Meeting with Mrs. White. Mrs. Justice commented that she thought President Hardesty had done a wonderful job spreading the word about the issues surrounding public schools during the meeting and through media contacts. Mr. Dunlevy thanked President Hardesty for demonstrating the difference in the regulations placed on different school options. Mrs. White said the demonstration was wonderful and that she had the pleasure of attending the Education Alliance Board meeting virtually and the West Virginia Public Education Collaborative. She also attended the Training Standards Review Committee to plan the upcoming training sessions for county board members scheduled for November 15, 2025. Mr. Gabriel reported that he attended the West Virginia Association of School Administrators meeting and echoed the sentiments of his fellow board members regarding President Hardesty's demonstration.

XIII. Future Meetings

President Hardesty announced that the next regular meeting of the West Virginia Board of Education would be on November 12, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in Charleston, West Virginia.

IVX. Adjournment

President Hardesty called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Wooten moved, Mrs. White seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. Upon the call for the question, the meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m. on a voice vote.

Minutes approved by the Board on November 12, 2025

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:
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