

WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

MINUTES

November 12, 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 November 12, 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 member Michele L. Blatt, State Superintendent of Schools, West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE). Sarah Armstrong Tucker, Chancellor, West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education was absent.

II. Approval of Agenda

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

III. Recognitions

Superintendent Blatt announced the 2025 National Blue Ribbon Nominees. Steenrod Elementary School in Ohio County and Neale Elementary School in Wood County represent the 2025 class from West Virginia. Although the Blue Ribbon School program was eliminated at the federal level, the WVBE recognized the excellence that each school has achieved.

IV. Delegations

Mr. Jeff Mace talked about the roundtable discussions that Roane County Schools is holding with local legislators. Ms. Brittany Brogran, Ms. Janine Gourley, Ms. Janie Claytor, and Ms. Elaine Anderson spoke about the importance of upholding the vaccination statute established in West Virginia law. Ms. Susan Parks read from the Bible. Ms. Elisa Payne talked about the regulations on public schools and other school choice options. Mr. David Gladkosky, Executive Director, West Virginia Professional Educators, discussed the association's legislative priorities. Mr. Mickey

Blackwell, Executive Director, West Virginia Principals Association, invited the members to attend the West Virginia Principals Conference and thanked the public school staff for feeding the children, especially during the federal government shutdown. Lastly, Mr. Dale Lee, Co-President of EducationWV, talked about giving thanks to our veterans for our freedoms, including the opportunity to make educational and health choices, and for our teachers who make sacrifices for students.

V. School Safety Report

Mr. Micah Whitlow presented the 2025 School Safety Report. Mr. Whitlow explained that West Virginia law requires all county boards, public charter schools and multi-county centers to annually assess the safety needs of their schools and submit their requests to the WVDE. The WVDE is then required to compile the information and submit it to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability. Mr. Whitlow explained that the report included a categorized priority list with the estimated cost of each category. After discussion, Mr. Wooten moved, and Mr. Gabriel seconded, that the 2025 School Safety Report be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

VI. Superintendent Reports

Superintendent Blatt talked about the Communities in Schools program and partners traveling around the State promoting the Being Present Matters initiative. She informed the Board that the partners had provided funding to meet some of the basic needs of our students and make things easier for the teachers and counselors. Superintendent Blatt took the opportunity to thank Sean and Angela Ball, Lisa and Larry Pack, and Brad and Alys Smith for their contributions.

Next, Superintendent Blatt discussed the Culinary Challenge that was held at Oglebay State Park in Wheeling. She explained that nine high schools participated, each focusing on the tourism region they were assigned. The event was modeled after Baking Impossible from Netflix. A Netflix crew was on site that had been modeling and coaching the teams since the beginning of the school year. The Netflix team assisted by joining online and helped coach them on their culinary and engineering project. Superintendent Blatt then showed a video of the Netflix crew highlighting the projects.

Superintendent Blatt shared the certified enrollment count for the current year. She explained that there are 234,957 students enrolled, which represents a 2.52% reduction from the previous school year. She pointed out that the public schools still serve 98.2% of West Virginia's students. She said that 53 of the 55 counties had a decline in student enrollment. She also provided a booklet that broke down the enrollment data.

Lastly, at the request of Superintendent Blatt, Mr. Micah Whitlow provided an overview of the school closing process because of the vast number of proposed closures expected due to the decline in student population.

VII. Consent Agenda

President Hardesty called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Wooten moved, Mr.

Gabriel seconded, that the Consent Agenda be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote approving the following:

- Approved the WVBE minutes from October 1, 2025.
- Approved the employment of substitute teachers in areas of critical need and shortage policies for Barbour, Braxton, Harrison, Kanawha, Nicholas, Pendleton, and Wayne counties.
- Approved the employment of retired bus operators as substitutes in areas of critical need and shortage policies for Harrison, Kanawha, and Monongalia Counties.
- Approved retirement affidavits for submission to the Consolidated Public Retirement Board.
- Approved the appointment of Nancy J. White to an unexpired term on the West Virginia Commission for Professional Teaching Standards and an unexpired term on the West Virginia Education Broadcasting Authority.
- Approved a statewide waiver of Policy 6204, section 3.4., School Closings or Consolidation.
- Approved Wayne County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 CEFP.
- Approved Pendleton County Board of Education's request to amend their 2020-2030 CEFP.
- Approved the West Virginia School Board Association (WVSBA) Statewide Fall Training Conference.
- Approved Monongalia County Schools' request for a waiver of Policy 4321.1, Standards for School Nutrition, for the 2025-2026 school year to allow for a la carte food sales at Morgantown High School.
- Approved the West Virginia Universal Pre-K 2024 Annual Report.

VIII. Mingo County Schools Update

Mr. Jeff Kelley provided background information relating to the Mingo County Schools intervention, reminding members that the Special Circumstance Review revealed significant governance and compliance issues within the Mingo County Board of Education that included a lack of unified vision, outdated policies, and persistent ethical concerns. He also said progress has included policy updates, principal training, improved instructional oversight and corrections to personnel records, contract and financial procedures. Then, County Superintendent Joetta Basile provided an update on the actions taken to correct the deficiencies that resulted in the WVBE intervening in Mingo County Schools. Superintendent Basile also answered questions from board members.

IX. Nicholas County Schools Update

Mr. Jeff Kelley provided background information relating to the Nicholas County Schools intervention that included problematic personnel practices and governance issues marked by a lack of procedures. In May, the Board's intervention included the immediate vacating of key leadership positions. Since the intervention, certification issues have been resolved, policies have been

updated, and improvements have been made in hiring practices. County Superintendent Scott Cochran provided an update on the actions taken to correct deficiencies identified in the Special Circumstance Review of Nicholas County Schools and the newly constructed Richwood Academic Complex. After which, Superintendent Cochran answered questions from board members.

X. Tyler County Schools Update

Next, Mr. Jeff Kelley provided background information relating to the Tyler County Schools Special Circumstance Review based on alleged board ethics violations, excessive executive sessions, general unrest, and other concerns. The Special Circumstances Review report resulted in an intervention in May 2025. The review recommended mandatory training for board members, policy alignment with WVBE standards, enhanced transparency, and community engagement. County Superintendent Shane Highley updated the members on actions taken to correct deficiencies.

XI. Discussion of Legal Matters

Mr. Gabriel moved, Mrs. White 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 D (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 10:30 a.m. The Board returned from executive session at 11:39 a.m. without taking any action.

XII. WVBE and WVDE Personnel Matters

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

XIII. WVBE Member Updates and Requests for Information

Dr. Stansbury said he recently attended the Charleston Veteran's Day Parade because his son is a member of the JROTC Program at George Washington High School. He said he was thrilled to see that more students were participating in band. Mrs. Sullivan attended a Veteran's Day Celebration at Rock Branch Elementary, read with elementary students, and visited the Tiger Morton Juvenile Center. Mrs. Justice reported that she was working with the Communities in Schools program on preparing and distributing blessing boxes. Mrs. White reported that she had attended the School Business Officials Conference, the School Board Associations Training Review Meeting, and the Education Alliance Meeting. Mr. Gabriel attended the School Building Authority meeting and a Keep the Ball Rolling event.

XIV. Future Meetings

President Hardesty announced that the next regular meeting of the West Virginia Board of Education would be on December 10, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in Charleston, West Virginia.

XV. Adjournment

President Hardesty called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Gabriel moved, Mr. Wooten seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. Upon the call for the question, the meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m. on a voice vote.

Minutes approved by the Board on December 10, 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:

Tina Payne, Board Secretary

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