

WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

MINUTES

July 8, 2026

I. Call to Order

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mr. Dunlevy. President L. Paul Hardesty called the meeting of the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) to order at 9:00 a.m. on July 8, 2026, in Capitol Building 6, Suite 600, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Charleston, West Virginia.

The following members were present: President L. Paul Hardesty, Vice President Victor L. Gabriel, Robert W. Dunlevy, Cathy L. C. Justice, James D. Paul, F. Scott Rotruck (via remote), Dr. Christopher A. Stansbury (via remote), Nancy J. White (via remote), 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. Mr. Wooten moved, and Mr. Dunlevy seconded, that the agenda be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

III. Delegations

Mr. David Gladkosky of the West Virginia Professional Educators addressed the Board regarding their wish list for changes to the state aid funding formula. Mr. Billy Reeves talked about student safety in public schools. Ms. Susan Parsons read from the Bible. Mr. Mickey Blackwell of the West Virginia Principals Association spoke about preparations for the new school year.

IV. “I Love WV Public Schools” Presentation

Next, Ohio County Superintendent Kimberly Miller announced the launch of the “I Love WV Public Schools” campaign. Superintendent Miller highlighted the accomplishments of West Virginia public schools, their role as community anchors, and the importance of public education in serving all students. A campaign video was also presented.

V. School Safety Report

Mr. Micah Whitlow and Mr. James Agee provided a school safety report. Mr. Agee outlined criminal history reviews and licensure application requirements, investigation processes for allegations of misconduct, and training and support provided to counties by the WVDE. He also

highlighted recent statutory changes that strengthened enforcement mechanisms, including the employee discipline database and automatic licensure suspensions or revocations for certain criminal offenses.

VI. State Superintendent Reports

Superintendent Blatt reported on the following:

- The ribbon-cutting and memorial dedication ceremony for the new entrance and memorial at the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind in Romney.
- America250 initiatives occurring across the state, including classroom resources, social studies projects, governor's schools' activities, and community engagement efforts.
- West Virginia's continued national recognition for Universal Pre-K and the annual report.
- A statewide artificial intelligence (AI) initiative being developed in partnership with Microsoft and Prodigy Learning. The initiative will provide AI resources, training, credentials, and professional learning opportunities for students, teachers, administrators, and schools.

VII. Consent Agenda

President Hardesty called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Dunlevy 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:

- Approved the WVBE minutes of the June 3, 2026, meeting.
- Approved the employment of substitute teachers in areas of critical need and shortage policy for Calhoun County.
- Approved the employment of bus operators in areas of critical need and shortage policy for Calhoun County.
- Approved continuing approval status for the 22 state-approved alternative certification programs and their providers, included in Attachment D to the agenda.
- Approved the appointment of David Price to serve as the State Superintendent's Designee on the West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission Review Board.
- Approved the transition from the current edTPA to edTPA Essentials, effective August 2026, with a dual acceptance period extending through December 2027.
- Approved the continuation of a statewide waiver of §11.9.d, Policy 5202, Minimum Requirements for the Licensure of Professional/Paraprofessional Personnel and Advanced Salary Classifications, for Grow Your Own West Virginia Teaching Pathway participants.

VIII. Middle School Initiative

President Hardesty then recognized Mr. Amon Gilliam and Ms. Kelly Massinople to provide information on the new middle school initiative. Mr. Gilliam explained that the goal of the new middle school initiative is to bridge the future by fine-tuning the focus on schools serving students in grades 6–8 in hopes of continuing the success in the elementary schools as those students transition to high school. The initiative will emphasize the following:

Evidence-based foundational, leadership, and instructional practices

- Professional development opportunities
- Middle school-focused conferences, webinars, and resources
- Advisory teams consisting of educators and administrators
- Career exploration lessons aligned with standards

Board members expressed support for the initiative and discussed the unique challenges and opportunities associated with middle grades education.

IX. Randolph County Schools State of Emergency Update

Ms. Alexandra Criner, Director of the Office of Accountability, reminded the Board of the issues that warranted declaring a State of Emergency in Randolph County Schools in June 2025 then introduced newly appointed Randolph County Superintendent Derek Lambert to provide an update on the district's progress in improving the county's financial condition, including school consolidations, staffing reductions, expenditure controls, and adoption of a balanced budget while maintaining the required reserve. President Hardesty then recognized Superintendent Blatt for a recommendation. Superintendent Blatt recommended that Randolph County Schools be released from the State of Emergency with the requirement that the local board of education and superintendent continue progress toward improving not only the efficiency of operations but also the effectiveness of the school system as evidenced by improved academic achievement and student outcomes. Superintendent Blatt informed the Board that the WVDE would continue to prioritize monitoring and support of Randolph County Schools for an additional 12 months to ensure that local improvements are sustained. After which, Mr. Gabriel moved, and Mr. Dunlevy seconded, that Randolph County Schools be released from State of Emergency status. Upon a call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

X. Roane County Schools State of Emergency Update

Ms. Criner reminded the Board of the issues that warranted declaring a State of Emergency in Roane County Schools. Roane County Superintendent Michelle Stallato outlined the progress made toward financial stability, including operational efficiencies, school consolidations, staff reductions through attrition, increased revenues, and improved budgeting practices. She also discussed challenges resulting from statutory personnel ratio requirements. According to Stallato, the district is projected to incur a \$1,440,000 penalty because their professional to instructional ratio falls below the 91% statutory requirement after the district eliminated positions, and that the only way to avoid the penalty would be to add back the 18 professional positions they cut, effectively undoing all the decision-making the district made to minimize the deficit. She requested that the WVBE and the West Virginia Legislature consider the unintended consequences that specific statutory requirement places on small, rural districts. After discussion, President Hardesty asked Superintendent Blatt for a recommendation. Superintendent Blatt recommended the State of Emergency be extended for an additional six months to ensure continued progress in Roane County Schools. After which, Mr. Wooten moved, and Mr. Gabriel seconded, that the State of Emergency be extended for an additional six months. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

XI. Harrison County Schools Review Report

Ms. Criner informed the Board that the Office of Accountability conducted an on-site monitoring visit to Harrison County Schools on April 27, 2026, to examine district operations. A follow-up visit was conducted on May 26, 2026, to interview school principals. Upon compiling the information from the visits, several systemic concerns were identified, including county board member interference in administrative functions; concerns regarding governance and chain-of-command issues; staffing levels significantly above the state funding formula; rapid depletion of unrestricted fund balances; and the need for additional review of special education services. During discussion, Uriah Cummings, Director of the Office of School Finance, provided additional information. President Hardesty then asked Superintendent Blatt for a recommendation, which was as follows:

- That the WVBE declares that extraordinary circumstances exist in Harrison County Schools that warrant partial intervention pursuant to W. Va. Code §18-2E-5
- That non-approval status be assigned to Harrison County Schools
- That the authority of the Harrison County Schools Board of Education be limited in areas that compromise the delivery of a thorough and efficient education to its students
- That the WVBE delegates to the State Superintendent or her designee the authority to fill positions of administrators and principals with individuals determined by the State Superintendent or her designee to be the most qualified for the positions
- That the WVBE grants the State Superintendent or her designee the authority to take actions necessary to correct the extraordinary circumstances
- That the WVBE voids the authority of the Harrison County Board of Education as to the approval of all financial transactions in excess of \$100,000, the employment, transfer, and termination of all personnel with employment contracts in excess of 200 days (or hourly equivalent), and delegates decision-making authority to the State Superintendent or her designee regarding those matters
- That the WVBE delegates to the State Superintendent or her designee the authority to conduct hearings on personnel and student discipline matters, the referral of investigations to other agencies, and the authority to appoint a designee for the limited purpose of conducting hearings while reserving to the State Superintendent the authority to render the resulting decision, if needed
- That the WVBE delegates to the State Superintendent or her designee the authority to review and approve all Harrison County Board of Education meeting schedules and agendas before their publication and to pre-approve any agenda items as she sees fit
- That the WVBE delegates to the State Superintendent or her designee the authority to replace administrators and principals in low-performing schools and to transfer them to alternate professional positions within the county at her discretion
- That the WVBE and the current and future Harrison County Schools superintendents and the State Superintendent jointly develop and present to the WVBE at a future meeting a set of standards and/or a strategic plan and communication protocols that must be implemented for the Harrison County Board of Education to regain control of the school system

- That the WVBE directs the current and future Harrison County superintendents to provide progress reports to the WVBE as requested

After which, Mr. Wooten moved, and Mr. Gabriel seconded, that Superintendent Blatt's recommendations be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

XII. State Superintendent Goals for School Year 2026-2027.

President Hardesty recognized Mr. Gabriel for a subcommittee report. Mr. Gabriel, Chair of the State Superintendent Goals Committee, informed the Board that the subcommittee had met on June 30, 2026, at the Robert Mollahan Research Center in Fairmont. After discussion, a majority of the subcommittee members voted to recommend that the Board adopt the four goals as outlined on pages 6 and 7 of the 2025-2026 Superintendent Goals & Accomplishments Report and start developing a strategic plan to establish future goals for education. After which, Mr. Wooten moved, and Mr. Rotruck seconded, that the goals outlined in the Superintendent's Report and start developing a strategic plan to establish future goals as recommended by the subcommittee be approved. Following discussion and the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

XIII. WVBE and WVDE Personnel Matters.

Next, President Hardesty called for a motion to approve the WVBE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment. Mr. Gabriel moved, and Mrs. Justice 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. Gabriel 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.

XIV. WVBE Member Updates and Requests for Information

- Mr. Wooten expressed support for the "I Love West Virginia Public Schools" campaign and requested additional information regarding enrollment trends, Hope Scholarship participation, and education funding comparisons. He also talked about the role school treasurers play in county finance issues.
- Mr. Rotruck emphasized the importance of county chief school business officials and advocated for including those positions in the school aid funding formula.
- Chancellor Tucker highlighted the upcoming Student Success Summit and expressed appreciation for the West Virginia Governor's School for the Arts Summer Program.
- Mr. Dunlevy expressed support for the public school campaign.
- Mrs. White discussed the growing responsibilities of county treasurers and the importance of trust among school leadership teams.
- Mr. Gabriel commended the middle school initiative, encouraged county superintendents as they begin the new school year, and talked about the intervention in Harrison County.

- President Hardesty discussed recurring financial concerns in county school systems and emphasized the importance of fiscal stewardship.

XV. Future Meetings

President Hardesty announced that the next regular meeting of the West Virginia Board of Education would be on August 12, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in Charleston, West Virginia.

XVI. Election of WVBE Officers

President Hardesty announced that the nominations were open for the election of officers and recognized Mr. Dunlevy for a motion. Mr. Dunlevy moved that Paul Hardesty be reelected as president, Vic Gabriel be reelected as vice president, Nancy White be reelected as financial officer, and Scott Rotruck be reelected as Secretary. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wooten. Mr. Paul then nominated Scott Rotruck for president and Dr. Stansbury as vice president. With no second for Mr. Paul's motion being heard, the question was called on Mr. Dunlevy's motion, which carried on a voice vote.

XVII. WVBE Tentative Meeting Schedule for 2026-2027 Approval

Mr. Gabriel moved, and Mr. Wooten seconded that the tentative WVBE meeting schedule for 2026-2027 be approved as presented in the agenda attachment. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

XVIII. Adjournment

President Hardesty called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Gabriel moved, and Mr. Paul seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. Upon the call for the question, the meeting was adjourned at 10:34 a.m. on a voice vote.

Minutes approved by the Board on August 12, 2026

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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