

WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

MINUTES

February 11, 2026

I. Call to Order

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Kelli Talbott. President L. Paul Hardesty called the meeting of the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) to order at 9:00 a.m. on February 11, 2026, 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 (via remote), F. Scott Rotruck, Dr. Christopher A. Stansbury (via remote), Nancy J. White, Gregory F. Wooten (via remote), 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. Dunley moved, and Mrs. White seconded, that the agenda be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

III. Delegations

Ms. Kimberly Mills and Mr. Henry Dillon spoke about the proposed Wayne County school closures. Mr. Dan Bucher spoke about Harmon School. Ms. Susan Parks read from the Bible. Mr. Mickey Blackwell, Executive Director, West Virginia Principals Association, spoke about celebrating Black History Month and the national leadership conference in Washington, D. C.

IV. School Safety Report

Mr. Micah Whitlow and Mr. James Agee provided a school safety update that included the number of threats reported and managed in January 2026, as well as the School Safety Unit's school resource officer and personnel trainings.

V. Consent Agenda

President Hardesty called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Dunlevy moved, and Mrs. White 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 January 14, 2026, and the January 16, 2026, meetings.
- Approved the employment of substitute teachers in areas of critical need and shortage policies for Gilmer, Greenbrier, Lewis, Marshall, Mason, Pocahontas, Roane, Summers, and Upshur counties.

- Approved the employment of retired bus operators as substitutes in areas of critical need and shortage policies for Gilmer, Marshall, Upshur, and Wayne counties.
- Approved retirement affidavits for submission to the Consolidated Public Retirement Board.
- Approved the revisions to West Virginia University's Bachelor of Science programs in Secondary Mathematics and Secondary Science Education, as recommended by the Educator Preparation Program Review Board.
- Approved the appointment of Katie Hayes as a member of the West Virginia Commission for Professional Teaching Standards.
- Approved the West Virginia Licensure Testing Directory.
- Approved the West Virginia School Board Association's 2026 Winter Conference Training.

VI. Amendment of Wayne County Schools' 2020-2030 Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan (CEFP)

Mr. Micah Whitlow explained that WVBE Policy 6200 requires all local boards of education to submit amendments to CEFPs to the WVBE and the School Building Authority of West Virginia (SBA) for approval. Further, the Wayne County Board of Education had requested approval to revise its CEFP to change the identified closures of Dunlow Elementary School and Genoa Elementary School from being a consolidation into a new facility to a merger into Crum PreK-8 School, East Lynn Elementary School, and Wayne Elementary School. Mr. Whitlow said that these schools were originally going to be merged into a new school but will now be merged into existing schools. The closures were not contingent on any other actions and are proposed to occur at the end of the 2025-2026 school year. After which, Mr. Gabriel moved, and Mr. Dunlevy seconded, that Wayne County Schools' request to amend their 2020-2030 CEFP be approved. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

VII. Wayne County Schools' Closures

Mr. Whitlow explained that the Wayne County Board of Education had requested approval to close Dunlow Elementary School and Genoa Elementary School and their merger into Crum PreK-8, East Lynn Elementary School, and Wayne Elementary School. The closures are not contingent on any other actions and are proposed to occur at the end of the 2025-2026 school year. In consideration of the closures, applicable WVBE policies were reviewed and followed, and documents were available for public inspection for the required period. Public hearings were held on January 20, 2026, for Dunlow Elementary School; January 21, 2026, for Crum PreK-8; January 22, 2026, for Genoa Elementary School; January 23, 2026, for East Lynn Elementary School and Wayne Elementary School. The Wayne County Board of Education approved the closures at its January 28, 2026, board meeting. Additionally, the Wayne County Board of Education has also requested a waiver of WVBE Policy 4336 for creating bus routes that will exceed the recommended duration of transportation time for elementary students. Wayne County Superintendent, Todd Alexandeer, then answered questions relating to the savings associated with the school closures and the financial situation in Wayne County. Superintendent Alexander explained that the system will be at a deficit in the next fiscal year if the closures are not approved. President Hardesty then addressed the public regarding the broken components of the statewide school system, a problem compounded over several decades, and urged all leaders to come together and address the issues. After which, Mr. Gabriel moved, and Mr. Dunlevy seconded, that Wayne County Schools' proposed school closures, consolidations, and all necessary policy waivers be approved. President Hardesty recognized Vice-President Gabriel, who asked Mr. Whitlow if the county had adhered to all statutory and policy

requirements that must be met to close and consolidate schools, to which Mr. Whitlow confirmed that the county had done so. Vice-President Gabriel then asked Superintendent Blatt if the proposed closures and/or consolidations would continue to ensure the delivery of a thorough and efficient education to the affected students, to which Superintendent Blatt confirmed that it would. Upon the call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

VIII. Logan County Schools Update

Ms. Alexandra Criner provided background information relating to the Logan County Schools' intervention, and then Logan County Superintendent Sonya White provided a progress report to the Board regarding actions taken to correct identified deficiencies. Superintendent Blatt then recommended that policy-making authority be returned to the Logan County Board of Education. After which, Mrs. White moved, and Mr. Gabriel seconded, that policy-making authority be returned to the Logan County Board of Education. Upon a call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

IX. Pocahontas County Schools Update

Ms. Alexandra Criner provided background information relating to the Pocahontas County Schools' State of Emergency, and then Pocahontas County Superintendent Letha Williams provided a progress report to the Board regarding actions taken to correct identified deficiencies. Superintendent Blatt then recommended that the State of Emergency be lifted. After which, Mr. Dunlevy moved, and Mrs. White seconded, that the Pocahontas County Schools be released from the State of Emergency. Upon a call for the question, the motion carried on a voice vote.

X. WVBE and WVDE Personnel Matters

President Hardesty called for a motion to approve the WVBE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment. Mrs. White 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 Hardesty then called for a motion to approve the WVDE personnel matters included in the agenda attachment. Mr. Dunlevy 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. WVBE Member Updates and Requests for Information

Mr. Gabriel reported that he had attended the West Virginia Association of School Administrators meeting.

XII. Superintendent Reports

Superintendent Blatt informed the Board that their meeting packets include a briefing on the opening of the Blue and Gold Building, with the Appalachian Café, part of a culinary program for the students, at West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, and a copy of the budget appropriation request to the West Virginia Legislature. Finally, Superintendent Blatt provided an update on the Hancock County Schools intervention.

XIII. Future Meetings

President Hardesty announced that the next regular meeting of the West Virginia Board of Education would be on March 11, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in Charleston, West Virginia.

XIV. Adjournment

President Hardesty called for a motion to adjourn. Mrs. White moved and Mr. Dunlevy seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Upon the call for the question, the meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m. on a voice vote.

Minutes approved by the Board on February 11, 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:

Tina Payne, Board Secretary

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