WEST VIRGINIA
BOARD OF EDUCATION
FALL LISTENING TOUR

Final Report — December 2019
Executive Summary

Background
The West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) and State Superintendent of Schools work collaboratively to establish policies and procedures to assure implementation of West Virginia’s public education goals and to ensure the general supervision, oversight, and monitoring of a thorough, efficient and effective system of free public schools. To achieve this, policy must be shaped by diverse perspectives and innovative ideas that improve student achievement.

The United States has proven over the course of its history that a free public education is more than a notion. It is the key that unlocks boundless opportunities for children, adults, and families. In West Virginia the importance of an effective and thriving education system stands paramount to who we are as a state, where we are going, and how we get there. Investing in education with our time, our talents, and our resources is an obligation that will propel us to greater economic development and sustained prosperity. In our state the challenges are daunting, making it even more critical that our system is equipped with the tools needed to teach the next generation of skilled workers and thought leaders, while ensuring families are fully engaged in their children’s learning.

Process
This report captures input from various stakeholders in an effort to inform the WVBE on topics that are emerging as key WVBE policy issues or topics of interest for the coming year.

The WVBE hosted a series of public forums, the 2019 Fall Listening Tour, to gather information and insight from the field. Two sessions of the tour were held in each Congressional district and data was collected through face-to-face conversations and paper and online surveys. The goal of the public forums and online surveys was to elicit input about how to best improve education in the Mountain State. Stakeholders were invited to engage in constructive dialogue focusing on, but not limited to, four topics that emerged as key WVBE policy issues or current topics of interest:

- Family Engagement
- Standards & Curriculum
- College & Career Readiness
- Educator Preparation, Recruitment & Retention

The Listening Tour was organized around exploring these topics and gaining perspectives and ideas in small discussion groups. Opportunities to give feedback were provided in a variety of ways:

1. Two, 30-minute discussion sessions
2. Written and online surveys on all four topics

Topic discussions were led by expert facilitators who work at the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) along with non-WVDE stakeholders. The facilitators provided background information on the topics and specific implications for future WVBE actions. Participants had opportunities to ask clarifying questions and discuss topics.

Overview of Participants
Survey respondents represented 52 of 55 West Virginia counties with three quarters of respondents (73%) identifying as educators. About four-in-ten identified as parents (42%) and community members (40%) respectively. Respondents could choose to identify in multiple categories. More than 300 people participated in the in-person forum discussions across six evenings in October.

The next page highlights four key themes that emerged from the forum discussions and survey responses.
Family Engagement
Counties, schools and educators need to find new ways to engage parents and caregivers who face challenges such as kinship care, unpredictable work schedules and navigating the foster care system.

Standards & Curriculum
Teachers need more collaborative planning time with their peers to enable and sustain professional learning.

College & Career Readiness
Expanded middle school career exploration and CTE opportunities are in high demand.

Educator Preparation, Recruitment & Retention
Traditional teacher recruitment is insufficient. Individual counties and the state as a whole must recruit in new ways to attract the next generation of West Virginia educators.
**OVERVIEW**

**Respondents represented:**

52 of 55 West Virginia counties

**Forum Locations & Number of Attendees**

- Mingo Central High School → 55
- Monongalia Technical Education Center → 76
- Greenbrier West High School → 43
- James Rumsey Technical Institute → 57
- Putnam Career and Technical Center → 32
- John Marshall High School → 45

**Total Number of Attendees**

308

**Who Attended?**

- Students
- Parents and caregivers
- Educators and other school staff
- Community members
- Representatives of higher education
- Advocacy groups
- Elected officials

**Responses to Written & Online Survey**

- Family Engagement: 335
- Standards & Curriculum: 390
- College & Career Readiness: 337
- Educator Preparation, Recruitment & Retention: 410
- Other Ideas: 178

**Total:**

1,650

For more about the Fall Listening Tour, visit wvde.us.
Family Engagement
“Interact with [families] in a way that makes it easier for them to engage with the schools. Offer them dinners and childcare and present information in a relaxing way. Give them access to things they need in return for their listening ears.”

**Background**

Family Engagement is authentically engaging families in the learning process and school decision-making so that they are effective partners who share the responsibility of the success of all students. Local School Improvement Councils (LSICs) are required per W. Va. Code §18-5A-2 and exist at each public school in West Virginia. Membership of the LSIC comprises teachers, school service personnel, family members, business, and community representatives. An election occurs annually for membership. LSICs allow educators, families, and community members to act collaboratively as catalysts for innovation in learning and school improvement.

Our core beliefs:

- All families have dreams for their children and want to see them succeed.
- All families have the capacity to support their children’s learning.
- When families are equipped with accurate, relevant and timely information, they are properly positioned to partner in support of their children’s learning.
- Families and school staff should be equal partners with support from the community.
- The responsibility for building positive family-school relationships rests primarily with school staff, especially school and county leaders.

Effective family-school partnerships lead to students who:

- Exhibit faster rates of literacy acquisition;
- Earn higher grades and test scores;
- Are promoted more and earn more credits;
- Adapt better to school and attend more regularly;
- Have better social skills and behavior; and graduate to go on to greater pursuits.

Effective family-school partnerships also lead to greater teacher retention and higher rates of job satisfaction.

**Implications for the State Board**

Effective family-school partnerships are essential for promoting student success and empowering families to support learning, leading to improved outcomes for all students. The WVBE will consider revisions to Policy 2200 - Local School Improvement Councils: Engaging Parents, Families, Students, Business and Community in Education, in an effort to establish better connections with families and communities and working relationships between local schools.

**What We Heard**

- Participants need resources to support student learning at home and opportunities for caregivers and community members to learn alongside students.
- Participants want clear and open communication between schools, families, and community.

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**What level of impact have you observed Local School Improvement Councils (LSICs) having on student learning at local public schools?**

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<td>Moderate Negative Impact</td>
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<td>No/Minimal Impact</td>
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<td>Moderate Positive Impact</td>
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<td>Large Positive Impact</td>
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What We Heard (continued)

- Many families were unaware of what LSICs are and the impact they may have on learning.

- Participants expressed concerns regarding the election of LSIC members and communications regarding meetings.

- Participants perceive that LSICs have no impact on student learning.

- To increase family engagement, participants desire to receive communications regarding upcoming events and student progress in a variety of ways.

- Participants want schools to provide family engagement opportunities at all programmatic levels. Currently, these opportunities seem to taper off after elementary school.

- To increase family involvement, participants request schools schedule events to accommodate those who work a traditional work schedule.

- Participants requested additional support for those providing kinship care.

- Participants believe childcare and transportation are significant barriers to family engagement.

- Participants feel that an open-door policy at the school is essential to engage families.

Key Theme

Counties, schools and educators need to find new ways to engage parents and caregivers who face challenges such as kinship care, unpredictable work schedules and navigating the foster care system.

Here

West Virginia ranks second among all states for the highest percentage of grandparents raising their grandchildren. All elementary and middle schools in Harrison County have a Healthy Grandfamilies support system. This includes work with kinship families.

There

Marion County, Indiana established a FosterEd program to support the learning and well-being of children in foster care. The program focuses on identifying an adult educational champion who instills high expectations and is an advocate for each child. The advocate is the core of an educational team of professionals to support the children.
Standards & Curriculum
Background
Standards are what we want students to know, understand and be able to do. Standards represent the goals for students set by the WVBE. Curriculum is how educators help students meet the goals set by the standards. Curricula for each subject are the intentional learning plans set by county boards of education, local schools, and/or individual educators.

- WVBE Policy 2510 - Assuring the Quality Of Education: Regulations for Education Programs, affords counties a great deal of flexibility around scheduling, time needed to master content standards, grading and personalizing required courses for individual students.
- Student Success Standards address the social and emotional well-being of students in grades pre-k – 12.
- In addition to stand-alone courses, the technology and computer science standards are to be integrated into all content areas in grades k-12.
- Counties have the flexibility to add additional minutes to their school day by programmatic level to build time in the calendar for professional learning.
- Counties have the ability to weight high school credits for advanced courses in addition to AP®.

Implications for the State Board
WVBE Policy 2510 outlines minimum requirements and provides flexibility to counties in programs of study for elementary, middle and high school students including graduation requirements. Currently, stakeholder meetings are being held to update and revise Policy 2510 to allow even more innovation, flexibility, and personalization of individual students’ education. The WVBE will consider adopting a revised policy in the coming months.

What We Heard
- Participants are generally unaware of current flexibility in policy to develop schedules or design instruction that provide for greater relevance and personalization for students.
- Participants demonstrated confusion between instructional materials, curriculum, and standards and who was responsible for designing and/or delivering each one.
- Participants spoke to supporting innovations to create greater engagement and relevance for students.
- Participants noted that time spent in school is only as impactful as the quality of instruction students are receiving during that time.
- Participants raised questions about changing school schedules and/or school calendars.
- Participants shared that students increasingly require more emotional and behavioral support than

“...it’s not standards we need to discuss. It’s the teacher quality and professional learning that really matter. Standards and curriculum can say whatever, but it won’t matter if teachers aren’t prepared and up-to-date.”

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TIME
(Teacher Hours per Week)

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From the Educator Voice Survey conducted in spring 2019
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about flexibility in local public schools?

Educators in local public schools have the flexibility to use innovative instructional practices to meet the needs of their students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided/Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>32%</td>
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Educators in local public schools have the flexibility to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of their students.

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>27%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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educators feel trained to provide and that these supports must be in place before academic learning can occur.

- Participants expressed the belief that students entering the classroom are not prepared to work at their current grade level.
- Participants support adding more third and fourth course options to high school course options, specifically in math and English language arts (ELA).
- Participants shared concerns that some standards do not vertically align well based on observations of student knowledge and skill gaps entering high school.
- Participants highlighted the influence of meaningful planning time and professional learning on the quality of instruction.
- Participants expressed the desire for teachers to engage in professional learning opportunities to become more effective at:
  - Designing and delivering instruction that addresses the current standards;
  - Designing differentiated instruction and accommodations that support all students in accessing grade-level standards; and
  - Addressing students’ mental and emotional health needs.

Key Theme

Teachers need more collaborative planning time with their peers to enable and sustain professional learning.

Here

St. Albans High School reimagined time during the school day to allow increased opportunities for teacher collaboration. Teachers at the school now have a period of time each day that they can meet and collaborate to improve and coordinate student instruction. Since this change, student outcomes at the school have moved in the right direction, attendance, and test scores have risen and dropout rates and discipline referrals have fallen.

There

In diverse contexts from the rural Midwest to Miami-Dade, research highlights the potential of investing time in teacher collaboration to improve student outcomes. Internationally, teachers in top-performing countries like Finland and Japan spend far more time in collaborative planning or lesson study than in the United States. Across all contexts, collaborative time must be well-structured to have the intended impact. School leaders and/or instructional coaches must often serve as active facilitators to build productive collaboration practices.
College & Career Readiness
Background

College- and Career-Readiness standards ensure that students exit high school prepared for success in a wide range of postsecondary options. West Virginia’s approach to college and career readiness builds on foundations established through a comprehensive approach to high-quality, early learning programming that extends through the middle and secondary learning years. To be college and career ready, students in West Virginia should exit high school with a complete understanding of the career opportunities available to them, the education necessary to be successful in their chosen pathway and a plan to attain their goals.

Students who participate in career technical education programs can earn:

- National industry credentials
- College dual credit
- State licenses
- On-the-job training
- Scholarships
- Apprenticeships
- Leadership and career-ready skills
- Governor’s Workforce Credential

Businesses that partner with career technical education programs can develop:

- Local industry focused curriculum
- Community mentorships
- Direct recruitment pipelines
- An industry certified, drug free workforce
- Awareness of career opportunities in specific businesses

Implications for the State Board

The WVBE and WVDE, in collaboration with county school systems and other state education and economic development partners, vow to change the economic landscape with an intense effort to ensure all students are well-prepared to transform the state’s economy. While continuing to serve the individual educational needs of students, the WVBE must sharpen its focus on developing a knowledgeable, skilled, and credentialed workforce capable of attracting and retaining businesses to grow the state’s economy.

What We Heard

- Participants want more access to career technical education (CTE) programs for middle school students as well as 9th and 10th graders.
- Participants want additional emphasis placed on career awareness at the middle school level.
- Participants expressed concerns that stereotypes exist regarding CTE centers and students.

Percent Who View As Worthwhile for Tax Dollars

- More CTE Offerings in high school: 94%
- Expansion of CTE to middle school: 83%

“Simulated Workplace is a great start for students...The Simulated Workplace program help[s] establish what it means to be in the career field today while students are in high school.”

From the Education Survey for Family and Community conducted in spring 2019
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>CTE/Vocational Education programs in local public schools provide valuable preparation for careers in related industries or professions.</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>I want to see CTE/Vocational Education programs expand, even if that means redirecting resources from other instructional areas.</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<td>CTE/Vocational Education programs in local public schools are aligned to West Virginia’s economic future/growth.</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<td>Local public schools provide students with adequate career readiness resources — outside of CTE/Vocational Education programs — that help prepare them for life after high school.</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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What We Heard (continued)

- To increase the number of students in CTE programs, participants want:
  - More CTE programs;
  - More slots available in programs; and
  - More CTE Centers.

- Participants desire equity in the number of and program offerings per county.

- Participants want balance between promoting and supporting students to engage in CTE and those preparing to enter the university setting.

- Participants are supportive of the initiatives and programs the WVDE has in place to increase access to CTE, including those through the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Middle School Empowerment Academies.

Key Theme

Expanded middle school career exploration and CTE opportunities are in high demand.

Here

In collaboration with the SRBE and the WVDE, teachers from pilot schools in Calhoun, Monongalia, and Monroe Counties are working to expand career exploration and simulated workplace into middle school. Though in the beginning stages, these Middle School Empowerment Academies are showing early signs of successfully engaging students through project-based units that integrate core subjects, career exploration, and social emotional learning standards.

There

Rigorous research from the Massachusetts Department of Education suggests high school CTE can have a large impact on the likelihood that students graduate on time. Building on the potential of high school CTE, North Carolina is expanding CTE to middle school using competitive grants to county school districts that require the evaluation of outcomes for participating students. Federal dollars (Perkins V) are available to help fund CTE expansion into middle school.
Educator Preparation, Recruitment & Retention
Background
West Virginia has nineteen colleges and universities offering traditional educator preparation programs (EPPs) designed to provide the knowledge and skills required for teacher candidates. Additionally, state-approved alternative certification programs are offered by West Virginia county school systems to assist individuals in transitioning their skills to meet areas of critical need and shortage.

Yearlong Residency (YLR)
Preparation programs across the state are currently developing YLR options to be available for freshmen starting in 2021. Partnerships among county boards of education, EPP providers, and school principals are key in implementing successful YLRs. A YLR is very different than traditional student teaching. YLR is a yearlong clinical experience that embeds content and pedagogy in a yearlong internship where the resident teacher is an integral part of the pre-k – 12 classroom, school, and community.

Accreditation
All West Virginia traditional EPPs are required to be nationally accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation.

Licensure Testing
There are three standardized testing requirements during the traditional teacher preparation program: Program Entry (basic skills), Prior to Student Teaching (content), and Program Completion (professional education). Endorsements may be added to a teaching license by taking a licensure test.

Recruitment and Retention
The teacher shortage is being addressed by providing multiple pathways into the profession and numerous recruiting strategies including alternative certification, teacher-in-residence, and the Teach West Virginia website at www.teachwv.com.

Key Theme
Traditional teacher recruitment is insufficient. Individual counties and the state as a whole must recruit in new ways to attract the next generation of West Virginia educators.

Here
Throughout West Virginia, 658 high school students are gaining exposure to opportunities in education through the Careers in Education Program of Study. In 2018-19, 312 students completed this program and 77.2% of program completers met the Technical Assessment Workforce Readiness level. Starting in 2018-19, Careers in Education program completers can take the Praxis Core assessment at no cost. In August 2019, an MOU was signed with Concord University to offer up to six college credits for Careers in Education program completers. Through Careers in Education, schools can feed their own pipeline of future educators.

There
Grow Your Own programs in states from South Carolina to California help hard-to-staff urban and rural districts to develop robust teacher pipelines by leveraging preferences among teachers to remain close to home. Many programs, including those in South Carolina, North Carolina and Texas, offer high school students dual credit opportunities to give them a head start on their college education preparation coursework.

Implications for the State Board
EPP enrollment continues to decline, teachers continue to leave the classroom, and shortages across West Virginia continue to grow. WVBE Policy 5100 - Approval of Educator Preparation Programs, in
How much do you agree or disagree that credentialed teachers should be able to add credentials to teach additional subject areas just by passing a standardized assessment such as the Praxis exam?

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How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

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conjunction with Policy 5202 - Minimum Requirements for the Licensure of Professional/Paraprofessional Personnel and Advanced Salary Classifications, sets the requirements for traditional EPPs and the licensure requirements for educators in West Virginia. Policy 5901 - Regulations for Alternative Certification Programs for the Education of Teachers sets the requirements for alternative certification EPPs. Currently, foundational components of educator preparation need to be reviewed to address changing demands on the profession and meet the needs of pre-k – 12 students.

What We Heard

· Participants believe new teachers require additional on-the-job training experiences prior to student teaching, including opportunities to collaborate with in-service teachers in designing instruction, integrating content and pedagogy, and learning effective classroom management processes.

· Participants recognized the need for new teachers to be better prepared for the reality of today’s classrooms and the effect that trauma has on student learning. They expressed support for extensive teacher training in implementing best practices for supporting the social emotional well-being and mental health of students.

· Participants support the concept of the YLR but had several questions and concerns regarding the model including, but not limited to:
  » How this model differs from the traditional student teaching
  » Hardship of an unpaid YLR
  » Lack of qualified cooperating teachers

· Participants expressed concerns about the costs associated with licensure testing.

· Participants firmly believe teacher recruitment and retention will continue to worsen until the public’s perception of the profession changes.

· Participants perceive a lack of time for teachers to engage in relevant professional learning opportunities for continuous improvement, to collaborate during the school day and to implement best practices in effective teaching (planning, designing, assessing, reflecting).

· Participants support the current option for licensed teachers to add an endorsement by taking a content exam. However, many stakeholders questioned the relevance of many of the licensure content assessments.

· Participants believe alternatively certified teachers lack adequate preparation and that inequities exist between the requirements for traditional route candidates versus those entering the profession on an alternative, provisional license.

· Participants want more options for pathways into the profession. They expressed support for funding and scholarships for students who enroll in a preparation program. They also encouraged the expansion of dual credit, education coursework at the community college, and cohort models in rural counties.

· Participants want the teaching profession as a career option in middle school providing opportunities for career exploration and experiential learning throughout middle and high school.

· Participants want opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles without leaving the classroom.