

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE

ON-SITE REVIEW REPORT

Philippi Middle School

January 2024



Office of Accountability



**West Virginia Board of Education
2023-2024**

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Introduction

The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) conducted a Special Circumstance Review of Philippi Middle School at the specific direction of the State Superintendent beginning on November 9, 2023, to examine compliance with the laws and policies affecting students' safety and well-being, discipline and administrative protocols, and academic achievement. Additionally, school improvement practices and the provision of special education services for students with disabilities were examined during this review. The review was conducted as the result of student safety concerns and a lack of adequate progress in the school improvement process.

Based on the WV Standards for Effective Schools, the review team conducted 44 classroom observations and teacher, student, and principal interviews. The WV Standards for Effective Schools describe seven common standards expected of schools to ensure high-quality education in engaging learning environments.

A team of WVDE staff members compiled the information collected during the onsite review and provided the findings outlined in this report. Several priority corrective actions are identified within this report. Additional technical assistance to address the findings in this report will be provided by the WVDE Office of District/School Improvement. This report will be presented to the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) at the January 10, 2024, meeting.

Onsite Review Team Members

Jonah Adkins, Director, Office of PK-12 Academic Support
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Alexandra Criner, Director, Office of Accountability
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Angela Urling, Coordinator, Office of Accountability
Tammy Varney, Coordinator, Office of Accountability
Whitney White, Coordinator, Office of Special Education

Background

Philippi Middle School, located in Barbour County, has a total enrollment of approximately 275 students in grades 5-8.

In the 2018-2019 school year, Philippi Middle School was one of 34 schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI). Identified schools represent the lowest-performing schools based on the identification categories outlined in West Virginia's Consolidated State Plan for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. As a CSI school, Philippi Middle School receives ongoing technical assistance from the WVDE, including an assigned school improvement coordinator to assist with creating and implementing a strategic improvement plan. Due to the COVID-19 national emergency, CSI schools received an additional one-year extension of funding and support. Of the 34 schools identified in 2018-2019, Philippi Middle School was the only school that did not exit CSI status after five years and was reidentified as a CSI School in 2022-2023.

Since the time of the school's reidentification, the leadership of the school and district have transitioned. The school has been under the leadership of multiple principals since the 2018-2019 school year. The current principal and superintendent assumed these roles in July 2023.

To ensure each county board of education provides a thorough and efficient education for its students, the WVDE annually reviews information submitted for each school system and issues an approval status. In the 2023 County Approval Status and Accreditation Report compiled by the WVDE Office of Accountability, Barbour County Schools was identified as **Needs Assistance** for the Finance County Operational Effectiveness indicator, **On Watch** for the ELA Achievement, Math Progress, and Attendance WV Balanced Scorecard indicators, and **Support** for the Math Achievement and On-Track to Graduation WV Balanced Scorecard indicators. The **Needs Assistance** identification indicates a lack of efficient operation by the district to ensure public funds are spent appropriately and for allowable purposes. Districts with this identification are required to submit an action plan to the WVDE to correct any deficiencies. **On Watch** identification describes one or more WV Balanced Scorecard indicators that do not meet standard. **Support** identification describes any WV Balanced Scorecard indicator that does not meet standard and does not show improvement for two consecutive years.

Focus Area 1: Student Safety and Well-Being

The areas denoted as requiring improvement were determined based on 44 classroom observations, interview comments, and analysis of school-level data.

NONCOMPLIANCE 1.1: At the time of the review, the school did not have a certified school counselor, nor was there a plan to provide temporary counseling services to students at the school. An itinerant school counselor job was posted on 11/30/23. *WVBE Policy 2315: Comprehensive School Counseling Program.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 1.2: The school did not have a Comprehensive School Counseling Program Plan at the time of the review. The lack of a Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP) leads to limited student access to social-emotional, mental health, and prevention services. *WVBE Policy 2315: Comprehensive School Counseling Program. 3.1 The CSCP is an integral part of the total school program and is aligned with the school's mission. 4.1.g. is coordinated by a certified school counselor as defined in W. Va. 126CSR136, WVBE Policy 5202, Minimal Requirements for the Licensure of Professional/ Paraprofessional Personnel and Advanced Salary Classifications and delivered collaboratively with school and community professionals.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 1.3: The team determined a social and emotional advisory system for student success was not implemented at the school. *WVBE Policy 2510.5.1.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 1.4: The School Crisis Response Plan was not developed by the statutorily required crisis response planning team members and contained outdated and incomplete information. *WVBE Policy 4373: Expected Behavior in Safe and Supportive Schools, W. Va. Code §18-9F-9, Crisis Response Plan.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 1.5: Upon arrival to a classroom for the first observation of the school day, a team member discovered a class of students left unsupervised. One student called the office and reported the teacher was not present in the classroom. The school secretary told the student the teacher was in the office meeting with the principal. The students continued to be left unsupervised until the teacher arrived several minutes later. *WVBE Policy 4373: Expected Behavior in Safe and Supportive Schools.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 1.6: The school facility was not identified as a focus area for the Special Circumstance Review. However, during the visit, the team determined the condition of the school facility presented cause for concern. Signs of water intrusion were present, including stained, sagging, and/or missing ceiling tiles. Air return grills were missing in the gymnasium. Several classrooms contained materials not relevant for instruction that minimized the space available for students. Mechanical/electrical rooms contained materials and supplies that limited access to electrical panels, and HVAC equipment, and presented a potential safety hazard. Electrical panels were unlocked and accessible to students and unauthorized personnel. The building was excessively dirty. Floors, windows, and walls were not clean, and a strong odor permeated the hallway and some classrooms. Insects were present in the room provided as a workspace for the team. During lunchtime, some students brought shoes for recess. Team members observed multiple pairs of shoes sitting on top of lunch tables while students were eating. After the lunch service, some students wiped tables and removed trash. *WVBE Policy 2510, Section 8.6.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 1.7: Several classroom doors were unlocked and opened with students present in the classroom. Fire and exit doors were observed propped open. Additionally, the team observed two large rocks inside the building near the main entrance doors. While the team did not observe the main entrance doors being propped open, it was evident to the team that the rocks were placed there for that purpose. *WVBE Policy 2510, Section 8.6.*

Focus Area 2: Instruction and Academic Achievement

The areas denoted as requiring improvement were determined based on 44 classroom observations, interview comments, and analysis of school-level data.

FINDING 2.1: Observation data collected during the on-site review did not support the use of multiple instructional strategies to provide equitable opportunities to learn. The team observed very limited examples of specially designed instruction and differentiation during classroom observations.

FINDING 2.2: The team noted a pattern of missed opportunities to use student performance to guide instructional decisions. Several examples of teachers providing answers rather than giving adequate wait time were recorded in observations. Where examples of formative assessment were observed, the team did not observe changes to instruction based on the formative assessment feedback.

FINDING 2.3: The team noted student engagement in learning was not pervasive in classrooms. During one observation, the team member noted some students had completed the assignment (a spelling packet) the day before and had to sit and wait for other students to finish the assignment, rather than being offered enrichment activities or other learning experiences.

FINDING 2.4: The team determined based on interview comments that staff member absences and a lack of substitute personnel negatively impacted the school's operation in multiple domains. The protocol for a teacher's absence without a substitute currently requires the principal or assistant principal to find coverage for the absent teacher's classes by asking other teachers to give up their planning time and/or Professional Learning Community (PLC) time. Students whose classes are covered by multiple teachers may not have the same access to rigorous, standards-based instruction as when their teacher is present or replaced with a qualified substitute teacher. Additionally, reduced planning time and PLC time have the potential to negatively impact the instruction in other classrooms. Three teachers were absent without substitutes on the day of the on-site review. In one classroom with coverage teachers, the team observed high levels of student disengagement, disruptive behavior, and assignments far below grade-level standards.

FINDING 2.5: Teacher and principal interview comments suggested that utilizing more project-based learning experiences is a goal. However, students conveyed most of their assignments are worksheets and paperwork. Most instructional activities observed met the criteria for Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Level 1: Recall.

Focus Area 3: Special Education

Coordinators from the WVDE Office of Special Education conducted 15 Individualized Education Program (IEP) file reviews utilizing established compliance monitoring protocols. The county special education director acknowledged clerical and record-keeping responsibilities needed to be revised. Of the 15 student files reviewed, two were reviewed for IEP amendments. Both were compliant with the IEP amendment criteria.

NONCOMPLIANCE 3.1: Six of the 15 files reviewed for Prior Written Notice were non-compliant due to sections of the prior written notice form left blank or incomplete. *IDEA §300.305(e)(3), 126 CSR 16-Ch. 5§1(C)(2).*

NONCOMPLIANCE 3.2: Eight of the 15 files reviewed for the 8-day Notice were non-compliant due to the parent not receiving an 8-day notification or the parent not waiving the 8-day notification. *IDEA 300.322(a)(1), 126 CSR 16-Ch. 10 §4.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 3.3: Of 15 files reviewed for invited members, six were non-compliant due to not listing invited members on the meeting notice. *IDEA 300.322 (b) (1) (i), 126 CSR 16-Ch. 10 §4.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 3.4: Of 14 files reviewed for procedural safeguards, seven were non-compliant. It was not documented if procedural safeguards were attached to the meeting notice or sent earlier in the year. *IDEA 300.504, CSR 16-Ch. 10 §2(B).*

NONCOMPLIANCE 3.5: Fourteen of the 15 files reviewed for supplementary services location were non-compliant due to routinely using “all” as a location rather than “GEE – General Education Environment” for classroom supplementary services. *IDEA 300.42, 107, 117, 126 CSR 16-Ch.5§(2)(G).*

NONCOMPLIANCE 3.6: Four of the 15 files reviewed for supplementary services extent and frequency were non-compliant due to inadequate detail on when the service should take place. *IDEA 300.42, 107,117, 126 CSR 16 – Ch. 5 §(2)(G).*

NONCOMPLIANCE 3.7: Of 15 files reviewed for the extent of participation with non-exceptional students, four were non-compliant due to the section being left blank. *IDEA 300.114, 126 CSR 16- Ch. 5 §2 (J).*

NONCOMPLIANCE 3.8: Of nine files reviewed for eligibility, four were non-compliant due to no parental consent for evaluation/reevaluation available to review and a lack of parental input included in the file. *IDEA 300.300, 126 CSR 16 – Ch. 3, Section 3(B).*

NONCOMPLIANCE 3.9: The team noted multiple hard copy files were missing information that was present in the uploaded files. The electronic file uploads and the hard copy files at the school should contain the same information. *WVBE Policy 2419, Ch. 10, Section 10.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 3.10: Interview comments indicated a student who transferred from out-of-state was not provided services comparable to those described in the previously held IEP in a timely manner. *WVBE Policy 2419, Chapter 5, Section 4. B.*

Focus Area 4: Discipline and Administrative Protocols

The areas denoted as requiring improvement were determined based on 44 classroom observations, interview comments, and analysis of school-level data.

Philippi Middle School's reported disciplinary incidents via ZoomWV in the 2022-2023 school year accounted for 41% of the incidents in the district's seven schools. At the time of the review, which occurred in the second nine-week period of the 2023-2024 school year, the reported disciplinary incidents at Philippi Middle School accounted for 43.63% of the total disciplinary incidents in the district's seven schools. Students described fights, arguments, and yelling as common occurrences. Further, students mentioned teachers frequently yell at students as a response to misbehavior. Some students communicated lunch detention is not an effective consequence because it is viewed as fun by students.

NONCOMPLIANCE 4.1: The team determined the administrative procedures for investigating, reporting, responding, and determining consequences are inadequate to maintain an orderly and safe environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Neither the principal nor the assistant principal articulated a clear and consistent administrative protocol for responding to reports of inappropriate behavior. *WVBE Policy 4373, Chapter 2, Section 1.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 4.2: The team noted the assistant principal's responsibilities include collaborating with the principal regarding disciplinary actions, supervising lunch detention, supervising students during in-school suspension, and maintaining work orders for students' technology devices. The assistant principal has not been given the autonomy to respond to disciplinary referrals without conferring with the principal. *WVBE Policy 5800, 5.2.g.3.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 4.3: The administrative team's current approach to leadership and division of responsibilities does not support effective instructional leadership. The distributed leadership model at the time of the review did not allow the principal to prioritize time and efforts to improve learning. Interview comments indicated the principal reserves time each day to visit classrooms, but the principal's time is often monopolized with discipline, parent meetings, and other administrative responsibilities. The assistant principal did not visit classrooms for instructional monitoring or teacher evaluations. Interview comments indicated when students are assigned to in-school suspension, the assistant principal must balance providing direct supervision of these students with other administrative responsibilities. *WVBE Policy 5800 5.2.c.1, 5.2.c.5.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 4.4: Before the visit, WVDE personnel received complaints from concerned parents regarding a change to the bathroom policy. These parents described situations in which students had accidents due to a lack of bathroom access, leading to bullying situations. The principal addressed this change during interviews, stating the decision was made to modify bathroom times for seventh-grade students only. The principal described five times daily in which students have full access to the bathroom and clarified that no student should be denied the opportunity to leave class to go to the bathroom. Interview comments suggested the policy was not communicated thoroughly to parents, students, and teachers. Students reported the seventh grade is "on lockdown" and are not allowed bathroom access except for the first five minutes of class, breakfast, lunch, recess, and the end of the day. An analysis of discipline referral data from ZoomWV at the time of the review revealed there had been three reported incidents occurring in the bathroom, one of which involved a seventh-grade student. During the same period, however, there were 563 incidents recorded in classroom locations. *WVBE Policy 5800, 5.2.f.4.*

NONCOMPLIANCE 4.5: At the time of the review, interview comments indicated a student had exhibited behavior defined as Level 4 in *WVBE Policy 4373: Expected Behavior in Safe and Supportive Schools* and had not been suspended from school according to appropriate disciplinary procedures. Level 4 behaviors are Safe Schools Act behaviors defined in W. Va. Code 18A-5-1 and 18A-f-1a, including battery on a school employee, felony, illegal substance-related behaviors, and possession and/or use of a dangerous weapon and require mandatory out-of-school suspension by the principal and mandatory expulsion for a period of not less than twelve (12) consecutive months by the county board of education for possession of a deadly weapon, battery on a school employee, or sale of a narcotic drug. *W. Va. Code §18A-5-1a.*

Priority Corrective Actions

The onsite review team determined the following immediate corrective actions. The Office of District/ School Improvement will identify and prioritize additional corrective actions necessary to address the entirety of the findings in this report.

Corrective Action	Responsible Party
Assign rotating coverage from counselors at other schools or from within community partnerships for emergency social-emotional care to students in need.	Central Office Leadership
Hire a school counselor with appropriate credentials/certification.	Central Office Leadership
Update School Crisis Prevention and Response Plan.	Principal and Central Office Leadership
Retrain staff on supervision protocols and expectations to ensure students are not left unattended.	Principal and Central Office Leadership
Utilize data to implement a social and emotional advisory system.	Principal and Central Office Leadership
Discontinue the practice of propping open exterior doors. Hold accountable any staff member who props open exterior doors or allows this practice to occur.	All staff
Develop and implement a disciplinary matrix to ensure fair, firm, and consistent responses to student behaviors can be applied in a timely and efficient manner. Communicate the disciplinary plan to parents/guardians. Coordinate with the Local School Improvement Council (LSIC) in the development of the disciplinary matrix.	Principal, Assistant Principal, Superintendent, and Stakeholders
Revisit expectations for the division of administrative responsibilities to allow instructional leadership to be prioritized.	Central Office Leadership

Corrective Action	Responsible Party
Collaborate with the WVDE Office of Special Education to plan and implement improvements to IEP procedures and record-keeping, and correct identified noncompliance and other findings. Ensure staff are trained and held accountable for implementing standards-based IEPs.	Special Education Director and Principal
Fulfill existing contract with Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) to provide support for instructional leadership. Implement directives and feedback from the assigned WVDE School Improvement Coordinator to create and implement strategic improvement practices.	Principal and Superintendent
Develop expectations and checklists for safety and cleanliness. Ensure custodian(s) are trained and monitored. Contact the WVDE Office of School Facilities to assist with evaluating air quality within the building.	Central Office Staff and Principal

Appendix A: Philippi Middle School 2023 Proficiency Rates

Figure 1

ZoomWV SY2023 Math Proficiency Rates: Philippi Middle School, Barbour County, and State Comparison

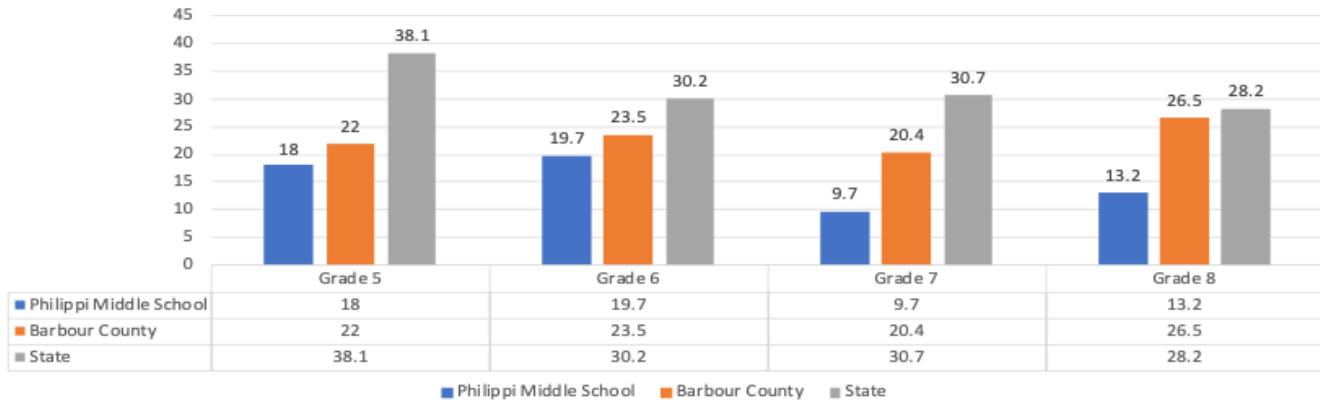
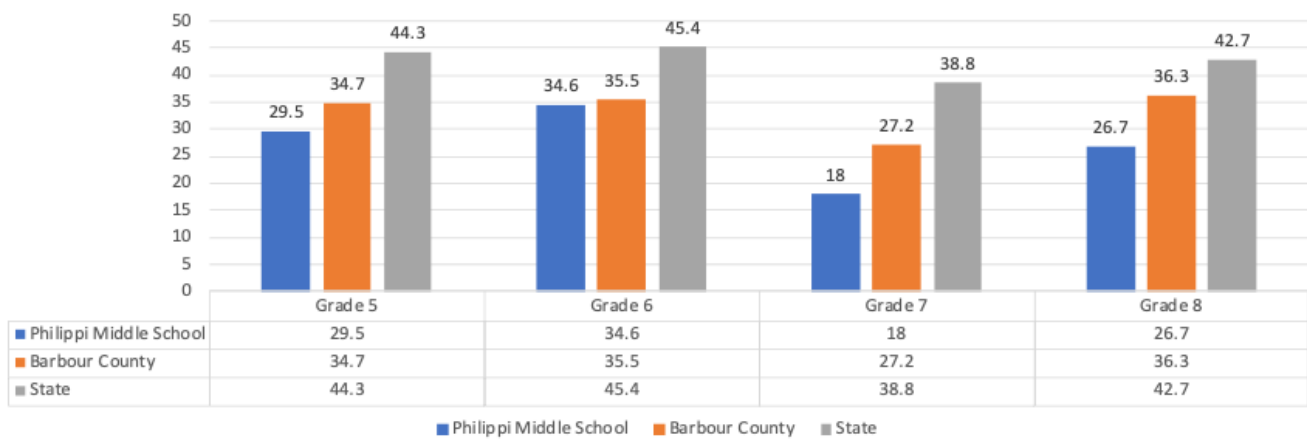


Figure 2

ZoomWV SY2023 ELA Proficiency Rates: Philippi Middle School, Barbour County, and State Comparison





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