

Short Line School Special Circumstance Review

Wetzel County Schools



At the request of the Wetzel County Board of Education, the Office of Support and Accountability conducted a Special Circumstance Review of Short Line School, March 1-2, 2022, to obtain specific information regarding the school's adherence to the West Virginia Standards for Effective Schools.

Short Line School is located in Reader, WV and serves an enrollment of 338 students in grades Pre-K-8. The school was identified during the 2017-2018 school year 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 Accountability Plan.

The school receives ongoing technical assistance from the WVDE, including an assigned school improvement coordinator to assist in improvement processes. Since the time of Short Line's identification, leadership of the school has changed three times with the current principal assuming the role in 2019. The current superintendent began leading the district at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year.

During the two-day onsite visit to Short Line School, the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) Team conducted 69 classroom observations, 27 teacher interviews, and interviewed the administration at the school and county.

Focus Area 1: Clear and Focused Mission

- » **FINDING 1.1:** Based on interview comments and review of the school strategic plan, the Team determined shared beliefs and values as described in the school strategic plan are not pervasively evident. *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 3.1*
- » **FINDING 1.2:** Nearly all staff mentioned improving attendance and student achievement as the current areas of focus for the school; however, few staff members articulated specific targets or identified action steps for improvement. *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 3.1*

Focus Area 2: Instructional Leadership

- » **FINDING 2.1:** Multiple staff members cited examples of information, such as changes to the school calendar, not being communicated promptly, and causing frustration among staff members. *WVBE Policy 5800, Section 5.2.i.i*
- » **FINDING 2.2:** The Team noted a division exists between the elementary and middle school programmatic levels, and interview responses suggested increased schoolwide communication, especially concerning the rationale behind administrative decision making, may address this division. *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 3.1.b*
- » **FINDING 2.3:** Minimal opportunities for students to gain and utilize leadership skills were observed by the Team or described during interviews. *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 3.1.b*
- » **FINDING 2.4:** Through observations and consistency of interview comments, the Team noted a lack of focused principal support for ensuring the implementation of instructional strategies schoolwide. When asked to describe the process for providing instructional support, the principal did not articulate a process for instructional coaching, conducting walkthrough observations, or providing feedback to improve instruction.
- » **NONCOMPLIANCE 2.1:** Based on the consistency of interview comments from multiple respondents, the Team determined the school leadership team does not utilize the School Improvement Process as described in *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 8.2*.

Focus Area 3: High Expectations for Success

- » **FINDING 3.1:** Based on the consistency of interview responses and classroom observations, the Team determined a strong sense of teacher efficacy is not evident schoolwide. Throughout the visit, staff frequently cited students' low motivation and apathy, even when the information was not directly relevant to the question asked. *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 3.1.c*

Focus Area 4: Positive and Safe Environment

- » **FINDING 4.3:** Based on interview responses, conflicting interpretations of the school climate and culture exist among faculty and staff. *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 3.1.d*

Focus Area 5: Equitable Opportunities to Learn and Effective Instruction

- » **NONCOMPLIANCE 5.1:** Based on the Team's analysis of data gleaned during classroom observations, the Team determined providing rigorous, standards-based instruction is not a pervasive practice schoolwide. *WVBE Policy 2510, 7.1; WVBE Policy 2322, Section 3.1.e*

Focus Area 6: Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

- » **FINDING 6.1:** While formative assessment or checking for understanding was observed during nearly sixty percent of classroom observations, the Team did not observe changes to instruction to address the results of formative assessments. *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 3.1.f*

Focus Area 7: Family and Community Partnerships

- » **FINDING 7.1:** Some staff expressed families in the school community do not want to be engaged in shared responsibility for student success. *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 3.1.g*
- » **FINDING 7.2:** Parents expressed effective communication is not a pervasive practice at the school. *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 3.1.g*

Focus Area 8: Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Process

- » **FINDING 8.1:** Due to leadership changes, activities funded through the CSI grant were not consistently monitored by central office staff for effective implementation. *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 7.1.c.5*
- » **FINDING 8.2:** Based on the evidence collected during the onsite visit, as well as school improvement data examined, the Team determined the school improvement process was not followed with fidelity. The Team noted a pervasive lack of follow-through on the goals and recommendations outlined in diagnostic reports and a lack of focus on established priorities. *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 8.2.c*

Focus Area 9: Special Education

- » **FINDING 9.1:** Students with disabilities at Short Line School have a higher rate of chronic absenteeism than students without disabilities. The rate of chronic absenteeism for students with disabilities at Short Line School exceeds the statewide average for students with disabilities. *WVBE Policy 2322, Section 8.2.a*
- » **NONCOMPLIANCE 9.2:** Based on interview responses, students with 504 plans and IEPs do not have the same opportunity to participate in career exploration as other students. *WVBE Policy 2510, Section 5.1; WVBE Policy 2419, Chapter 1; The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Public Law 108-446*
- » **NONCOMPLIANCE 9.3:** The Team analyzed a sample of ten, randomly selected special education files. Of those ten, seven (70%) had at least one incorrect service. *WVBE Policy 2419, Chapter 5, Section 2.G*
- » **NONCOMPLIANCE 9.4:** Case management analysis revealed three students who are not being case managed by an appropriately credentialed professional. *WVBE Policy 2419, Chapter 6, Section 4*