

West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

June 2022 Update



Student Care

Student care has been a primary focus of the on-site support provided by the intervention team. As a result, a system of procedures and safety measures has been established to ensure the safety and well-being of all WVSDDB students. Improvement was noted by the Team in the areas of collaboration, response to student mental health needs, and the residential environment. Continued collaboration between residential and instructional staff and with the WVDE Technical Assistance Center for Accessibility and Transitions (TACAT) were recommended next steps. Additionally, the Team recommends expanding the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) program, utilizing WWEIS Discipline Management System to document behavior interventions occurring in all areas of the campus.

Instruction

The WVDE Office of Elementary Learning has provided support for instruction at the elementary programmatic level. Team members noted significant progress in the area of instruction, especially in the elementary classrooms. Support and collaboration from the WVDE Office of Career and Technical Education (CTE) has resulted in the highly effective implementation of CTE programming. Safe and appropriate student behavior was exhibited during the visit. Classroom observation data collected during the visit confirms the effective use of instructional time in most classrooms; however, the Team noted most instructional activities represent a low depth of knowledge and are not aligned to grade level standards. Recommended next steps include continuing the work of establishing high expectations schoolwide, prioritizing grade level, standards-based instruction, and school leaders providing effective instruction through frequent observation and feedback. Additionally, the Team recommended a co-taught learning environment be implemented when possible to provide multiple means of communication, such as American Sign Language (ASL) and braille.

Special Education

Professional learning was provided by WVDE staff in the area of case management. During the review visit, it was determined all students were appropriately case managed. A tracking system has been implemented to ensure all plans, evaluations, and meetings are completed in accordance with policy. Fifteen student special education files were reviewed for fifty areas of compliance with WVBE Policy 2419, with significant improvement in compliance over previous years. With support from WVDE, an updated admission process has been established to ensure students meet admission criteria and to comply with the requirements of W. Va. Code. Recommended next steps include maintaining and refining the newly established processes for ensuring IEP and evaluation compliance, providing additional professional learning opportunities, and participating in networking and collaboration with special education directors statewide.

Facilities

Management of WVSDDB facilities is coordinated through the WVDE Office of School Facilities to ensure timely correction of all work orders and any maintenance and construction projects. Facility improvements have been made to residential areas, including installation of cameras in the dorm wings, each hallway, and the cafeteria. Enhanced safety procedures have been implemented and refined. An amendment to the school's Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan (CEFP) was approved by the WVBE in May 2022. The Team recommended proceeding with the planned collaboration with WVDE CTE staff to involve statewide CTE programs in designing and construction further improvements to residential areas. Additionally, the Team recommended continuation of the established partnership with WVDE to improve and maintain facilities while implementing the approved CEFP.

Transportation

The collaboration with WVDE staff has resulted in the establishment of procedures to ensure student personal and medical needs are communicated and documented. There are currently three local bus routes operated daily, all within the appropriate ride times; however, one home-going bus is still transporting a student for seven hours. Preventive maintenance is current for the bus fleet, and a master schedule of maintenance has been developed to allow all staff access to this information. The Team recommended continued evaluation and revision of home-going bus routes to reduce ride time when possible, as well as scheduling and training transportation aides to ensure adequate staffing of qualified personnel.

Financial Indicators and Purchasing Compliance

A Finance Manager employed by the WVDE serves as the Chief School Business Officer, overseeing and managing all financial decisions and transactions. This collaboration has resulted not only in greater compliance with policy and W. Va. Code, but also a more favorable financial outlook for the school. All overtime payments are monitored by the payroll supervisor, who ensures employees have received approval prior to working overtime. All employee degree classifications and supplemental payments are monitored and were reviewed to ensure correct payment. WVDE staff required the school to begin following all requirements for purchasing and to use the WV OASIS program for all purchases after September 1, 2021. Recommended next steps include: a thorough review of school policies in the area of purchasing and finance with revisions as necessary; periodic review of budget information and expectations with each department at the school; and creation of a comprehensive budget report to be presented to the State Superintendent of Schools and WVBE at the conclusion of each fiscal year.

Personnel

Continued collaboration with the WVDE Office of Legal Services has resulted in the correction of all concerns noted during the initial review. Personnel have been hired to oversee payroll and accounts payable. Additionally, staffing adjustments made during prior school years have resulted in avoiding any reduction of force during the 2021-2022 staffing season. WVSDB Human Resources staff have collaborated with WVDE staff to begin the process of identifying, advertising, and hiring necessary positions for the 2022-2023 school year. The Team recommended continued pursuit of innovative strategies to address recruitment and retention as well as a thorough review of policies related to hiring, licensure, certification, communication, and employment.

Leadership

The leadership structure of the school has been reorganized to reflect the consolidation of the two previous schools. The Dean of Students is tasked with the supervision of the school and residence halls and the primary responsibility of the principal is to serve as the instructional leader of the school. Most evaluation activities were completed within the timeline required in WVBE Policy 5202. A school leadership team has been established and meets with the State Superintendent of Schools periodically. The number of documented instructional walkthroughs has increased over previous years. Some improvements in the area of communication were noted. Recommended next steps include continued improvement in the frequency of walkthrough observations and the instructional feedback provided to teachers, expanding the work of the school leadership team, and establishing protocols for reciprocal communication. Through collaboration with WVDE, school leadership will continue to be supported through mentoring and participation in the WV School Leadership Network.

Additional Findings

Based on the findings in the previous report, the WVDE Office of Support and Accountability provided support in the area of mission and vision development prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year. However, during the review visit, a clear and focused mission was not evident to the Team. Additionally, some teachers shared they continue to question some students' eligibility for attending the school. The Team recommended school leadership communicate the revised admissions process to ensure all staff are aware of the criteria for admission to the school. Further, the Team recommended school leadership frequently reinforce the expectation that all students enrolled at the school must have equitable access to high-quality instruction. It is also recommended school leadership work to prioritize the development, promotion, and execution of a clear and focused schoolwide mission.