

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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**New Data Collection Title:**     **Assuring the Quality of Education: Digital Equity**

**Background:**

The West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) and West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) share a vision of providing an effective education system that supports high quality teaching and learning in public schools, and ensuring equal educational opportunities are available to each student. Components of an effective education system that provides such opportunities include, but are not limited to: high quality programs of study, including exploring career development opportunities; student support programs; personnel; facilities; instructional resources; supplies; equipment; technology integration; and effective instructional practices (see W. Va. 126CSR42, WVBE Policy 2510, Assuring the Quality of Education: Regulations for Education Programs). Furthermore, among a set of Standards for Effective Schools to accomplish this vision is to provide *Equitable Opportunities to Learn and Effective Instruction* (see W. Va. 126CSR12, WVBE Policy 2322, West Virginia System of Support and Accountability). Each county school district is charged with providing the necessary resources to ensure that students attain high standards of performance, with technology explicitly identified as a tool to help achieve high standards of performance in all schools.

Public schools in West Virginia are well equipped to integrate technology into the delivery of instructional programs—as long as students and educators are in school buildings. Educators have long worried about the “homework gap”—the difficulty some students may experience in trying to complete school assignments, projects, or homework with limited access to the Internet and technology resource in their homes. The transition to remote learning in the spring of 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, revealed in stark terms that in West Virginia a digital divide exists that separates the technological haves and have-nots. The inequities in access to high-speed internet and appropriate devices on which school work—including remote and virtual learning—can be done, and teachers’ limited knowledge about students’ technological circumstances in the home and their consequent ability to complete work virtually, present significant challenges to providing equal and equitable opportunities to learn. In addition to the impediment to remote and virtual learning, these inequities limited the ability to identify and provide services to support the well-being of students and their families.

To successfully carry out its responsibilities to ensure equitable access to high quality educational opportunities, the WVDE must begin collecting new data elements within the West Virginia Education Information System (WVEIS) about individual students relating to equitable access to technology.

**Proposal:**

The WVDE proposes collecting four new data elements. These elements relate to students’ ability to access technologies adequate to support full and equitable participation in public educational opportunities on a full-time basis or during episodes when virtual and/or remote learning is necessary. The WVDE proposes collecting information about

- Student access to devices suitable for virtual and/or remote learning
- Whether students have sole use of devices for learning or whether such devices are shared among family members
- The type of internet services (e.g., cable, DSL, fiber, satellite, etc.) or internet connectivity available in a household
- The quality of internet access/connectivity to support virtual and/or remote learning in the home.

**Impact:**

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic the WVBE and WVDE have identified three highly interdependent priorities as the State enters to 2020-2021 school year and progresses into recovery beyond:

- Physical and social-emotional well-being of students
- Equity and access to technology, supports, and resources
- Closing the achievement gap

Adopting the proposed data elements will ensure that the WVBE, the WVDE, and county school districts have critical information needed to more effectively deliver supports to educators, students and their families in service to these priorities for providing effective public education system.

**List of Stakeholders**

The WVDE Data Governance Committee and other stakeholders internal and external to the department have reviewed this proposed data collection and have determined that it is an appropriate request to submit to the West Virginia Board of Education for review and consideration.

**Internal WVDE Stakeholders**

Nanette Argabrite, Director  
WVDE Office of West Virginia Education Information System

Jan Barth, Assistant Superintendent  
WVDE Division of Teaching & Learning

Susan Beck, Director  
WVDE Office of Special Education & Student Support

Michelle Blatt, Deputy Superintendent  
West Virginia Department of Education

Gloria Burdette, Manager  
WVDE Division of Teaching & Learning

Tim Conzett, Technology Officer  
WVDE Office of Data Management & Information Systems

Alexandra Criner, Coordinator  
WVDE Office of School Improvement

Monica DellaMea, Director  
WVDE Office of Early & Elementary Learning

Teresa Hammond, Coordinator  
WVDE Office of Early & Elementary Learning

Georgia Hughes-Webb, Manager  
WVDE Office of Data Management & Information Systems

Deborah Justice, Program Assistant  
WVDE Office of Middle & Secondary Learning

Erika Klose, Coordinator  
WVDE Office of Middle & Secondary Learning

Derek Lambert, Coordinator  
WVDE Office of Middle & Secondary Learning

Julia Benincosa Legg, Coordinator  
WVDE Office of Data Analysis & Research

Stacey Losh, Coordinator  
WVDE Office of Leadership Support

Robert McCoy, Coordinator  
WVDE Office of Infrastructure & Network Operations

Mark Moore, Coordinator  
WVDE Office of Infrastructure & Network Operations

Brenda Morris, Coordinator  
WVDE Office of Education Information Systems

Cynthia Sorsaia, Coordinator  
WVDE Office of Student Support & Well-being

Lori Whitt, Coordinator  
WVDE Office of Infrastructure & Network Operations

Andy Whisman, Director  
WVDE Office of Data Analysis & Research

Aaron Williams, Coordinator  
WVDE Office of Infrastructure & Network Operations

Joey Wiseman, Director  
WVDE Office of Middle & Secondary Learning

## **External Stakeholders**

### **County Superintendents**

Richard Duncan, Superintendent  
Roane County Schools

Blaine Hess, Superintendent  
Jackson County Schools

William Hosaflook, Superintendent  
Wood County Schools

Jeffery Kelley, Superintendent  
Lincoln County Schools

Kimberly Miller, Superintendent  
Ohio County Schools

C. David Price, Superintendent  
Raleigh County Schools

Stephen Wotring, Superintendent  
Preston County Schools

**County Staff/Data and Technology Experts**

Jeremy Baisden, Coordinator, Information Systems  
Cabell County Schools

Dawn Gessel, Director of Information Systems  
Putnam County Schools

Thomas Hanson, Director of Technology  
Boone County Schools

David Kenney, Director of Information Technology  
Berkeley County

Jim Mahan, Director of Secondary Education  
Jackson County Schools

Hilary Ramsey, Director of Technology and Communication  
Randolph County

David Soltesz, WVEIS Coordinator, School Safety, and Computer Applications Trainer  
Marshall County Schools

Leah Sparks, Executive Director of Technology  
Kanawha County Schools

Bobbie Tuggle, Technology Director  
Monroe County

Courtney Whitehead, Director of Assessment, Accountability, and School Counseling  
Monongalia County Schools

**Proposed Data Collection:  
Assuring the Quality of Education: Digital Equity  
Description and Information**

Four elements not already existing within the data system will be collected to ensure accurate and adequate information regarding student access to technologies enabling equal and equitable educational opportunities. Proposed new components and their descriptions follow.

**Item Name & Definition:**

The WVDE proposes to collect information about individual student access to devices suitable for virtual and/or remote learning, and the availability and quality of broadband internet services at each student household to support virtual and/or remote learning. The following four items will be used to determine these factors.

- *Digital Devices Available to Student:* This element is defined as the devices suitable for virtual and/or remote learning to which a student has access. Suitable devices in this context include laptops, tablets, Chromebooks, or similar hardware having necessary software/applications installed that are compatible with virtual and/or remote learning protocols provided by students' respective county school districts. Not included are smartphones, which are not sufficient for full and high-quality participation in remote learning, and school- or county-provided devices. It is expected that this element will include a list of all device types to which a student may have access, including devices such as the following:
  - Desktop computer
  - Laptop computer
  - Chromebook
  - Tablet
  - Other
  - None
  
- *Student Sole or Shared Use of Devices:* This data element is defined as an indication of whether a student has sole personal use of any device suitable for remote learning or whether use of digital devices must be shared with others in the household. It is expected that this element will include three primary response options:
  - Personal/sole use of at least one suitable digital device
  - Shared use of all digital devices in household
  - No access to digital device at home
  
- *Household Access to Broadband Internet Services:* This item is defined as the type of access to broadband internet services (e.g., cable, DSL, fiber, satellite, etc.) in to support virtual and/or remote learning in a household. It is expected that this element will be coded categorically to indicate the type(s) of broadband internet services are available in the home. Response options may include the following:
  - Cable
  - Fiber
  - Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)
  - Satellite
  - Dial-up

- Personal hotspot/smartphone
  - Other type (including unknown service type)
  - Broadband available in area, but household not connected
  - No broadband access available
- *Quality of Household Internet Service:* This item is defined as the quality or acceptability of household internet services to support virtual and/or remote learning for all students in the home. To determine quality, school or county staff may ask students or families to self-report or may ask a proxy question such as, “Can you stream a video on your primary learning device without interruption?” Indicators of internet service quality may include the following
    - Good Quality: internet access is of sufficient quality to fully support all virtual and/or remote learning activities
    - Acceptable Quality: internet access is adequate to support most virtual and/or remote learning activities
    - Inadequate Quality: Internet access is not adequate to support virtual and/or remote learning
    - None: no internet access available in household
    - Open Response Option: Internet speed as tested/reported by family members

**When and Where the Information will be Collected:**

Information about students’ access to devices and access to broadband internet services will be collected through direct report by county district and/or school staff at a single point in time during the school year, most likely upon the opening of school to enable administrators and educators to use the information in planning discussions and decisions for the year. The information will be entered by county district and/or school staff into an appropriate application within the WVEIS. As appropriate and feasible, parent surveys may also be employed to allow parents/guardians to self-report data that will be loaded to and stored in the data system. If this proposal is approved, it is expected that these data may be collected beginning in the spring of 2021 or the fall of the 2021-2022 school year.

**Description of the Legal Authority, Purpose, and Use of the Information:**

Collection of this information is permitted by state policy (W. Va. 126CSR42, WVBE Policy 2510, *Assuring the Quality of Education: Regulations for Education Programs*) to ensure the provision of a thorough and efficient system of education, specifically with regard to an appropriately demanding curriculum for all students with emphasis on programs of study aligned with rigorous standards, learning skills and technology tools. More and more, the latter has become integral to ensuring full and equitable student access to the system of education they deserve.

As with other information collected by the county school districts and schools, students’ access to devices and access to broadband internet services will not be revealed publicly and will not be used for any purpose other than the provision and administration of educational services. If used as justification to leverage or secure resources necessary for the provision and administration of educational services, the information will be used in an aggregate format that will ensure no student can be personally identified. Student privacy and the security of student information will be maintained pursuant to applicable federal and state regulations, to include (but not be limited to) the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), WVBE Policy 4350 (*Procedures for the Collection, Maintenance, and Disclosure of Student Data*), and the Student Data Accessibility, Transparency, and Accountability Act (W. Va. Code § 18-2-5h).

**NEW DATA ELEMENT:  
Assuring the Quality of Education: Digital Equity**

**COMMENT PERIOD ENDS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMENT RESPONSE FORM**

**NOTICE:** Comments, as submitted, shall be filed with the West Virginia Secretary of State's Office and open for public inspection and copying for a period of not less than five years.

The following form is provided to assist those who choose to comment on the proposed new electronic data collection of *Digital Equity* data. Additional sheets may be attached, if necessary.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check the box below that best describes your role.

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School System Superintendent | <input type="checkbox"/> School System Staff        | <input type="checkbox"/> Principal         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Support Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Service Personnel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Family                | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Member           | <input type="checkbox"/> Business/Industry |

COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<b>Digital Equity: Digital Devices Available to Student.</b>
<b>Digital Equity: Student Sole or Shared Use of Devices.</b>
<b>Digital Equity: Household Access to Broadband Internet Services.</b>

COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<b>Digital Equity: Quality of Household Internet Service.</b>

Please direct all comments to:

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1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305-0330  
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