West Virginia Legislative Priorities for Public Education:
A Collaboratively Developed and Collectively Supported Action Agenda

“Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.”

- John F. Kennedy
**General Support**

**Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB)**

*We believe resolving the OPEB issue is essential to maintaining a thorough and efficient education system* (*Pauley v. Bailey*). On July 13, 2011 the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) filed an amicus brief, in support of the local county boards of education, with State Supreme Court. The WVDE (West Virginia Department of Education) and WVBE support action which resolves this matter and relieves the counties of this fiscal burden for personnel funded through the state aid funding formula. If this issue is not resolved, the financial burden impacts county school systems’ ability to uphold the tenets of the Recht decision of 2002.

**Educator and Service Personnel Pay Raises**

*We believe the ability to attract and retain high quality teachers is foundational to student achievement.* There is no single variable more powerfully linked to student achievement than the quality of the classroom teacher. The talented pool of West Virginia teachers currently leading WV classrooms continues to decline as retirement eligibility accelerates. Salary is a determining factor for career choice. Unfortunately, ACT composite scores indicate teaching, in general, no longer attracts top students to the profession (*The academic quality of public school teachers by Podgurksy, Monroe and Watson, University of Missouri, 2004*) **Currently West Virginia average teacher salary ranks 48th in the nation**. This ranking is detrimental to the economic and educational well-being of our state. West Virginia needs a long term plan to address this fundamental issue of attracting and retaining high quality educators. The WVDE and WVBE support a general pay increase for all WV educators and service personnel in the public school system to make salaries competitive nationally and with our neighboring states. The WVDE and WVBE also support a long-term and reasonable goal of moving salaries from the 48th in the nation to at least 25th within this decade.
HIGHEST NEED IMPROVEMENT PACKAGE

Technology Infrastructure: Instructional and Administrative (WVEIS) Technology

We believe educational technology is a fundamental tool for educational improvement. National and international business and education leaders advise that improving our economy rests on transformation of our educational system. These experts also believe a comprehensive approach to providing the technology infrastructure and digital tools are the essential fuel for accelerating this transformation. Technology powers learning via new curricula, new teaching, and more effective assessments. Technology creates new parental connections. Technology enhances administrative effectiveness and efficiency. Technology helps prepare students for a digital-based workforce and, improves student motivation, attitude and interest in learning. Therefore, the WVDE and WVBE recommend a fiscally sound and long-term plan for providing the technology infrastructure and digital tools to all West Virginia public education students.

This proposed package includes infrastructure, tools and supports to serve West Virginia students and teachers. This request builds upon the annual investment in “Tools for Schools” that supports existing technology utilization and infrastructure. The improvement package requests funding for six (6) grade levels over four years with a plan to achieve total implementation for all grade levels in eight years (2020). This proposal allows for county and school installation flexibility based upon the assessed needs of particular schools and the county’s long-term technology plan.

FISCAL NOTE: $22,931,125 annually for four (4) years to fund six (6) grade levels (with continuation of this amount annually to address refresh and maintainence)
STATUTORY REQUESTS

Lifting the RESA Funding Cap

We believe the eight Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) provide necessary targeted services to West Virginia public schools and communities. We propose lifting the cap on RESA funding by changing §18-9A-8a to the original intent of “sixty-three one hundredths percent of the allocation for professional educators.” With this language the funding allowance for RESAs is still controlled at two levels: (1) the total foundational allowance for RESAs from school aid funding is limited and (2) WVBE rules provide for distribution of funding (60 percent equally across all RESAs and 40 percent based on student enrollment within the respective RESAs). The current cap on the Basic Funding Allowance for RESAs (§18-9A-4) and the lack of an increase in the Computer Repair and Modernization allowance for RESAs have resulted in reduction in services. This reduction has significant impact, particularly on small county school systems which comprise the majority of all West Virginia systems. The following examples have already occurred and/or will occur within the next two years: elimination of 11.5 Computer Technicians, two (2) Technology Integration Specialists, and seven (7) support staff positions (professional, clerical and accounting); reduction of capital improvements to provide technology training and support to schools and school systems; reduction in technical assistance to low performing schools and staff development activities in support of the WVDE 21st Century Teaching and Learning initiatives; and reduction in psychological/audiological services.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated cost to eliminate cap completely - $1,561,198

Educator Mentoring and Induction

We believe a structured induction and support program for beginning teachers and administrators is a key to educator retention and effectiveness. WVDE data show 44 percent of West Virginia educators will be eligible to retire in the next five years (age 50 and over) and that currently, 28 percent are eligible (age 55 and over). West Virginia must be prepared for the nearly 10,000 new educators who will lead our schools and classrooms. Research data on successful induction programs indicate sufficient support during the first three years of service diminishes staff turnover, enhances overall job satisfaction, and positively impacts student achievement. When appropriate supports are not provided, there are long term costs to the system; national data indicate that about one out of every two new teachers has left the classroom by the end of the fifth year. Thus the need for a strong start with positive, targeted supports is clear. A Legislative waiver of state statute (an outcome of an Innovation Zone pilot) was granted to Cabell County Schools during the 2011 Legislative Session to implement an alternate teacher mentoring/induction program. The WVDE and WVBE recommend changes to West Virginia statute that will allow increased flexibility and accountability for all counties to implement a comprehensive educator induction program. The increased appropriation will allow county school systems to expand the single, one-year, traditional mentoring program into a full-fledged induction program. The WVBE will also revise policies related to Beginning Principal Internships and Beginning Educator Internships to align with requested statutory changes. The appropriation will provide necessary resources for those counties that desire to implement comprehensive induction programs.

FISCAL NOTE: $930,466 in addition to the current appropriation of $842,034 for a total of $1,772,500
**ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENT PACKAGE REQUESTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

**Career/Technical Education College and Career Readiness: Middle School Modules and Digital Learning Platform**

The request provides for development of career and technical career exploration modules for middle schools and establishes a statewide digital platform for digital student portfolios that support career exploration, goal setting and self-direction. Career awareness and readiness skills are essential for the post-secondary success of all students. It is critical to engage students in goal setting activities, identifying future aspirations and choosing high-school courses that advance their options for college and career success. Students at the critical transition stage of entering high school need to be exposed to quality career exploration opportunities and understand how to adequately prepare for successful post-secondary life.

FISCAL NOTE: $1.85 million

**Universal Pre K Supports**

The request establishes a support system for the statewide Pre-K efforts by providing staff for the Office of School Readiness, professional development, and resources for County Collaborative Early Childhood Teams. As WV Pre-K continues to grow and develop, resources must be available to assure high quality programming. However, there is no dedicated funding source to provide the necessary supports and resources for the 55 county collaborative teams which are building the WV Universal Pre-K system. County collaborative teams are responsible for all decisions regarding the design and implementation of universal pre-K. Members of the collaborative teams represent the local county school system, Head Start, and local child care providers. By establishing the funds to administer the Office of School Readiness’s efforts toward Program Assessment and Improvement, Child Assessment and School Readiness, and coordination of effort among all pre-K partners, the WVDE can assume the level of responsibility to assist with the differentiated, collaborative approach called for in legislation and WVBE Policy 2525.

FISCAL NOTE: $390,000.00

**WV Youth Science Camp**

The request provides funding to extend the West Virginia Youth Science Camp (WYSC), located at Cedar Lakes, to two (2) weeks for more in-depth exposure to scientific topics related to technology, engineering and math. Extending the camp to two weeks also increases opportunities that prepare students to face the challenges of college, careers and life-long education and fosters extended camaraderie among future leaders. Time that the students are participating in these elements will have positive results for the future of these students and West Virginia.

FISCAL NOTE: $219,954.00
LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

West Virginia Code §18-2-13f mandates that the State Board of Education provide an adequate and appropriate education for all school-age juvenile in state correctional institutions. Second, West Virginia Code §18-2-13h mandates that the State Board of Education shall provide for an adequate and appropriate education for school age juveniles placed in certain DHHR facilities. West Virginia Code 18-2-13h requires the Office of Institutional Education programs to seek funds to assist them in the aforementioned facilities West Virginia Code §18-20-5 mandates that the State Superintendent of Schools shall provide an education to adults in correctional facilities and regional jails to the extent that funds are provided for such a purpose. Therefore, West Virginia Code establishes the basis for the following four improvement packages for Institutional Education Programs.

**Education Services for the Davis Center**

Provide continuing funding for 3.5 FTEs for academic and vocational teachers and counselor and one (1) FTE for an art/music teacher. The Davis Center which will house all incarcerated female juvenile inmates in West Virginia.

FISCAL NOTE: $260,569

**Education Services for the McDowell County Corrections**

Provide one-time funding for computer equipment, start up supplies, career/technical equipment plus continuing funding for five (5) professional educators and one secretary. The Welch Facility and the Stephens Clinic, combined, house approximately 440 inmates.

FISCAL NOTE: $694,629 ($184,000 for one time request for equipment and $510,629 continuing funding for staff)

**Improving Career/Technical Education in Juvenile Programs (OIEP)**

Provide for one-time funding for equipment, materials, computers and furniture to expand career/technical offerings in four OIEP schools (Pressley Ridge White Oak, Pressley Ridge Grant Gardens, Davis Stuart, and Board of Child Care). Request also provides continuing funding for 3.5 professional educators.

FISCAL NOTE: $631,241 ($332,000 for one time request for equipment/computers and $299,241 continuing funding for staff)

**Education Services for Pressley Ridge at Laurel Park**

Provide continuing funding for 7 professional educators (4 content teachers, 1 special education teacher, 1 counselor, 1 school secretary), employee benefits, operational costs and computer equipment. Pressley Ridge at Laurel Park (Clarksburg) provides services to 20 females and 20 males meeting Level II criteria as described by WV DHHR.

FISCAL NOTE: $598,000
During the 2011-2012 school year the West Virginia Department of Education and the West Virginia Board of Education will engage a series of diverse stakeholder groups to address issues related to the following:

- Balanced Calendar (year round education)
- Teacher Evaluation
- Attendance
- Incentive Packages for Educators/Teacher Recruitment/Retention
- Steps 4, 5 and 6a of the School Funding Formula
- Policy 2510 and Secondary Education
- Revisions to Office of Education Performance Audits’ Process for Improving Education to Reflect Growth Model

It is expected that each stakeholder group will issue position papers related to the pertinent issue and provide a series of recommendations and implications for both West Virginia Code and West Virginia Board of Education Policy. Those recommendations will guide the development of future legislative priorities.