

# OFFICE OF EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AUDITS



## DRAFT EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

FOR

BLUEFIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL

MERCER COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

NOVEMBER 2004

WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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## INTRODUCTION

An announced Education Performance Audit of Bluefield Middle School in Mercer County was conducted on October 7, 2004. The review was conducted at the specific direction of the West Virginia Board of Education. The purpose of the review was to investigate the reasons for performance and progress that are persistently below standard and to make recommendations to the school and school system, as appropriate, and to the West Virginia Board of Education on such measures as it considers necessary to improve performance and progress to meet the standard.

The Education Performance Audit Team reviewed the Unified School Improvement Plan, interviewed school personnel and school system administrators, observed classrooms, and examined school records. The review was limited in scope and concentrated on the subgroups that failed to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP).

## EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT TEAM

Office of Education Performance Audits Team Chair – Allen D. Brock, Coordinator

West Virginia Department of Education Team Leader – Nathan Estel, Coordinator, Office of Professional Preparation

West Virginia Department of Education Team Leader – Serena Starcher, Coordinator, Office of Professional Preparation

## TEAM MEMBERS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>School/County</b>
Ralph Board	Principal	Parkersburg High School Wood County Schools
Wilma Dale	Principal	Marlinton Elementary School Pocahontas County Schools
Steven Taylor	Principal	VanDevender Junior High Wood County Schools
Edward Toman	Superintendent	Gilmer County Board of Education

### SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

This section presents the Annual Performance Measures for Accountability and the Education Performance Audit Team's findings.

#### 51-301 BLUEFIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL – Needs Improvement

#### MERCER COUNTY

Grades 06 - 08  
Enrollment 587

GROUP	Number Enrolled for FAY	Number Enrolled on April 20	Number Tested	Participation Rate	Percent Proficient	Met Part. Rate Standard	Met Assessment Standard	Met Subgroup Standard
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>								
All	560	589	571	96.94	56.53	Yes	Confidence Interval	√
White	429	454	440	96.92	63.94	Yes	Yes	√
Black	129	133	129	96.99	32.00	Yes	No	<b>X</b>
Hispanic	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Indian	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Asian						NA	NA	NA
Low SES	353	378	360	95.24	42.85	Yes	No	<b>X</b>
Spec. Ed.	124	129	122	94.57	17.09	Yes	No	<b>X</b>
LEP						NA	NA	NA
<b>READING/LANGUAGE ARTS</b>								
All	560	589	569	96.60	77.26	Yes	Yes	√
White	429	454	438	96.48	82.60	Yes	Yes	√
Black	129	133	129	96.99	60.00	Yes	No	<b>X</b>
Hispanic	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Indian	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Asian						NA	NA	NA
Low SES	353	378	358	94.71	69.46	Yes	Confidence Interval	√
Spec. Ed.	124	129	120	93.02	26.95	By Improvement	No	<b>X</b>
LEP						NA	NA	NA

**Passed**  
**ATTENDANCE RATE = 94.7%**

## AYP Information by Class

### MATHEMATICS

Class	Tested Enr.	FAY Enr.	Tested	FAY Tested	Part. Rate	Novice	Below Mastery	Mastery	Above Mastery	Distinguished
06	223	214	218	210	97.76	13.81	31.90	38.10	13.33	2.86
07	173	158	167	152	96.53	13.82	26.97	40.79	12.50	5.92
08	193	188	186	181	96.37	8.84	34.25	34.81	17.68	4.42

### READING

Class	Tested Enr.	FAY Enr.	Tested	FAY Tested	Part. Rate	Novice	Below Mastery	Mastery	Above Mastery	Distinguished
06	223	214	219	211	98.21	8.53	16.59	45.02	23.22	6.64
07	173	158	164	149	94.80	7.38	13.42	45.64	27.52	6.04
08	193	188	186	181	96.37	6.08	15.47	36.46	26.52	15.47

## Other Relevant Performance Data

### Writing Assessment

#### Grade 7

4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	N
0%	3%	9%	16%	47%	16%	5%	4%

**Note:** Seventy-five percent (75%) of the students scored at or above 2.0 on the Statewide Writing Assessment.

### Physical Assessment – Presidential Physical Fitness Test

Percentage of Students	School Year
Not Available	2003-04
72.1%	2002-03
87.3%	2001-02

## ANNUAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

### Below Standard

#### 5.1.1. Achievement

Bluefield Middle School failed to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP) in one or more subgroups designated in 5.1.1. Achievement. Three subgroups designated in 5.1.1 Achievement, included: Racial/Ethnic Black students (B), economically disadvantaged (SES), and special education students (SE). In accordance with Section 9.5 of West Virginia Board of Education Policy 2320, *A Process for Improving Education: Performance Based Accreditation System*, the West Virginia Board of Education issued the school Temporary accreditation status at the September 10, 2004 State Board meeting.

The Team determined that the Unified School Improvement Plan (USIP) had been revised to address 5.1.1. Achievement.

## EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT

### INITIATIVES FOR ACHIEVING ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

The Education Performance Audit Team reported that Bluefield Middle School had undertaken initiatives for achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The prominent initiatives and activities included the following.

**6.1.1. Curriculum based on content standards and objectives.** Content Standards and Objectives (CSOs) were correlated with the WESTEST. As a result, the CSOs were prioritized based on the number of items on the test for each standard. Teachers used the prioritized CSOs to teach the curriculum in language arts and mathematics. Content Maps were used in developing classroom curriculum.

**6.1.2. High expectations.** Test strategies classes were created to address specific deficiencies in identified cell groups. Students scoring below mastery (novice or partial mastery) in reading/language arts and/or mathematics are provided additional time and instructions. All Grade 6 students and most Grade 7 and 8 students are enrolled in a basic skills class. These “double shot” skills classes are designed to increase individual WESTEST scores as well as the deficient cell groups.

**6.1.4. Instruction.** The staff developed a prioritized mathematics plan to increase mathematics test results. Data were analyzed and a specific plan was in place to improve student performance in mathematics on the WESTEST.

Teachers emphasized a positive school climate through time on task, classroom management practices, and student discipline.

Staff implemented the team planning approach that provided an excellent means of developing continuous and coherent communication between grade level teachers. Time was devoted to academic issues, student concerns, parental issues, and student discipline.

- 6.1.5. Instructional strategies.** The Staff utilized the Shurley English method, which was used with the elementary schools, and continued at the middle school. This program was also part of the college curriculum, which supplied many student teachers and student observation opportunities at Bluefield Middle School. The Shurley Method English program teaches the solid foundation of grammar using a novel approach. Students use rhythm and a set of specific questions to classify sentences orally, identify each sentence part, and identify the overall sentence structure. They learn how all sentence parts fit together and express an idea. Students learn how to expand, improve, and edit their writing. This method is research-based and has been proven effective in schools where traditional programs have failed. Through this program students learn grammar and writing techniques and enjoy the process.
- 6.2.4. Data analysis.** WESTEST data were analyzed and deficient subgroups were identified. Specific items were targeted for teachers to address in each area tested. Information regarding proficiency levels and areas of weakness was provided to teachers for students in their classes. Teachers then designed a curriculum that addressed the items analysis for each student and each subgroup.
- 6.7.1. School rules, procedures, and expectations.** The staff developed a six-step discipline approach. This is a proactive approach to discipline that makes students accountable for their actions and places the responsibility of the consequences in the hands of the team teachers. Key behavior problems, high risk students, and teachers needing classroom management skills were identified. A committee of administrators and teachers developed a plan to target specific behaviors. The Positive Behavior Support program was implemented to keep students in class using a six step process that included: 1. Note to parent – signed and returned, 2. time out with partner teacher, 3. parent contact by phone, 4. team conference with student, 5. team conference with parent, and 6. office referral.

## HIGH QUALITY STANDARDS

### Necessary to Improve Performance and Progress to Meet the Standard (5.1.1 Achievement – B/SES/SE)

#### 6.1. Curriculum

- 6.1.2. High expectations.** Through curricular offerings, instructional practices, and administrative practices, staff demonstrates high expectations for the learning and achieving of all students and all students have equal education opportunities including reteaching, enrichment, and acceleration. (Policy 2510)

Through Team observations, three teachers did not show high expectations for their students. There was no evidence of varied instructional strategies and students were not engaged in the educational process.

## **6.6. Personnel**

- 6.6.2. Licensure. Professional educators and other professional employees required to be licensed under West Virginia Board of Education policy are licensed for their assignments including employees engaged in extracurricular activities. (W.Va. Code §18A-3-2; Policy 5202)**

The teacher who taught the Bible class was not certified by the State.

## EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS & PRACTICES

### 6.1.11. Guidance and advisement.

Title: Carper's Corner

#### Description of Program

Carper's Corner is a unique program in which the counselor meets with students during their lunch period. Students register or schedule a date for the event by signing a reservation calendar. The group is limited to four students per lunch period which helps facilitate conversation and provide the counselor an opportunity to maximize and focus direction.

The students named the lunch area in honor of the counselor (Mrs. Carper). They also decorated the corner where lunch is held. The lunch table is located in a visible location and every student is aware of the opportunity to join the counselor for lunch. Students register months in advance, and many excitedly count the days until their turn at Carper's Corner. Since the daily participation rate is limited, students receive the counselor's full attention. During this lunch with the counselor, students have the opportunity to discuss the future, their hopes, their problems, options for dealing with difficulties, or other issues. All the while, the counselor guides and encourages appropriate behaviors and positive interpersonal interactions.

Throughout the year, 600-800 reservations are available for each grade level. The students take advantage of this opportunity and reservations are scheduled in advance. The counselor encourages all students to join her for lunch. She has a calendar for each grade level (for the entire term) and students have opportunities during the day to reserve lunch with the counselor.

Learning Focused Strategies are utilized during the lunchtime discussions (work walls, vocabulary, summarization, etc.), and are most appropriate when applied to matters important to the student. Additionally, the positive relationship between students and the counselor is strengthened.

#### Summary of Results

During lunchtime discussions, students are guided to think about consequences of behavior and to make wise decisions. Students are given the opportunity to discuss their thoughts and feelings, thereby, reducing misbehavior and conflicts between students. The office has charted a reduction in office referrals concerning student conflicts and an increase in cooperation within the classroom (respect toward others, completed homework/classroom assignments, etc.) One significant result of Carper's Corner is the opportunity for the students to develop an identity in Bluefield Middle School society, to realize that they are an integral part of the school, to build healthy relationships with their peers, and to establish a level of trust with the counselor.

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### EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS & PRACTICES

#### 6.5.4. Physical Assessment.

Title: Physical Education

#### Description of Program

The President's Challenge is a physical activity/fitness awards program of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. Bluefield Middle School has developed an outstanding physical education program in which students perform exercises and compete in fitness tests that encourage the development of physically active lifestyles. Effective teaching strategies and high expectations for students have resulted in impressive records. The dedicated and committed staff at Bluefield Middle School is extremely proud to be recognized for "outstanding physical achievement and exceptional dedication to the ideal of a sound mind in a strong body" and equally proud of the diligent efforts of the students who contribute to the benefit from the program.

#### Summary of Results

Bluefield Middle School won the Physical Fitness State Champion Award (Category III) in 1996-97, 1999-2000, 2002-03, and 2003-04.

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## EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS & PRACTICES

### 6.7.1. School rules, procedures, and expectations.

Title: Positive Behavior Support

#### Description of Program

Bluefield Middle School staff began exploring data to identify the key behavior problems, high risk students, and teachers needing classroom management skills. Dr. Rick VanAker (University of Illinois) met with the staff to provide documentation using staff's knowledge of behavioral referrals to promote positive behavioral change. A committee was formed to develop a plan to target specific behaviors. The plan was implemented to keep students in class using a six (6) step process which included: 1. Note to parent – signed and returned, 2. time out with partner teacher, 3. parent contact by phone, 4. team conference with student, 5. team conference with parent, and 6. office referral. In using the six step discipline plan, a teacher has the responsibility to promote student success. Teachers take a proactive approach and do not wait for students to fail before offering support. A triad teacher provides collaboration, technical supports, staff development, and evaluation of peer feedback. The committee meets monthly with administrators and teachers discussing the process and progress of the reduction in disciplinary issues. This positive behavior support plan is continuous and is modified to meet the needs of the students.

#### Summary of Results

The positive behavior support has resulted in a schoolwide environment conducive to learning. Discipline referrals have decreased significantly. Teacher/parent communication has improved with parents being more supportive of staff. Because students and parents better understand the discipline procedures, less time is spent educating parents regarding student behaviors and parents know what consequences will result from a particular behavior. Office referrals have been reduced by 25 percent in one year. Students are in class and positive relationships are developing between the teacher/student and teacher/parent.

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### **Indicators of Efficiency**

Indicators of efficiency for student and school system performance and processes were reviewed in the following areas: Curriculum delivery, including but not limited to, the use of distance learning; facilities; administrative practices; personnel; utilization of regional education service agency, or other regional services that may be established by their assigned regional education service agency. This section contains indicators of efficiency that the Education Performance Audit Team assessed as requiring more efficient and effective application.

**None identified.**

### **Building Capacity to Correct Deficiencies**

West Virginia Code §18-2E-5 establishes that the needed resources are available to assist the school or school system in achieving the standards and alleviating the deficiencies identified in the assessment and accountability process. To assist Bluefield Middle School in achieving capacity, the following resources are recommended.

<b>HIGH QUALITY STANDARDS</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED RESOURCES</b>
6.1.2. High expectations.	West Virginia Department of Education Office of Instructional Services (304) 558-7805
6.6.2. Licensure.	West Virginia Department of Education Office of Professional Preparation (304) 558-7842

- 17.1. Capacity building is a process for targeting resources strategically to improve the teaching and learning process. School and county Unified Improvement Plan development is intended, in part, to provide mechanisms to target resources strategically to the teaching and learning process to improve student, school, and school system performance.**

The Team determined that Bluefield Middle School and Mercer County have the capacity to correct the identified deficiencies.

### **Identification of Resource Needs**

A thorough and efficient system of schools requires the provision of an adequate level of appropriately managed resources. The West Virginia Board of Education adopted resource evaluation as a part of the accreditation and evaluation process. This process is intended to meaningfully evaluate the needs for facilities, personnel, curriculum, equipment and materials in each of the county's schools and how those impact program and student performance.

**17.2. School personnel.** Bluefield Middle School's greatest concern is personnel and the number of substitute teachers. At the time of the Education Performance Audit eight (8) long-term substitutes were employed, three (3) were teaching for teachers on medical leave and five (5) occupied vacant teaching positions. While the necessity for personnel is reasonable, realistic, and conforms to statutory requirements; the need for consistent, stable staff affects the teaching and learning process. For example, the substitute who was teaching science was not certified to teach science and will be long-term until January. It was noted that the science teachers plan together and meet as a team daily, thereby, assisting the substitute.

According to the principal, staff recruitment is a challenge. The Team noted that the staff at Bluefield Middle School was a dedicated professional group, and committed to educating students.

Bluefield Middle School has endured a declining enrollment from approximately 1200 students to a current 587. A shift in population trends has also occurred from a 33 percent Ethnicity/Black (B) population to 23 percent B. The school has a 70 percent rate of Economically Disadvantaged (SES) students.

### **Early Detection and Intervention**

One of the most important elements in the Education Performance Audit process is monitoring student progress through early detection and intervention programs.

**None identified.**

**School Accreditation Status**

School	Accreditation Status	Education Performance Audit High Quality Standards	Annual Performance Measures Needing Improvement	Date Certain
51-301 Bluefield Middle School	Full Accreditation	6.1.2; 6.6.2		September 1, 2005
			5.1.1 (B/SES/SE)	

**Education Performance Audit Summary**

The Team identified two (2) high quality standards – necessary to improve performance and progress to meet the 5.1.1 Achievement – for racial/ethnic black students (B), the economically disadvantaged (SES), and special education (SE) subgroups.

Bluefield Middle School’s Education Performance Audit was limited in scope to the process and performance standards and progress related to student and school performance in the area of deficiency (5.1.1 B/SES/SE). The Team also conducted a resource evaluation to assess the resource needs of the school. The Team submits this draft report to guide Bluefield Middle School in improvement efforts. The school and county have until the next accreditation cycle (September 1, 2005) to correct deficiencies noted in the report.