

OFFICE OF EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AUDITS



FINAL EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

FOR

ELK GARDEN SCHOOL

MINERAL COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

NOVEMBER 2004

WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

The West Virginia Office of Education Performance Audits conducted an Education Performance Audit of Elk Garden School in Mineral County May 2, 2003.

A Follow-up Education Performance Audit of Elk Garden School was conducted September 28, 2004. The purpose of the follow-up was to verify correction of the findings identified during the original Education Performance Audit. The review was in accordance with West Virginia Code §18-2E-5 and West Virginia Board of Education Policy 2320 which specify that a school that meets or exceeds the performance and progress standards but has other deficiencies shall remain on full accreditation status and a county school district shall remain on full approval status for the remainder of the accreditation period and shall have an opportunity to correct those deficiencies. The Code and policy include the provision that a school "... does not have any deficiencies which would endanger student health or safety or other extraordinary circumstances as defined by the West Virginia Board of Education."

EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT

NONCOMPLIANCES

5.1 Curriculum

- 5.1.11. Approved elective offerings. An elective offering must be based on approved West Virginia Board of Education content standards and objectives or have written goals and objectives that are approved by the county board. (Policy 2510)**

Goals and objectives for the mini-courses were not available and had not been approved by the local board of education as required by West Virginia Board of Education Policy 2510.

FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

COMPLIANCE. Goals and Objectives for the mini-courses were developed by the staff and presented to and approved by the Mineral County Board of Education during the 2003-04 school year. The students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 have since been moved from this school and consolidated into Keyser Middle School.

5.7 Administrative Practices and School-Community Relations

- 5.7.7. Codes of conduct. The county and schools implement and routinely investigate and monitor the code of conduct for students and the code of conduct for employees. (W.Va. Code §18-2E-5; Policy 4373; Policy 5902)**

A classroom was labeled special education. In addition, the Team observed that students' papers were posted in the hallway that had grades indicated on the papers. The Team also observed a chronic care plan for a student posted on the bulletin board in a classroom. These practices fail to preserve student confidentiality requirements as indicated by West Virginia Board of Education Policy 4350, *Procedures for the Collection, Maintenance and Disclosure of Student Data*.

FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

COMPLIANCE. The Team visited classrooms, talked with teachers, and reviewed student materials posted on bulletin boards and in hallways. No student confidential information was observed that could be viewed by students or anyone without proper authority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1.8. Library/educational technology access and technology application. The Team observed that the COMPASS learning program was being utilized; however, the Team recommended that the COMPASS lessons be correlated with classroom instruction. In addition, the Team could not determine that the Library computer laboratory was being fully utilized. The Team recommended that the middle grades use the computer laboratory to integrate technology with classroom instruction.

FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION FOLLOWED. The technology specialist aligned the COMPASS activities with the Content Standards and Objectives (CSOs) and trained teachers in correlating them with their classroom instruction. The middle grades were relocated to Keyser Middle School.

5.12.1. Leadership. When asked about the atmosphere and culture of the school during interviews, some teachers indicated that occasionally conflicts occurred between the principal and some staff members. The Team recommended that the staff participate in team building activities to ensure that the staff and principal foster an atmosphere of mutual respect, courtesy, fairness, and dignity. The Team also recommended that a collaborative team building approach be in place and consensus used, as appropriate. A process for resolving conflict should be implemented and staff empowerment should be coupled with responsibility and accountability.

FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION FOLLOWED. Staff development in team building has been provided. The principal reported that he relinquished some decision-making authority to the staff. A number of informal meetings were held with staff members to improve communications and involve staff.

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.

15.1. Facilities, equipment, and materials. Facilities and equipment specified in Policy 6200, Chapters 1 through 14, are available in all schools, classrooms, and other required areas. A determination will be made by using the Process for Improving Education (W.Va. Code §18-2E-5) whether any identified deficiencies adversely impact and impair the delivery of a high quality educational program if it is below the West Virginia Board of Education standards due to inadequacies or inappropriate management in the areas of facilities, equipment, and materials. The Education Performance Audit Teams shall utilize an assessment instrument for the evaluation of school facilities which generally follows the requirements of Policy 6200. Note: Corrective measures to be taken in response to any identified resource deficiency will of necessity be subject to the feasibility of modifying existing facilities, consideration of alternative methods of instructional delivery, availability of funding, and prioritization of educational needs through Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plans and the West Virginia School Building Authority. This policy does not change the authority, judgment, or priorities of the School Building Authority who is statutorily responsible for prioritizing "Need" for the purpose of funding school improvements or school construction in the State of West Virginia or the prerogative of the Legislature in providing resources. (Policy 6200 and *Tomblin v. Gainer*)

According to the items checked in the School Facilities Checklist, Elk Garden School was below standard in the following areas.

15.1.1. School location. Parking for staff, visitors, and handicapped individuals was inadequate. The parking area was located across the highway and was not paved.

15.1.2. Administrative and service areas. A reception/waiting area was not available.

15.1.12. Grades 7 –12 auditorium/stage. An auditorium/stage was not available.

FOLLOW-UP CONCLUSION

The facility resource needs remained as noted in the June 2003 Draft Report with the exception of the following:

- **Grades 7 and 8 were consolidated into Keyser Middle School which eliminated the requirement for an auditorium/stage at this school.**

BUILDING CAPACITY TO CORRECT DEFICIENCIES

- 14.3.11. Ensuring that the needed capacity is available from the state and local level to assist the school or school system in achieving the standards and alleviating the deficiencies.**

The Team determined that Mineral County and Elk Garden School have the capacity to implement the strategies needed to improve student achievement and correct the identified noncompliances.

FOLLOW-UP CONCLUSION

The identified deficiencies had been corrected.

SCHOOL SYSTEM APPROVAL & SCHOOL ACCREDITATION STATUS

The Office of Education Performance Audits recommends that the West Virginia Board of Education continue the **Full Approval** status of the Mineral County School System and continue the **Full Accreditation** status of Elk Garden School.