



PROGRESS REVIEW EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

FOR

GRANT COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

OCTOBER 2014

WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

West Virginia Code §18-2E-5 and Policy 2320 specify that the system of education performance audits shall include on-site reviews of schools and school systems only at the specific direction of the West Virginia Board of Education upon its determination that a school or school system is persistently below standard or other circumstances exist that warrant an on-site review.

At its September 10, 2009, meeting, the State Board directed the Office of Education Performance audits (OEPA) to conduct an Education Performance Audit of the Grant County School District. The OEPA conducted an announced audit (five days in advance) of the Grant County School District and the schools during October 2009. The OEPA reported that Grant County was not providing a thorough and efficient system of schools as required by law.

In November 2009, the State Board issued the Grant County School District Nonapproval status, declared a state of emergency in the system, and intervened in the operation of the school system.

The West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) directed the Office of Education Performance Audits to conduct a full audit of the Grant County School System to “ascertain the degree of compliance and progress in addressing the noncompliances from the Office of Education Performance Audits audit which ascribed nonapproval...” status. An Education Performance Audit Team conducted a full county audit of the Grant County School District September 11-14, 2012. A report of the Education Performance Audit was reviewed by the WVBE December 2013. The WVBE returned partial control of the Grant County Board of Education in 1. Curriculum, Policies, Facilities, Transportation, and The establishment and operation of a school calendar. The WVBE continued intervention in Personnel and Finance.

A Progress Review was conducted July 30 - August 1, 2014, to ascertain the leadership capacity of the Grant County Board of Education and progress of the county board in personnel practices and finance. This report describes the Education Performance Audit Team’s assessment of progress made by the Grant County School System in meeting the requirements for the county school system to assume local control.

EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT TEAM

Office of Education Performance Audits Team Chair – Dr. Donna Davis, Deputy Director

NAME	TITLE	COUNTY	CATEGORY
Steven Peer	Associate Superintendent	Mineral County Schools	Finance
Delores Ranson	Retired Assistant Superintendent	Office of Education Performance Audits	Personnel

7.4. REGULATORY AGENCY REVIEWS.

7.4.1. Regulatory agency reviews. Determine during on-site reviews and include in reports whether required reviews and inspections have been conducted by the appropriate agencies, including, but not limited to, the State Fire Marshal, the Health Department, the School Building Authority of West Virginia, and the responsible divisions within the West Virginia Department of Education, and whether noted deficiencies have been or are in the process of being corrected. The Office of Education Performance Audits may not conduct a duplicate review or inspection nor mandate more stringent compliance measures. (W.Va. Code §§18-9B-9, 10, 11, 18-4-10, and 18-5A-5; Policy 1224.1; Policy 8100; W.Va. Code §18-5-9; Policy 6200; Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 §104.22 and §104.23; Policy 4334; Policy 4336)

PROGRESS REVIEW JULY 2014

Finance

The county board distributes the systems' resources on the basis of the strategic plan. (Policy 2510)

The Team reviewed the county Strategic Plan and found the plan contained a budget for the activities listed in the plan. A fiscal year 2014 expenditure was examined via invoice and verified in accordance with the plan and the county budget and expenditure report.

The county board's accounting practices are consistent with state policies and procedures. (WV Code 18-9B-9,10,11 and Policy 8100)

The county audit report and the *School Laws of West Virginia, Handbook of School Finance, and Accounting Procedures Manual for the Public Schools in the State of West Virginia* were on hand and readily available. Additionally, the county board policies regarding finance had been board adopted and available on line at grantcountyschools.org.

The Grant County Board of Education independent audit for fiscal year 2013 was conducted by Tetrick & Bartlett, PLLC of Clarksburg, West Virginia.

Findings:

No findings reported for:

**Financial Statements
Federal Awards
Financial Statement Audits
Questioned Costs – Major federal Award Programs Audit**

The school distributes resources on the basis of the strategic plan (Policy 2510)

Petersburg Elementary School's Strategic Plan was reviewed and found to contain a source of funding for the action components contained in the plan. Verification was made with the Chief School Business Officer (CSBO) that a selection of the listed plan activities were completed and the funding had been provided as indicated either by the county or a specific program budget such as Title I.

Individual school accounting practices are consistent with state policies and procedures. (Policy 1224.1 and Policy 8100)

Schools

All Grant County Public Schools were audited by Tetrick & Bartlett for fiscal year 2013.

Findings were noted at each school.

Petersburg High School and Union Educational Complex had the same findings: individual selling tickets at more than five events and incomplete ticket reconciliation reports.

Petersburg High School and Maysville Elementary had findings of only one signature on several checks.

Written corrective action plans were written for all findings and on file at the school and county office. The Chief School Business Official (CSBO) verified the plans were being followed.

The individual schools used School Ledger, a computerized accounting software package, to maintain their financial records. It appeared schools maintained accounting records according to the *Accounting Procedures Manual for the Public Schools in the State of West Virginia*. The CSBO received monthly reports as required. Additionally, the CSBO monitors the schools' financial accounting files from his computer.

School support organizations provide the CSBO with annual financial statements. In addition, the county plans to include the audit of booster organizations in the next county audit RFP.

The faculty senate monitors the funds allocated to individual classroom teachers and librarians from legislative appropriations. The remainder of the funds is to be expended in accordance with a budget approved and monitored by the faculty senate. (WV Code 18-5A-5).

The faculty senates meet in accordance with W. Va. Code §18-5A-5 and maintain a budget approved by its members. Faculty senate funds were maintained as a sub-account in each school's General Fund and allocated in accordance with W. Va. Code.

Summary

Grant County ended fiscal year 2013 with a deficit of approximately (\$126,000). Fiscal year 2014 could also end in a deficit of approximately (\$193,000). However, additional revenue from Medicaid billings, if received prior to August 31, 2014, would result in a deficit of approximately (\$136,000).

It should be noted that Grant County experienced some Extraordinary Budgetary Restrictions during fiscal year 2014.

1. The county experienced losses in revenue: PEIA allocation of (\$205,656), Child Nutrition lost revenue due to days lost (\$75,053), and Critical Skills reduction in April of (\$15,052).
2. The county additionally experienced some extraordinary expenditures: A law suit settlement of \$57,500, Local Share of a School Building Authority (SBA) project of \$50,000, utility cost increases of \$63,934, substitute personnel cost increases of \$83,830, and contracted services for special education occupational therapist/physical therapist (OT/PT) of \$50,215.

Both the loss of revenue and extraordinary expenditures had an adverse impact on the attempts to recover from the deficit.

The Team noted that the county is making efforts to reduce expenditures and shift some expenditures to state and federal grants where allowed.

The Chief School Business Official (CSBO) was prepared for the OEPA review. All documentation needed to verify the financial checklist was readily available. The Team commended the CSBO's ability to access individual school finance records. The Team reported the CSBO was aware of and complying with county, state, and federal policies and laws regarding public school finance. The finance

office was organized and efficiently managed. Under the direction of the Grant County Superintendent of Schools, the school system was making great efforts to reduce spending and operate within the State Aid Formula and other available funding sources.

7.6. PERSONNEL.

7.6.1. Hiring. County boards follow hiring practices set forth in W.Va. Code. (W.Va. Code §§18A-4-7a, 18A-4-8, and 18-2E-3a)

Findings

The initial introduction to Grant County Schools for the review of hiring practices was provided by a well-prepared, highly-organized, and well-versed director of personnel/ assistant superintendent. Verification documents and information relevant to hiring practices, such as, application forms, bid sheets, board minutes, lists of teachers on permit and/or out of field authorizations, etc., were available for team members to review prior to beginning the initial examination of hiring practices in the personnel office.

The Team randomly selected job postings for 35 jobs posted for the 2012-2013 school year in the various categories of teachers, student support personnel, administrators, service personnel, coaches and other extra-curricular assignments to review to determine if the county board followed hiring practices set forth in W.Va. Codes §§18A-4-7a and 18A-4-8b.

The assistant superintendent, who was the personnel director, has been in his position for one year. During that time, he has worked to learn personnel law and to implement the law in the county's hiring practices. Posting files for all postings the Team randomly selected to review were readily available and complete. Files included the posting; job description; applications for the specific posting; interview data where appropriate; and a completed matrix for professional personnel that showed the comparisons of qualifications of applicants. Service personnel posting files also included a copy of letters sent to individuals not selected for the position as to the status of their application as required in W. Va. Code §18A-4-8b.

Applications for the initial employment (professional and service) were available on the county website. Application bid sheets for a specific position for professional, service, coaches, and/or extracurricular were also available on line. The professional applicant bid sheet included an opportunity for applicants to list their qualification criteria as required in W. Va. Code §18A-4-7a.

Vacant positions were posted in the county board office, in all schools, and on the State and county websites. Positions were posted as soon as they became vacant, or if new when approved by the State Department of Education. Each posting included a nondiscrimination statement.

No professional employee was transferred after 5 days prior to the beginning of the instructional term. Seven personnel transfers after this date will be effective with the 2013-2014 school year. Those vacant positions were filled with long-term substitutes

for the 2012-2013 school year. One vacant position (Spanish, Petersburg High School) was filled with a long-term substitute teacher and was being continuously posted.

A matrix was developed for each set of factors listed in WV Code §18A-4-7a to compare the qualifications of applicants. Each matrix showed the appropriate criteria listed in W.Va.Code §18A-4-7a used to evaluate each applicant. It was evident that the county used the proper matrix in every professional posting the Team reviewed. The county used a point system to determine the most qualified applicant when evaluated with the first set of factors in W.Va.Code §18A-4-7a. When using the second set of factors in §18A-4-7a, equal weight was given to each criterion. Written directions were established to follow in processing the comparisons of applicants. As per the directions, when there is a tie of the criteria (2nd set of factors), the applicant with the greatest amount of experience in the subject/grade area is determined the most qualified. Using this set of factors, there has never been a situation where the most senior regularly employed applicant was not selected for the posted position.

Interview questions were held when the first set of factors was used. Questions were prepared in advance by the personnel director and were asked of all candidates. The interview committee included the principal, an appropriate director or supervisor, and the personnel director. For a principal vacancy, the superintendent is a member. Additionally, a member of the faculty senate, most senior service personnel, and Local School Improvement Council (LSIC) member of the respective school are invited to be members of the interview team. The interview questions, written responses, and interviewer notes are retained. When the second set of factors is used, principals are given an opportunity, W.Va.Code §18A-2-1, to interview the most qualified candidate. The interview results are not used in the selection process, but are for the purpose of sharing with the applicant the school's mission and goals as well as teacher expectations. Additionally, the interview gives the applicant an opportunity to ask questions important to him/her regarding his/her assignment at the school prior to transferring into the new position.

Prior to employment, certification of teachers is reviewed and approved by the West Virginia Department of Education. Individuals recommended for employment, pending out-of-field authorizations, were identified on the board agendas. The county has eight teachers employed on out-of-field authorizations, three on permit, and one on a waiver. The assistant superintendent was working to recruit fully certified teachers. He attended three teacher recruiting fairs (West Virginia University, Fairmont, and Shepherd) last spring. From the fairs, the county hired four teachers, including two speech language specialists and a math teacher. He also works with neighboring county personnel directors to get names of applicants when those counties have more applicants than they can hire.

The recommendation for employment is made by the principal and personnel director to the superintendent.

PROGRESS REVIEW JULY 2014

A follow-up review of school personnel revealed that much work had been done by Grant County personnel to address and correct findings identified in the last OEPA Audit. An organized notebook contained several verification documents relevant to county hiring practices.

Prior to reviewing relevant personnel hiring documents, the Team spoke with the assistant superintendent of Human Resources (ASHR) regarding the 2013 Legislative changes in W. Va. Code §18A-4-7a and West Virginia Board Policy 5000, regarding Grant County's implementation of the new hiring process. The ASHR was knowledgeable of both school law and State Board policy. His computer was linked to school law, relevant State Board and county policies, hiring forms and documents, as well as communication and training documents provided to school principals. He easily accessed and addressed relevant hiring subjects.

It was evident that the ASHR has received extensive training in school personnel during the last one and one-half years, attending 13 training sessions, two were Signature Series on School Personnel held by Bowles Rice. Subsequent to these training sessions, the ASHR provided training to school principals and faculty senate chairs in implementing West Virginia Board of Education Policy 5000. Training included written detailed steps which the faculty senate was to take to determine the model it would select to implement the hiring process, the voting process for making such decision, etc.

Once faculty senates met to determine the model for participation in the hiring process, completed forms returned to the ASHR indicated "all Grant County's schools" selected the Single Designee with the discretion to ask up to two other faculty senate members to assist. All but one school, Petersburg High School, voted to adopt a policy permitting the superintendent or his/her designee to narrow the pool of qualified applicants to no fewer than three qualified applicants, unless fewer than three qualified individuals applied who appeared to be the most qualified based on an examination of the factors of W. Va. Code §18A-4-7a.

Following this overview with the ASHR, the Team reviewed 18 job postings (six for the 2013-2014 school year and 12 for 2014-2015). For all categories (professional; service; and extracurricular, including coaches), the Team found all relevant hiring materials in the files were high quality (comprehensive and current.) For example, applications provided opportunities for applicants to list qualifications relevant to W. Va. Code §18A-4-7a (professional) and §18A-4-8b (service). Job descriptions included with the posting documents were up-to-date and current with State Board policies and Code. When interviews were held, interview questions and interview notes were a part of the posting file. For applicants on the reduction-in-force (RIF) list, a copy of a certified letter notifying

the individual of the posting was noted. Finally, a completed matrix was included in the posting file with weight given to each of the 11 factors of W. Va. Code §18A-4-7a. The applicant with the greatest weight (most points) was identified as the most qualified candidate. The separate recommendation of the principal and single designee or single designee and up to two faculty senate members were included.

The Team found that for classroom teacher positions, the ASHR had reviewed the applications of candidates, narrowed the list of candidates to no fewer than three (for all schools except Petersburg High School) and prepared a matrix showing the qualifications of the applicants in the first eight factors of W. Va. Code §18A-4-7a(b), (for example, writing in the total amount of teaching experience in the certified area, degree level, etc.). When there was a tie (such as certification) or there appeared to be a “winner” of a factor (such as having the highest GPA of all candidates), that qualification was highlighted on the matrix for the interviewing committee and principal to review. The matrix was subsequently submitted to the school principal and faculty senate single designee.

Upon receipt of the above information, the faculty senate single designee determined if interviews were to be held. If so determined, the interviews were scheduled by the ASHR and held, when possible, at the school. In addition to the single designee and up to two faculty senate teachers (if used) and the principal, the interview committee also included designated individuals from the central office, such as the ASHR, Special Education Director, etc. Individuals from the central office participated in the interview process, which included writing interview questions, asking questions of candidates, taking notes, as well as participating in the “after interview” discussions of the faculty senate (single designee and, if used, two faculty senate members) and principal prior to the faculty senate single designee and principal making their respective recommendations. According to the ASHR, the participating central office staff did not participate in the final decision to select and recommend the most qualified candidate. That was solely the responsibility of the faculty senate single designee and principal. In every posting reviewed, the faculty senate single designee and principal recommended the same candidate as most qualified. The candidate, in turn, was recommended by the superintendent for employment (if new hire) or transfer if candidate was a current permanent employee.

West Virginia Board of Education Policy 5000, Section 7.2.c.3. (Rule for faculty senates states that the interview of applicants will be conducted jointly with the principal. Section 5.1.c (Roles and Responsibilities) states that the superintendent may, at his/her discretion, conduct interviews of applicants in addition to any interview conducted by the principal and faculty senate hiring committee, single designee, or faculty senate chair. Although the policy does not state central office personnel cannot be an integral part of the interview team along with the faculty senate and principal, it appeared to the OEPA Team that interviews are to be conducted separately at the discretion of the superintendent.

However, the ASHR indicated the county's legal counsel, Greg Bailey, Attorney, Bowles Rice advised Grant County that central staff members can be a part of the hiring committee along with the faculty senate hiring committee and principal, unless denied by either the principal or faculty senate hiring committee, single designee, or faculty senate chair.

Coaches. All non-paid (paid \$1) coaches met the required certification. All coaches held a professional teacher license, substitute permit, or coaching authorization. Individuals holding a professional license were given priority in hiring. Once certification ranking was determined, the county used the first set of factors in W. Va.Code §18A-4-7a to determine the most qualified in the specific group.

The majority of posting files the Team reviewed were consistent with hiring practices; however, the Team noted a few findings in some individual posting files. These findings appeared to be the result of a new personnel director who was still learning the complicated school laws of personnel hiring. The majority of the findings can be corrected immediately.

Findings

- 1. Professional Personnel.** The county works to fill all vacant positions with certified applicants who also meet the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) definition of a highly qualified teacher. References were checked thoroughly for all out-of-county and out-of-state applicants and an interview was held. When the county finds that an applicant, although certified for the position, has been dismissed from another school system, has unsatisfactory performance in and/or out of the classroom, or cannot successfully complete an interview, that person is not considered for employment and the position is reposted. This appeared to be a noncompliance as per W.Va.Code §18A-4-7a(o)(3). Reference Posting 13-004, Math, Petersburg High School, hired on an out of field authorization (OOF); 13-001, Principal, Petersburg High School.

Recommendation. W.Va.Code §18A-4-7a(o)(1)(c) states, "Any special criteria or skills that are required by the position shall be specifically stated in the job description and directly related to the performance of the job." List special criteria as "completion of successful interview" and place this requirement as special criteria in the job description (and posting) under required qualifications. When this special criterion is not met and documented, it appears that the county could repost the position. The Team recommended that this be reviewed with legal counsel.

PROGRESS REVIEW JULY 2014

Legal Counsel (Greg Bailey, Attorney Bowles Rice) provided the following written statement for Grant County School System which is included in personnel postings as one of its Minimum Qualifications for all personnel (professional and service).

Minimum Qualifications: Additional minimum Requirements for Applicants not Currently Employed: Applicants who have been dismissed or who have had their contracts non-renewed for cause by another school district are not eligible for consideration; applicants who have recently unsatisfactory evaluations will not be considered eligible for consideration; applicants who demonstrate unsatisfactory interview performance are not eligible for consideration; and, applicants who receive unfavorable reference recommendation will not be eligible for consideration.

2. Professional and Service Personnel. Job Descriptions. Job descriptions for postings were attached to postings placed in the county office and in schools. Job descriptions were not available on the county or State websites, but upon request to the personnel office a job description will be sent to applicants via e-mail, fax or U.S. mail. Job descriptions were currently being reviewed by the personnel director who was in the process of revising (updating) service personnel job descriptions. Several job descriptions the Team observed had been revised during the summer. Of the service personnel job descriptions reviewed, it appeared that they complied with West Virginia Board of Education Policy 5314 (effective date 1985) with duties and responsibilities; however, there were no qualifications listed or the qualifications listed did not include such requirements as passing the State competency test for the specific classification on the job description. Reference postings for aide (13-062), general maintenance (13-016), cook (13-029), and custodian (13-014). There was no job description for autism mentor (13-020). Additionally, no qualification was listed on the job description for coach. However, qualifications were listed on all job postings.

Corrective Action

- Make job descriptions available on the county website.
- Continue the process of reviewing job descriptions prior to posting a vacant position and updating or creating, where necessary, including adding required qualifications for the specific job to the job description.

PROGRESS REVIEW JULY 2014

Job descriptions available on the county webpage were listed under a specific category (professional, service or extracurricular). Job descriptions included the qualifications listed on the posting. Professional personnel job descriptions included duties and responsibilities, performance criteria, and professional responsibilities specified in the West Virginia Board of Education Policy 5310. The job description for teachers was dated July 2014. Service personnel job descriptions included the classification definition as found in W. Va. Code §18A-4-8, as well as performance standards and duties and responsibilities of the

position. A copy of the job description was attached to the posting in all posting files the Team reviewed.

3. Individuals whose names have been placed on the preferred list are contacted by the assistant superintendent of any openings for which they are eligible. If no contact is made, the individual's name will be entered as an applicant for the vacant position. W.Va.Codes §§18A-4-7a(n) and 18A-4-8b require that the notification of openings be sent by certified mail to the last known address of the employee on the preferred list.

Corrective Action

- Comply with W.Va.Codes §§18A-4-7a (n) and 18A-4-8b.

PROGRESS REVIEW JULY 2014

A certified notice of postings is sent to individuals on the reduction-in-force (RIF) list when the individual is eligible (certified or holds classification) for the posted position. A copy of the certified notice can be found in the posting file. The county complied with W. Va. Codes §§18A-4-7a(n) and 18A-4-8b.

4. **Service Personnel.** W. Va. Code §18A-4-8b(g)(2), requires that the notice of job vacancy include the starting and ending time of the daily shift and the amount of pay and any benefits. Postings for aides (13-018) and bus operators (13-011) did not list the time of the daily shift. Under salary on the posting it states, "WV State Service Personnel Salary." A salary amount was not listed. Additionally, benefits were not listed.

Corrective Action

- List the starting and ending time of the daily shift on all service personnel postings.
- List a salary range (from lowest to highest) on the posting for the pay grade of the classification.
- Under benefits, for regularly employed positions, list benefits such as health and life insurance available.

PROGRESS REVIEW JULY 2014

All postings the Team reviewed for service personnel including aide, custodian, secretary, and bus operator had the starting and ending time of the daily shift on the personnel posting with the exception of bus operator. The ASHR indicated that at the time of the posting (prior to the beginning of the school term) the starting and ending time of the daily shift of the bus operator position could not be determined until after school began and bus runs (routes) had been made for the new year. A shift in students from one year to the next can dictate a change in the starting and ending time.

A salary range (from lowest to highest) based on the monthly state minimum for the pay grade of the classification was listed on the posting. Benefits listed included Teachers' Retirement System, PEIA Health and PEIA Life Insurance.

5. Where there was more than one classification title within a classification category the posting was listed without the specific class title (Example, posting for Custodian - 13-014 and Cook - 13-029. Each classification title of service personnel is listed in W. Va. Code §18A-4-8a and considered a separate classification title of employment with a separate Pay Grade. For example, custodian titles are listed as: Custodian I, Custodian II, Custodian III, and Custodian IV. There is no classification title of just Custodian or Cook.

Corrective Action

- All vacant positions must be posted by the proper classification title, if known. For example: If the vacancy is for a Custodian IV, the position should be posted, "Custodian IV," not just "Custodian," as Custodian IV also identifies the Pay Grade of that position. Note: Some classification titles such as Custodian I, II, III, and IV are included in the same classification category for competency testing and seniority and are not treated as separate class titles (W. Va. Codes §§18A-4-8e and 18A-4-8g).

PROGRESS REVIEW JULY 2014

All posted service personnel positions the Team reviewed had the proper classification title. This will be done when the proper classification title is known.

6. Once applicants meet the criteria of qualifications and evaluation of past service, seniority becomes the deciding factor for transfer or employment of service personnel. With the exception of one posting reviewed, W.Va.Code §18A-4-8b was followed in the selection of service personnel. Posting 13-016, "Mechanic, General Maintenance, Bus Operator," posted March 8, 2012, did not appear that the individual selected for the job and transferred into the position met the qualifications of the posting.

There were two applicants for the posted position. Applicant A was a regular employee previously employed in the classifications of mechanic and general maintenance. He did not hold bus operator certification. Applicant B was a new applicant who, according to the application, held bus certification. He was not given an opportunity to take the State competence test for mechanic or general maintenance, which according to W.Va.Code §18A-4-8e(h), is used to determine the qualification of new applicants seeking initial employment. Applicant A was transferred into the posted position pending bus operator certification. As per the personnel director, the employee has up to one year to obtain the certification and will not drive a bus until certification is obtained.

Corrective Action

- Review this situation with legal advisors and comply. It appeared that Applicant B should have been given the competency test for mechanic and general maintenance. If Applicant B successfully passed both tests, he would have been the most qualified applicant for the position. Also, determine through West Virginia Department of Education approval, that hiring a bus operator can be done pending certification, the length of time for obtaining required certification, etc.

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The county will ensure that all applicants meet the qualification requirements of the posting prior to being recommended for employment. In the above case, it has been determined that neither Applicant A nor B held the required school bus operator's certification prior to Applicant A being recommended for employment. Applicant A has since obtained his school bus certification along with all personnel working in the Transportation Department, including the transportation director.

7.8. LEADERSHIP.

7.8.1. Leadership. Leadership at the school district, school, and classroom levels is demonstrated by vision, school culture and instruction, management and environment, community, and professionalism. (Policy 5500.03)

W.Va. Code §18A-2-12a (1) provides “The effective and efficient operation of the public schools depends upon the development of civil and cooperative relationships between county boards and school personnel.”

Findings

The Office of Education Performance Audits (OEPA) Team interviewed the President of the Grant County Board of Education and the four other board members, the county superintendent, and county office staff. The Team reviewed agendas and minutes of the Grant County Board of Education meeting, relevant memoranda, and documents. The findings are the result of the interviews and document reviews.

Grant County Board of Education

1. Minutes of Grant County Board of Education meetings showed that the board meetings were conducted in a respectful and civil manner and according to statutory requirements.
2. Board members generally expressed support of the county superintendent and expressed a readiness to assume control or partial control of the school system.
3. Minutes of the Grant County Board of Education were complete and provided information to the public in a comprehensive and understandable manner.
4. Board members were actively involved in developing the Grant County Five-Year Strategic Plan and were aware of county and school level achievement and the county’s needs.

PROGRESS REVIEW JULY 2014

At the time of the Progress Review (July 30-August 1, 2014), Grant County Board of Education meetings were conducted according to Open Governmental Proceedings (W. Va. Codes §§ 6-9A-2 to 6-9A-12) and Statement of policy and practice for county boards and school personnel to minimize possible disagreement and misunderstanding (W. Va. Code § 18A-2-12a). The board exercised board leadership and decision-making based on the needs of Grant County’s schools.

However, two board members assumed office July 1 and had not had the benefit of board leadership training and public meeting decorum and protocol. Subsequent to the Progress Review, the Office of Education Audits (OEPA) reviewed minutes of the Grant County Board of Education which indicated one new board member exited the (August 26, 2014) board meeting which the board president handled tactfully by proper meeting protocol. The OEPA observed this action demonstrated a lack of decorum and boardmanship. Board minutes from July 1, 2014 to the present indicated four of the five board members functioned in unity and accord with a cohesive mission for the Grant County School System. Since this incident, the Grant County Superintendent has scheduled two board trainings on board membership and procedures for holding board meetings. Training on board membership has occurred and the Executive Director of the West Virginia School Boards Association is scheduled to conduct training on procedures for holding board meetings.

Leadership Development Indicators

1. The Team observed that while the Grant County Board of Education and the county superintendent had extended opportunities for community support and involvement, the support for the Grant County School District could be further strengthened by the various community entities.
2. The Grant County Board of Education has been receptive to the role of resuming decision making and participating in board leadership development. The Team observed that the board members are learning about board membership, but could benefit from further training.

PROGRESS REVIEW JULY 2014

1. In response to the Leadership Development Indicator, Grant County Board of Education adopted two goals (January 28, 2013) pertaining to strengthening community support and involvement. Goal 1-Foster proactive communication with community stakeholders and Goal 2-Work together to foster positive community alliances that will empower the safety of all Grant County School District's students. Board minutes showed meaningful community agency and business participation with individual schools and the school system. However, the Grant County School System would benefit to an even greater level if the two major local governmental agencies collaborated with each other in supporting the school system.
2. At the time of the Progress Review, the OEPA Team found the Grant County Board of Education was exercising effective board leadership in the areas control had been returned to Grant County. Board minutes and member interviews substantiated the board's decisions were made based on the schools' and county's needs assessment and goals and were

consistent with West Virginia Board of Education Policy and State Code. The Team observed Grant County was moving forward in a planned, systematic approach to improve student performance. Two new board members assumed office July 1. It is critical that these new members develop knowledge of and practice board member protocol, interactions with community and staff, and adhere to the rules of conducting public meetings.

District Leadership

1. District leadership was exemplified by the collaborative effort of the superintendent, the central office staff, professional staff representatives and community representatives including two school board member representatives to develop the Five-Year Strategic Plan to address the needs of Grant County School District students. The strategic planning process was commendable and provided multiple opportunities for input from the various constituents into the annual plan.
2. The district office staff exhibited professionalism, worked well together, communicated freely with each other, and worked collaboratively to improve student achievement.
3. The Grant County School District Superintendent worked well with the Grant County Board of Education and did an exceptional job of keeping the board informed through an annual State of the Schools report; presentation of the County Strategic Plan; and updates that included: Personnel actions, policy changes, financial reports, and overall student achievement. The superintendent had scheduled trainings for board members in several areas that included: Board leadership, personnel, and finance. It was apparent from interviews with individual board members that the lines of communication between the superintendent and the board were open and effective.
4. A schedule for the schools' local school improvement council (LSIC) presentations to the board for the 2012-2013 school year was established. The board minutes should include documentation that a quorum of the LSIC members were present for the annual LSIC presentations and that the board received and discussed the schools' Five Year Strategic Plans during these presentations.
5. The Grant County School District Superintendent had a thorough knowledge and understanding of West Virginia Code and West Virginia Board of Education policies and guided the board of education in adherence to Code and policies.

PROGRESS REVIEW JULY 2014

Central office staff and superintendent interviews and Team information review evidenced that leadership capacity had been developed in district staff. Administrative staff were working as a cohesive unit and the school system's central office staff and school administrators have a role in decision making. The superintendent further partnered with Marshall University and initiated a class, Administrative Exploratory for Teachers. Last year, nine teachers enrolled in the class, five of whom enrolled in an administration program. Currently, the course is offered to ten teachers and the superintendent is organizing an advanced administrative class for central office staff.

The State appointed Grant County Superintendent of Schools and the Grant County Board of Education functioned well together. The board effectively transitioned to resuming authority of key decision-making areas. The Superintendent of the Grant County School System provided the board extensive training and updates on these key areas. In turn, board members developed a foundational base from which to make decisions and applied this knowledge in making informed decisions. It is commendable that the board conveyed and exercised a comprehensive knowledge of the multiple components of the school system. The board demonstrated a good grasp of finance and personnel, the two areas under West Virginia Board of Education authority.

8.1. INDICATORS OF EFFICIENCY.

8.1.4. Administrative practices. The school district assesses the assignment of administrative personnel to determine the degree managerial/administrative services provided schools establish and support high quality curriculum and instructional services.

The Grant County School District is limited in the assignment of administrative personnel because the county does not have an excess levy to support positions. The county does an effective and efficient job of providing necessary administrative functions by combining administrative responsibilities. The Team found that the secondary curriculum central office leadership was the one area in which administrative services needed to be supported. However, the county is limited in the capacity to enhance these services.

PROGRESS REVIEW JULY 2014

Grant County continued to function effectively and efficiently within the fiscal limitations of not having an excess levy to support personnel positions. Declining student enrollment has resulted in the loss of teachers. The county was maximizing state agency support to improve student and school performance. While the secondary curriculum leadership remains as reported in the previous review, curriculum staff has become more efficient in managing the demands of personnel and has been able to devote more time to curriculum leadership.

8.1.5. Personnel. The school district assesses the assignment of personnel as based on West Virginia Code and West Virginia Board of Education policies to determine the degree to which instructional and support services provided to the schools establish and support high quality curriculum and instructional services.

The Team reviewed student enrollment data for the last three years to determine if the county was experiencing an increase in student enrollment that affected personnel needs. As per the attendance director, student enrollment has decreased the last two years and appears to have decreased for the current school year. The data showed a decrease in enrollment of 86 students since October 2009-2010.

The business manager indicated that the county does not have an excess levy to support personnel. Grant County is currently within the State aid formula with both professional and service personnel. To determine personnel needs, principals project their personnel needs for the up-coming year in their respective schools. This process is currently taking place in each school for FY2014. Each principal sends the school's personnel needs list to the personnel director. A county staff meeting is held with all principals and directors present to determine the county's staffing needs for the subsequent year. The county ensures sufficient teacher positions to meet the basic

needs, i.e., teaching all core classes at the high school level, meeting students' individual education programs (IEPs), and meeting the pupil/teacher ratio as required in W.Va.Code §18-5-18a.

To meet student needs this year (2012-2013), Grant County funds and contracts part-time (up to 16 hours/week) a psychologist, teacher of gifted, nurse, occupational and physical therapist. Five teachers and one-half time academic coach positions are paid with Title I funds. One and one-half time academic coach positions are paid from Title II funds.

Two speech language specialists were hired this past year. Although paid a supplement of 20 percent of their salary, the cost of two employed speech language specialists is less than contracting for one specialist.

The assistant superintendent stated that all required courses are offered to students. When necessary, low incident courses are offered through Virtual School or via satellite or the courses are offered every other year. Art, music, and physical education are offered to all elementary students an equivalent of one day a week by a specialist. The classroom teachers also teach physical education at the elementary levels. One and one-half school nurses and two LPN/aides (positions posted) served the county, which met the number required by Code. Counselors and media specialists are assigned to the middle and high schools. They are also assigned on an itinerant basis to all elementary schools. The amount of time assigned to each school is determined by the number of students and needs of the respective schools. No itinerant person is assigned to more than three schools.

To keep students in school and to decrease the dropout rate, which has gone from 24 students in 2010 to five (5) students in 2012, the school district offers Credit Recovery (evenings, weekends, and summers) using Virtual Learning as well as an Alternative Learning Center (ALC). The ALC is used not only for students assigned due to behavior problems, but for students who need a different learning method. These programs, along with the efforts of the attendance director, were named as promoting success for students and keeping the students in school through graduation.

Service personnel appeared to be sufficient to serve the county. Aides were assigned to preschool, kindergarten, and special education classes where required or "needed." Custodians were assigned to schools based upon the square footage of the facility. Cooks were assigned according to the number of meals served at the school. The number of cooks hired was equitable with county school systems similar to Grant County School enrollment.

PROGRESS REVIEW JULY 2014

A review of student enrollment data showed continued decrease in the number of students. The county enrollment decreased 116 students since FY 2010; 54 within the last two years (FY 2013 and FY 2014). As per the Chief School

Business Official (CSBO), this resulted in a loss of state aid funding of approximately 1.5 teachers each year.

The county does not have an excess levy to support personnel. Grant County is currently within the state aid formula for both professional and service personnel. Personnel are employed to meet the required needs. The county superintendent begins the process no later than the first of December to determine personnel needs for the subsequent year. Both principals and county office staff are involved in determining the county's personnel needs. The county ensures sufficient teacher positions to meet the basic needs, i.e., teaching all required programs of study courses, meeting students' individual education programs (IEPs), and meeting the pupil/teacher ratio as required in W. Va. Code §18-5-18a.

There has been no change in contracted service. Grant County School System continued to contract part-time (up to 16 hours/week) a psychologist, nurse, occupational and physical therapist. Three academic coaches were being paid with federal funds. The county pays speech language specialists a supplement.

The superintendent indicated the county offers all required programs of study. Advanced Placement (AP), honors, and college courses for dual credit are offered with numbers of courses offered increasing each year. In 2012-2013, the following courses were offered: AP (9); honors (9); and college credit courses (8). For 2014-2015 the county has scheduled 13 AP courses, 19 honors courses, and nine college credit courses. This is an increase over the three years of AP by 4 courses, honors by 10 courses, and college credit courses by one. The county continues to offer low incident courses through Virtual School or via satellite or if a high school junior desires to take a low incident course and it is not offered, the course will be offered the subsequent year. If the student is a senior, the county will find a way to provide the course. The county continues to offer Credit Recovery. An alternative school is provided to serve behavior disorders students and students who need an alternative learning environment. Art, music, physical education, and 21st Century Learning Skills are provided according to West Virginia Board of Education Policy 2510 requirements to all elementary and middle school students. Elementary students receive instruction by a specialist an equivalent of one day per week. The general classroom teacher is responsible for additional instruction in those areas. There was no change in the number or assignment of nurses. With the closing of Dorcas Elementary School, itinerant time of counselors, art, music, and physical education teachers at that school was transferred to Maysville Elementary and Petersburg Elementary schools.

Service personnel were employed to meet the needs of the schools/students. The number of service personnel in each location was determined by a specific process. Aides were employed and assigned to preschool, kindergarten, and special education classes where required or "needed." Custodians were assigned to schools based upon the square footage of the facility, and cooks were assigned according to the number of meals served at the school.

The Team commended the Grant County Superintendent and staff, working without the additional funds of a school levy, for providing personnel based on West Virginia Code and West Virginia Board of Education policies and within the state aid formula, to support high quality curriculum and instructional services. This is done through hard work as well as working as a cohesive and supporting team.

SUMMARY

The December 2013 Approval Recommendations for Grant County School System were presented to and approved by the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE). The State Board returned partial control to the Grant County Board of Education in the areas of Curriculum, Policies, Facilities, Transportation, and The establishment and operation of a school calendar and upgraded the county to Conditional Approval status.

As evidenced in the July 30-August 1, 2014 review, Grant County Board of Education has demonstrated effective board leadership in the areas where control was returned. The OEPA found four of the five board members exercised strong board leadership and followed effective procedures and protocol. These four board members exhibited unity in carrying forth the mission and goals of the Grant County Board of Education and advancing the Grant County School System.

The Office of Education Performance Audits determined that four members of the Grant County Board of Education demonstrated the resolve, training, knowledge, and empowerment to make decisions for the school system.

APPROVAL RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Education Performance Audits recommends that the West Virginia Board of Education return local control of the county school system to the Grant County Board of Education effective October 15, 2014, subject to the following conditions: That,

1. The current superintendent remain in the position through June 30, 2016, unless the superintendent and the Grant County Board of Education agree mutually to terminate the contract.
2. The Grant County Board of Education members exercise appropriate boardmanship.
3. The Grant County Board of Education be mindful that it is under the watchful eye of the WVBE as noted in W. Va. Code §18-2E-5(n)(2) which states the State Board of Education may intervene immediately in the operation of the county school system, “. . . if the state board finds the following: That the conditions precedent to intervention exist as provided in this section and that the state board had previously intervened in the same school system and had concluded the intervention within the preceding five years.”

Note: According to the new Policy 2320 (effective July 1, 2014), school system approval status (Full, Temporary, or Conditional) is tied to grades of schools (A-F) within the school system. Since grades will not be issued until the fall of 2015, at which time all school systems will receive their first approval status under the new accreditation system, it is not necessary to issue an approval status in this report.