



The

Challenge



July 2003

State BOE backs down on \$\$ dispute Board decides it doesn't want a fight with the Legislature

The West Virginia Board of Education quickly retreated from a position it took in mid-July on the release of funding earmarked for specific projects by the state Legislature in its annual Budget Digest.

On July 9, State BOE members threatened to withhold \$4.9 million in

Budget Digest money unless the Legislature restored a \$2 million budget cut it imposed upon the BOE.

The BOE spent two hours debating the move during the first day of its monthly two-day meeting in Charleston, but put a decision off until the next day.

On the meeting's second day, the board relented and decided to allow State Superintendent of Schools Dr. David Stewart to release the funding on schedule.

The Budget Digest funds are earmarked for special projects in schools around the state such as a \$2,000 grant to Hampshire

High School to fund an "after prom party." Hampshire is the home county of Delegate Jerry Mezzatesta, chairman of the House Education Committee.

Mezzatesta snared \$190,000 in this Budget Digest for such projects.

The Budget Digest has been criticized as being pork.

Judge rules against Marsh Fork High School

A Kanawha County Circuit Judge will allow Marsh Fork High School in Raleigh County to close.

In a decision issued after the Fourth of July holiday weekend, Kanawha County Circuit Judge Jennifer Bailey Walker ruled that the Raleigh County Board of Education, the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Schools did not violate state law or state policy when approving the closure of the school.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit, Citizens for preserving Marsh Fork and Clear Fork Communities,

have vowed to appeal Walker's decision to the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals.

The fight over the Marsh Fork closure has been continuing since

March 2002, when the school was first set for closure.

In the first round a Raleigh County circuit judge ruled the closure hearing violated the West

Virginia Sunshine Law and the board's closure documents were inadequate.

After going through the process a second time, the current suit developed.

Make plans now

Challenge West Virginia's Annual Fall Conference

October 10, 2003, at 10 a.m.
Marshall University

details and registration form in the
August edition of *The Challenge*

This 'n that from around the state

• A statewide teachers organization is suing a statewide school board's association over the use of allegedly unlawful use of public funds in lobbying the West Virginia Legislature. The West Virginia Federation of Teachers has filed a lawsuit against the West Virginia School Boards' Association, claiming that the School Boards' Association is a "taxpayer-funded lobbying group." The association is made up of county boards of education who pay annual dues to be a part of it. The association provides training for school board members and lobbies the Legislature for changes in laws affecting county boards of education.



• State Department of Education officials recently told members of the State Board of Education that students in Lincoln and McDowell counties are doing better since the state seized control of the two school systems. During its July monthly meeting, the State Board heard that, since the takeover in Lincoln County, the percentage of high school graduates continuing to college has increased from 18 percent to 45 percent. As for as test scores go, state-appointed Lincoln County Superintendent Bill Grizzell said, "Test scores don't necessarily reflect it, but kids are engaged [and] teachers are engaged."

• The Logan County Board of Education has set a Nov. 1, 2003, special election date for the county's excess levy. If approved, the levy will raise an additional \$5.9 million per year over the county's current expense levy. The levy will not be new, it will only continue the levy which is currently in effect. The money will be used for salary supplements, school security, maintenance of athletic facilities and playgrounds, assistance for public libraries, dental and vision insurance for employees and other related uses.

• In Harrison County, the board of education has voted unanimously to close Harden Elementary School in Salem. Another two closure hearings were scheduled but had not been held as of press time. In the county's plan to consolidate Salem Middle School with Gore Middle School, the Salem closure hearing was scheduled for July 29 and the Gore hearing was set for July 30.

• The Cabell County Board of Education is involved in a legal dispute with its superintendent of schools. Superintendent David Roach believes that he should be able to

travel out of county, at the board's expense, whenever he deems it necessary, instead of having to obtain the board's approval prior to a trip, as is required by current policy. Roach has filed a lawsuit seeking to end the board's current policy. State Superintendent of Schools Dr. David Stewart has already weighed in on Roach's side. In a letter last year, Roach asked Stewart for a "Superintendent's Interpretation" on the policy, when it was first under consideration. In a Dec. 3, 2002, letter to Roach, Dr. Stewart

wrote, "It is my opinion that this policy is ill advised. It does not allow the flexibility necessary for a county superintendent to perform all duties required of him or her." The lawsuit is pending in Cabell County Circuit Court.

• State Superintendent Stewart recently told a statewide educator's conference that West Virginia is ahead of other states in complying with the provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. In April, West Virginia's plan to meet the statute's requirements was the ninth such plan approved by federal educational officials. The statute requires each state to have a written plan for compliance approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

• A new survey, released by the American Federation of Teachers says that West Virginia ranked 41st in the nation in terms of average teacher salaries. According to the survey, the average salary in West Virginia was \$36,775 during 2001-2002, while the national average salary was \$44,367 per year. California had the highest average salary at \$54,348, while South Dakota had the lowest average at \$31,383. Each state surrounding West Virginia ranked significantly higher. The highest was Pennsylvania at \$50,599, which made it good for 7th place. Kentucky was nearest West Virginia with an average annual salary of \$37,951. The average for Virginia was \$41,752, in Ohio the average was \$44,266 and in Maryland, the average was \$48,251.

• The West Virginia Board of Education has changed leadership for the 2003-2004 fiscal year. During the board's July meeting, Sandra Chapman was elected president. Former State Senator Lloyd Jackson, II, was elected vice-president. Barbara Fish was elected secretary. Chapman, who has been on the board since 1996, has previously served as secretary, vice-president and president. Jackson was appointed to the board earlier this year and Fish has been a member since Dec. 2000.

State releases annual education stats

The West Virginia Department of Education has released its annual educational statistics for the 2002-2003 school year.

The statistics provide information on school systems around the state, including information about school employees' salaries, county board of education expenditures and enrollment figures, among other things.

Total Employees

According to the statistics, the 55 county boards of education employed a total of 37,789 people during the school year. Professional employees totaled 24,287 and service personnel totaled 13,501.

The largest employer was the Kanawha County Board of Education, which employed 2,402 professional personnel and 1,245 service personnel.

The smallest employer was the Wirt County Board of Education with 91 professional employees and 48 service personnel.

Students

As for student enrollment, Kanawha was the largest county with 28,417 students and Wirt was the smallest with 1,045. All students in the state totaled 281,591.

Superintendents

The average salary for

a county superintendent of schools during the 2002-2003 school year was \$78,076, according to the department's statistics. The highest paid superintendent, with an annual salary of \$100,000, is in Kanawha County. The superintendent of schools in Grant County made the smallest salary in the state at \$63,000.

Administrators

The state's statistics show 742 central office administrators in the state's 55 county offices with an average annual salary of \$59,717.48. The central office administrators include 55 county superintendents, 66 assistant superintendents, 116 curriculum specialists and 442 directors.

Principals

The number of central office administrators around the state outnumbered the number of school principals. The state reports a total of 730 principals and 322 assistants. Elementary school principals number 438, middle school and junior high principals number 127 and there were 133 high school principals reported. Principals at combined schools numbered 32. The average principal's salary was \$59,563.13, with high school principals having the highest average

salaries at \$65,423.81. The average assistant principal salary was \$53,715.11.

Teachers

A total of 20,414 classroom teachers received an average salary of \$38,497.04, according to the department's statistics. Elementary school teachers totaled 6,901, while there were 3,275 teachers at the middle/junior high school level and 4,009 high school teachers.

Boone County classroom teachers enjoyed the highest starting salary at \$28,940 per year. The lowest starting salary, at \$26,350, is found in a total of 30 counties.

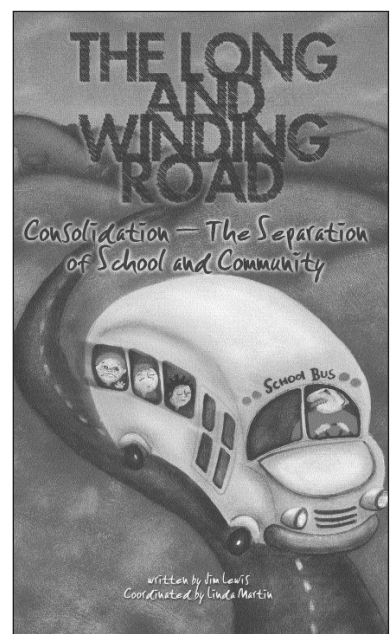
The average starting salary for all teachers in West Virginia was reported to be \$26,692.

Service Personnel

Approximately 13,502 service personnel received salaries averaging \$23,098.42 per year. School bus drivers accounted for the largest number of service personnel. 2,775 bus drivers were paid an average annual salary of \$20,889.88 during the 2002-2003 school year. Aides accounted for the second largest number of employees at 2,683, with an average salary of \$21,300.17. In third place were the custodians, who numbered 2,179 and received \$23,176.05 in average salaries. The cook classification was the fourth largest group with 1,789 total receiving \$19,137.23 per year in average salaries.

All of the statistical tables can be downloaded from the department's Internet site at <http://wvde.state.wv.us>.

Copies of Challenge West Virginia's latest publication, "A Long and Winding Road: Consolidation — the Separation of School and Community are still available. Contact Linda Martin, whose contact information is on the back of this newsletter, for more information.



The Challenge

The Challenge is published monthly by Challenge West Virginia, a statewide organization committed to maintaining and improving small community schools.

Challenge West Virginia's goal is to reform education in West Virginia so that citizens have a voice in policy decisions and every child has the opportunity to receive a first-class education and the promise of a bright future.



Challenge West Virginia

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