



The Challenge



October 2002

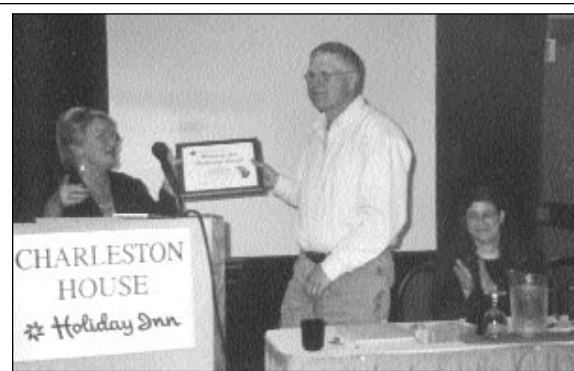
Challenge W.Va. holds annual conference

Challenge West Virginia held its annual conference on Sept. 27, at the Charleston House Holiday Inn.

The theme of the conference was "Our Communities, Our Schools."

Dr. Craig Howley, a nationally recognized small schools researcher was the keynote speaker for the conference.

Dr. Howley is the co-director of a research program at Ohio University. He also serves as the associate director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.



At the Challenge WV Annual Conference in September, Challenge WV Director Linda Martin presented Dr. Craig Howley, of the Ohio University, with Challenge West Virginia's "Meeting the Challenge Award, in recognition of his invaluable contribution to small schools research. Pictured (l. to r.) are Martin, Dr. Craig Howley and Dr. Aimee Howley.

Howley gave a presentation on some of the research he has conducted on rural education.

During the conference, Challenge West Virginia's

Director, Linda Martin, presented Dr. Howley with the "Meeting the Challenge" award.

Dr. Howley's award reads, "In recognition of

outstanding research and communication with community people."

Presentations were also made by Dr. Howley's wife, Dr. Aimee Howley; Doris Williams, of the Rural School and Community Trust and Marty Newell, of the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky.

Attendees were treated with a performance by the Poca High School Show Choir.

"I want to express my gratitude to those who attended, performed and presented at this year's conference," said Martin. "It was a big success."

Lincoln County high school to cost \$30 million

The W.Va. School Building Authority has estimated that a new high school in Lincoln County will cost more than \$30 million.

If built, the new school will become the most costly school ever built in the State of West Virginia.

The enrollment estimate for the new school is 800 students.

Until now, the most expensive school in the state has been Riverside High School in Kanawha County. Riverside, which houses 1,200 students, was completed in 1999 at an approximate cost of \$23 million.

A previous estimate for the cost of the Lincoln County school was significantly lower. The higher estimate is blamed on the

Legislature's passage of a law which requires new high schools to be built with enough space for vocational education programs, in addition to two gymnasiums.

The new requirements were championed by out-going Senate Education Committee Chairman Llyod Jackson (D-Lincoln). Jackson did not run for re-election.

Challenge West Virginia Director Linda Martin was quoted in *The Charleston Gazette* commenting on the new school.

"That is an enormous amount of money," Martin said. "They could take that money and build two high schools on each end of the county and serve the children that much better.

This 'n that from around the state

- Two members of the West Virginia Board of Education have resigned since our last edition. On Oct. 1, State BOE Member Jim MacCallum submitted his resignation. MacCallum's resignation letter indicated that he was moving to North Carolina. MacCallum, a Boone County attorney, has been on the State Board since 1989. Under more dubious conditions, State BOE President and School Building Authority Member J.D. Morris submitted his resignation, from both positions, on Oct. 11. Criminal charges have been filed against Morris in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia. Morris is charged with embezzling \$172,000 from Clay County Bank, between Jan. 1997 and April 2002. Morris retired from the bank in April. He was the bank's president. There are now three vacancies on the State Board of Education. Members are appointed by the Governor to nine-year terms.

- In a small victory for supporters of small schools around the state, the W.Va. Board of Education and the W.Va. School Building Authority announced in late-September that the amount of time children spend on a bus will be monitored and will be given the same consideration as other factors, which go into SBA decisions on money distribution. State BOE policy currently sets guidelines for how long children should ride on a bus during the school day. The guidelines are recommended but are not necessary. Challenge West Virginia is advocating the passage of a new statute which would make those times mandatory.

- With the State of West Virginia facing a predicted budget crunch during the next fiscal year, Governor Bob Wise has vowed not to cut the amount of money which the state pays to county boards of education each year for support of public education in FY2003-2004. Wise has asked all state government agencies to decrease their budgets by 10 percent during the next budget cycle. The W.Va. Department of Education has been asked to reduce its budget by three percent, but the amount set aside for state-aid-to-schools will remain the same, according to the Governor's Office.

- The No Child Left Behind Act requires that, not only will all children be tested, but every school district - not just those qualifying for Title I funding - will be required to develop a parental involvement policy in consultation with the parents of the district. Policies must include ways that school districts can work with parents in pro-



viding necessary support to increase student achievement. The Act requires every school to set aside at least one percent of its Title I funding for parental involvement.

- A unscientific Internet poll conducted by The Lincoln Journal has found that, of the poll's 2,719 respondents, 2,260 (83 percent) said they did not think that Bill Grizzell is doing a very good job in his position as the state-appointed superintendent of schools for Lincoln County. The Lincoln County school system is currently under state control and teachers organizations, as well as the county's principal's association recently submitted complaints, to the state superintendent of schools, about Grizzell.

- The Boone County Board of Education is now considering school consolidation. On Sept. 27, the board presented a proposal to the W.Va. School Building Authority which includes the closure of two elementary schools — Nellis and Sylvester. Under the plan, the two schools will be closed and Sherman Junior High School will become a middle school. Students in grades K-5 from Nellis will attend Ashford-Rumble Elementary

- In State Department of Education controlled Mingo County, Brenda Skibo has been named the new county superintendent of schools. Skibo replaces David Temple who is moving into the position of administrative assistant to the Upshur County superintendent. Skibo was superintendent in Logan County before taking the Mingo County superintendent's job. Logan County Assistant Superintendent David Godby has moved into the superintendent's position on an interim basis.

- The Kanawha County Board of Education has voted to seek School Building Authority money for the construction of a new elementary school in eastern Kanawha County. The proposal calls for the consolidation of Marmet and Chesapeake elementary schools into one school which will be built in Chesapeake.

- The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia has rejected an appeal, from an order of the Circuit Court of Raleigh County, brought by the Raleigh County Board of Education. The Circuit Court ruled that the BOE violated state laws in its proposal to close Marsh Fork High School. The net result is that the school will remain open at least for another year. Challenge members in Raleigh County played an active role in the lawsuit.

Charleston Gazette looks into consolidation

The Charleston Gazette has begun an in-depth series of stories on school consolidation in the State of West Virginia.

In the series, entitled "Closing Costs," Gazette writers Eric Eyre and Scott Finn are telling the story of school consolidations in the state.

The first story in the series detailed the effects of long bus rides on students.

The story pointed-out the fact that the State Department of Education has set guidelines for student travel times, but, those guidelines are merely recommendations for county boards of education to follow, and com-

pliance is lax at best.

Eyre and Finn have put forth an extraordinary effort in researching the facts for the series.

Among their findings were the following:

- more than half of the bus rides in West Virginia exceed the state's recommended maximum times of 30 minutes each way for elementary students, 45 minutes for middle school students and one hour for high school students;
- two thirds of elementary school bus runs exceed the recommended guidelines while 60 percent of middle school routes and one third of high school runs are over the recom-

mended time limits;

• bus rides are expected to become even longer over the next eight years due to the fact that 153 schools are scheduled to close during that time;

• West Virginia spends more on student transportation than any other state;

• while the number of students in West Virginia schools has been steadily decreasing, transportation costs have been steadily increasing;

• the longest one-way bus ride in the state is endured by a Monroe County student who rides two hours, for a total of four hours a day on a school bus;

• a Cairo Elementary

School student in Ritchie County had a 13 minute bus ride while that school was opened, since the school has closed, the ride has increased to 66 minutes;

• the average elementary school bus run is 41 minutes long;

• the average high school bus run is 54 minutes long;

• the average commuting time to and from work, for an adult in Los Angeles is 28 minutes.

Stories in the series can be obtained at newspaper's website at www.wvgazette.com.

The series will continue for the next few months.

Associated Press examines education in West Virginia

In addition to The Charleston Gazette's examination of school consolidation in West Virginia, the Associated Press has begun a series of stories on education in general and education finances in particular.

The Associated Press

series is attempting to determine whether the state is meeting the requirement of providing West Virginians with a "thorough and efficient" education as mandated by the W.Va. Constitution.

At press time, three stories in the series had

been published. The series will run in Sunday newspapers around the state, over the next several weeks.

The first story examined problems with the state's school aid formula, which provides that funding for county boards of

education decreases as student enrollment decreases.

The second story detailed the problems faced by teachers as a result of the school aid formula, while the most recent story examined special education.

W.Va. education facts

Total enrollment — 282,232
Expenditure per pupil — \$7,115
Total expenditure — \$2 billion
Transportation costs — \$136 million
Total elementary schools — 485
Total secondary schools — 314

Based on Oct. 2001 statistics

CORRECTION

We are happy to report that the Putnam County Board of Education's decision against making school consolidation a part of its long-range plan was by a vote of 5-to-0, instead of the previously reported vote of 4-to-1. We regret the error and thank Putnam County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Sam Sentelle for bringing it to our attention.

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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