



The

Challenge



October 2003

Challenge conference a success

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Harrison County Fellow

Community leaders, educators and Challenge WV members from across the state came to Marshall University's Drinko Library to participate in the use of interactive video (ITV) and Distance Learning. Bringing Education To Where Our Children Live was the topic for this one day conference.

Dr. Vicki Hobbs led the morning session live from the University of Missouri and spoke to the group assembled at Marshall University's Drinko Library. With two decades of experience and knowledge of state-of-the-art distance learning, Dr. Hobbs shared with the group how high quality interactive video can capitalize on the benefits of small schools and how the

rationale for closing small schools and consolidating is greatly diminished.

Distance Learning is not intended to replace teachers, but offer a way to combine good teachers in reaching more students. When the student-teacher ratio falls below the desired number to justify a teacher onsite, we are now able to blend with technology and provide some academic and economical advantages for small schools.

class, but when this class is offered to small school (B) and (C) via ITV, the student-teacher ratio now justifies the hiring of the teacher.

In the state of Missouri, Dr. Hobbs says that a small elementary school with less than 100 students is now offering Spanish 3 and reminded those of us in attendance that children are not intimidated by technology. In 1993, Missouri had two way interactive video (ITV) in 134 schools in only three (3) school districts. In the year 2003, they have grown to 225 school districts with ITV capability.

ITV provides students unlimited opportunities with virtual field trips to zoos, science and cultural centers around the world. Advanced Placement classes can be offered to schools where the classes have low enrollment by sharing resources with schools of similar size through an educational consortium. For example: Small school (A) cannot offer a music theory teacher with only a handful of students desiring the

What is the price tag of Distance Learning? The capital cost to wire and fully equip a classroom is less than \$30,000 which includes Poly Com View Stations that allow teachers and students to see and hear each other simultaneously on video monitors or large as life video screens. T-1 telecommunication lines are already in many of our classrooms in West Virginia and the operating costs are reduced greatly,

Ramey meets the Challenge...



Challenge West Virginia Lincoln County Fellow Thomas Ramey was this year's winner of the "Meeting the Challenge Award." Each year the award is presented to a person who has worked, in an outstanding manner, in support of Challenge West Virginia's mission. Ramey has worked tirelessly over the past year on a legal challenge to school consolidation in Lincoln County. Pictured above are Challenge West Virginia Preston County Fellow Jana Freeman and Ramey.

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to as low as \$100 per month, when school districts take advantage of subsidies available through the Federal Communications Commission's E-rate program.

New Construction vs ITV--- comparison:

A new consolidated middle school can easily have a price tag of \$11million dollars in land acquisition and construction costs plus the cost of busing students out of their community. \$11 million dollars spent on distance learning would provide ITV in three hundred and sixty-six (366) classrooms, provide the equal educational opportunities to many children across the county and bring the education to where our children live. Just imagine the \$30 million set to be spent on a single consolidated high school in Lincoln County--that would provide ITV in one thousand (1,000) classrooms.

When asked about the benefits of ITV in meeting the demands of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, Vicki Hobbs was quick to point out that;

(1) Teachers can meet additional and new certification requirements through the use of ITV.

(2) Links can be established with other schools in the district, thus eliminating the need for the physical transfer (busing) students to a different school in the district.

(3) Paraprofessionals

(teacher aides) can work toward a degree without having to leave the community to attend classes.

our school bus policy here in West Virginia.

Those attending the conference had lunch in

afternoon on his more than 15 years of experience in working with distance learning. He shared his expertise from purchasing the equipment to setting up the classrooms for distance learning. Interactive video (ITV), Video Conferencing, Two Way Video, and Compressed Video is all the same thing according to Mr. Johnson and has many benefits and uses, such as teachers communicating to teachers, students to teacher, principals to the county central office, principals to principals and county administrators to state offices.

A new consolidated school may meet the SBA economies of scale and now offer additional classes, but what have we accomplished when the class enrollment for these new courses is so low that we still cannot justify hiring a teacher on site? ITV could eliminate any further relocation of families when parents feel that they must move from one county to another when their children cannot get the classes being offered in larger schools.

Challenge West Virginia believes that distance learning technology is truly an alternative to consolidation and would provide those classes that are currently not being offered at smaller rural schools and those with very low enrollment.



Challenge West Virginia fellows from around the state pose with the John Marshall statue at Marshall University, during the annual conference.

(4) The required Supplemental Educational Services can be the consortium of smaller schools sharing expertise and resources that will provide a valuable service to students that are now behind.

What about the disciplinary measures available for the teachers? Dr. Hobbs stated that Missouri uses a student enrollment contract with parental consent on the rules and expectations of the students. They also use video monitors and a remote principal can be contacted by phone, which sounds much like

the Don Morris room and were entertained by the Marshall University Choral group. After lunch, the group learned that distance learning is currently taking place in Mason, Pendleton, McDowell, Mingo and Wayne County school systems through the Rural Educational Research and Development Center at Marshall University (Berkeley County will be next in the spring of 2004).

Mr. David Johnson, Director for Distributive Education in Technology at Marshall University spoke to the group in the

This 'n that from around the state

• The W.Va. Board of Education is asking W.Va. Attorney General Darrell McGraw to drop his plans to file a lawsuit against the federal government, challenging unfunded mandates in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. State education officials say the new law will cost West Virginia taxpayers between \$30 million and \$70 million over the next few years, just to comply with the Act. Federal education officials, however, claim that West Virginia is receiving more education funding than ever before. The State BOE passed a resolution recently, resolving that it would not become a voluntary plaintiff in the case. The final decision will be left up to the Governor, the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Department of Education and the Arts, a state agency which is a separate entity from the W.Va. Department of Education and the W.Va. Board of Education. At least 12 other states are considering such a lawsuit, as is the National Education Association.

• It was recently revealed that Gubernatorial candidate Lloyd Jackson, a former state senator and member of the W.Va. Board of Education, has moved out of his native Lincoln County, so that his children can receive better educations. Jackson has rented a house in Charleston, so that one of his children can attend George Washington High School. Another one of Jackson's children attends an out-of-state boarding school. Many Lincoln County citizens are openly hostile to Jackson, due to his support for forced school consolidation.

• The Preston County Board of Education owes the W.Va. Department of Education more than \$1 million due to inaccurate student enrollment numbers. The county erroneously reported pre-kindergarten students as full-time students. State assistance to county boards of education is based on enrollment numbers, therefore, the state overpaid Preston County. In 2001 Boone County was overpaid by the state, and state officials say no repayment has ever been made.

• In December, the W.Va. School Building Authority will distribute nearly \$200 million in school construction money. The money comes from a bond sale and the bonds will be re-paid by revenues from the state lottery. County superintendents of schools will compete for the cash during presentations to the SBA on November 17 and 18. Jefferson County plans to ask for \$35 million for a new high school and renovations to an existing high



school. McDowell County, which is under state control, wants \$10 million for a new high school and two elementary schools. Mingo County will request funding to close and consolidate four high schools. The Logan County BOE plans to ask for more than \$20 million to build a new consolidated high school to house students from Chapmanville High School in Logan County and Harts High School in Lincoln County. Earlier this year, Logan County voters defeated a bond levy proposal, which would have provided more than \$5 million in local money to match an SBA grant for the school.

• Monongalia County voters have approved a proposed bond levy. Proceeds from the bond sales will go to build a new University High School, build two new grade schools and renovate three other schools. The amount of the bond issue will be \$50 million.

• Kanawha County voters passed a hotly contested excess levy in October. The levy passed by a margin of only 224 votes. The final vote tally was 14,918 for and 14,694 against. The levy will raise \$44 million for current expenses over the next five years.

• The Mingo County BOE will hold school closure hearings this month. A hearing on the closure of Varney Grade School is set for Nov. 24 and a hearing on Burch Middle School is scheduled for Nov. 25. The county is also planning an excess levy election on Nov. 22.

• The W.Va. Supreme Court of Appeals has refused to hear an appeal from an order of the Circuit Court of Pocahontas County, which removed two members of the Pocahontas County BOE from office. In March, a special three-judge panel ordered that BOE members Kenneth Vance and Kermit Friel be removed from the board. The circuit judges found that both men were ineligible to serve on the board when they were sworn-in, due to the fact that both men held other public offices. Vance was employed as a deputy in the Pocahontas County Assessor's office and Friel was serving on the governing board of the Pocahontas County Public Service District. The court ruled that both positions fit the definition of a "public office" and were incompatible with simultaneous service on a county board of education. After being removed, both men resigned from the additional offices and were re-appointed to the board by the remaining three members.



**Challenge
West Virginia**

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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 the Mountain State 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.

We Support Small Schools!

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