



Mezzatesta: Should parents have students tested? **WVDE Estimates Future NCLB Costs**

by Jason B. Keeling

The Legislature has received monthly interim updates from the W.Va. Department of Education on the state's progress regarding the No Child Left Behind Act. On Tuesday (Dec. 9) Deputy State Schools Superintendent Steve Paine said based upon "professional assumptions" over the next four years it could cost an additional \$95 million to reach all impoverished students in the state's public schools, not just those in Title I schools.

All public schools failing to meet standards set by the state under direction of NCLB are identified as needing improvement. Schools receiving Title I funds are subject to the law's sanctions, which include increased professional development, supplemental education services, and school choice among other things.

In order for a school to receive Title I moneys, at least 50 percent of its students must qualify for free/reduced lunches, according to Paine, who said there are approximately 70,000 low socioeconomic status students in non-Title I schools in West Virginia, which means providing additional services for those students would require either added federal funding or state and local dollars.

WVDE officials established the \$95 million figure by calculating a per-pupil cost to provide NCLB related services to all the state's impoverished students, he said.

Sen. Steve Harrison (R-Kanawha) said the state department's estimation calculated funding for all impoverished students, while many of those students receive instruction in schools that meet

NCLB's provisions. He asked Paine to have the figure re-estimated.

The federal government is funding 19 percent of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's requirements currently, but IDEA committed a 40 percent federal rate of funding, said Paine. "These rigorous and unprecedented times call for rigorous and unprecedented funding," he said. If the federal government fulfilled 40 percent of IDEA's funding, the state would receive an additional \$52 million annually, he said.

Sen. Robert Plymale (D-Wayne) said the state has constructed a single accountability system, but providing the necessary services to all the state's students would be difficult without increased funds.

Plymale and fellow Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability co-chair Del. Jerry Mezzatesta (D-Hampshire), expressed frustration regarding the federal government's handling of NCLB, particularly in terms of funding and requirements placed on special education students, who Mezzatesta says are becoming targets of peer criticism because of lower testing performances.

Special education students are required by federal law to have an Individualized Education Plan, which often modifies instruction below a student's actual grade level, but NCLB requires them to perform equally with their peers, according to Mezzatesta. "Two federal laws are in direct conflict with each other," he said.

Plymale said the law has significantly reduced local control of

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OVERVIEW

STATS

2003 Regular Session:	<i>Adjourned Sine Die</i>
Days Until 2004 Regular Session:	33
Interim Meetings Remaining:	January 2004

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QUOTE

"If we don't question, and we don't get to the bottom of it, then our students get short changed, and our kids get a bum rap." — *Del. Jerry Mezzatesta (D-Hampshire) in reference to areas of the No Child Left Behind Act that he says need to be revisited by the U.S. Department of Education.*

Middle and High School Performance Studied

by Jason B. Keeling

The performance of West Virginia's schools are affected by several factors, but the educational achievement of parents, regional per capita income and poverty rates are the greatest determinates, according to Michael Hicks, an economist with Marshall University's Center for Business and Economic Research.

High school performance is affected by teacher education levels, particularly at the 10th and 11th grade levels, while smaller class sizes, high attendance, and lower drop-out rates also have some impact on higher achievement, he said.

The center's research found that for middle and high schools, a building's age, number of administrators, presence of alternative education (home or private schooling), or the school's size did not

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Wise: K-12 Budget Cuts Possible

by Eric Eyre

Gov. Bob Wise called on state Board of Education members Wednesday to say where education spending can be cut for the next school year.

In recent years, the governor has ordered most state agencies to reduce spending to make up for budget shortfalls. But he has spared schools and the state Department of Education.

West Virginia spends about \$1.6 billion on K-12 education every year — about 53 percent of the state's total budget.

"I can no longer leave that off the table," Wise said during a Wednesday state Board of Education meeting. "There's absolutely no way I can starve every agency down and leave 53 percent off and out of consideration. I've got to believe, at \$1.6 billion, we can find some savings."

State board members are expected to discuss Wise's request today. They could recommend cuts. Or, more likely, they might ask Wise to tell them how much they'll have to spend on schools next year.

"Like everybody else, it would be difficult," said state schools Superintendent David Stewart. "You have to determine what you're probably no longer going to do or what you may be able to do more efficiently. We have not begun that discussion."

Some state school officials speculated privately Wednesday that Wise's directive was intended to spark support for legislation that would raise existing fees and establish new revenue sources, such as legalized table gambling at racetracks. More revenue would help stave off cuts in public education.

Wise has pledged not to raise sales and personal income taxes. He has said he would consider signing table games legislation but

would not introduce it.

State school officials also noted that legislators, not Wise, will have the final say on whether to cut money from schools.

The state Department of Education manages only about \$28 million of K-12 education spending each year — less than 2 percent of the education budget.

The rest goes to county school boards, which distribute cash to schools.

Wise said he doesn't want to cut money that goes directly to schools and teaching. But state school board members said there isn't much else to cut.

"When we go to cut, getting a significant amount may not happen," said board member Barbara Fish.

School spending cuts would require legislators to change the state school funding formula.

In that case, county school officials would likely be forced to cut teacher and service worker pay, which makes up about 80 percent of school budgets.

Teachers didn't get a pay raise from the Legislature last year. They're expected to ask for one next month during the start of the legislative session.

In a rare appearance before the state school board, Wise said Wednesday he came in the "full spirit of candor."

The state has a projected \$120 million budget shortfall for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins July 1.

"It is a tough picture," Wise said. "I'd like to tell you this is a one-year occurrence. But this is a situation we're going to have to come to grips with."

Wise said he has made education a "top priority" in his administration. He said he pried loose additional money for education last year in supplemental appropriations in response to legislators' spending cuts.

He also said, at times, he has fought "more aggressively" than state school board members for K-12 school funding.

Wise said he could give board members a "bottom line" K-12 education budget for the upcoming fiscal year, which starts in July. But he'd prefer they suggest cuts by early next month.

"When tough choices have to be made, you know best where to make them," Wise said.

Education spending has increased in recent years, but most of the additional money went to the teachers' retirement system.

School officials and county board members have pleaded for more money, especially with new federal mandates under the No Child Left Behind Act.

State officials estimate that West Virginia schools need another \$70 million a year in federal funding to help struggling schools meet the new standards.

Last Friday, Wise ordered a 2.9 percent budget reduction for most state agencies because of an expected \$20 million shortfall for the current fiscal year. Wise imposed a 1.4 percent cut for higher education while exempting K-12 public schools.

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The Legislature provides county board of education members, state policymakers, school administrators, and others information, opinion and commentary regarding West Virginia legislative issues. This publication does not necessarily reflect the official views, opinions or policies of the WWSBA, unless specifically stated.

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WWSBA Monthly

DEC. 19 LOOK FOR THE LATEST ON ASSOCIATION MATTERS.

Secretary Paige's Portrayal of Education Funding is Inconsistent

by Kay Goodwin

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige recently wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* that charges of underfunding for the No Child Left Behind bill are part of a “semantic game,” and propagated by “special interests and their allies in the Democratic Party.” The implication is that the funding problems are an invention of Washington insiders who seek to leverage them for political purposes. If you believe that, let me recommend that you go find a public school teacher and ask him or her how well No Child Left Behind is working at ground level - you will find that, while federal funding for education has increased slightly under this administration, it hasn't increased nearly as much as the new costs stemming from NCLB. The truth is that the Bush administration is not providing the funding states need to comply with No Child Left Behind, in spite of the fact that the law guarantees that states cannot be required to fund compliance measures themselves.

Secretary Paige's portrayal of the federal funding increases for NCLB is so remarkably inconsistent that no critical reader could accept it. In the first paragraph of his commentary, he claimed that K-12 education spending has increased by 40% under the Bush administration, but later in the same paragraph he indicated that funding has risen by \$11 billion to \$470 billion - that's only about 2.3%. The secretary conveniently failed to point out that the 40% increase represents only federal funds - funds that are just a small slice of the education funding pie. Even using Secretary Paige's generous figures, the federal government still provides less than a tenth of all K-12 education funding. The administration's vaunted 40% increase in funding

amounts to very little compared to the funding provided by state and local governments.

And there lies the great problem with No Child Left Behind. The Bush administration has made the rules, and left state and local governments to foot the bill. The provisions of the No Child Left Behind Law have placed an enormous new financial burden on state and local governments, but the federal increases in funding aren't nearly enough to bear that burden. This couldn't have come at a worse time, given the weakness of the economy; just when state and local governments across the country are struggling financially, the federal government has demanded expensive new programming without increasing funding enough to pay for it.

For as long as there have been public schools, they have been locally funded and locally controlled. Under No Child Left Behind, the Republican-controlled Congress is trying to enforce federal control (making education much more expensive in the process), without picking up a significantly greater portion of the funding. Secretary Paige says that money is not the main factor in providing good education. I agree. Unfortunately, the Bush administration has pushed our local schools into a position where they can't use their money to improve education, because they have to use it to jump through hoops for the federal government.

Until this administration is prepared to provide enough funding to implement its programs, it should leave control of education to those who pay for it

— *Goodwin is W.Va. Secretary of Education and the Arts. This piece was submitted to The Wall Street Journal on Nov. 3, an edited version was printed by the journal on Nov. 15.*

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public education.

Making an emphatic point, Mezzatesta urged parents across the state to take advantage of one of NCLB's provisions by choosing *not* to have their children tested. Although at least 95 percent of a school's students must be tested in order to avoid being flagged, Mezzatesta said such an approach would force the U.S. Department of Education to “write up” more schools and address areas of the law that he says need to be reviewed.

“If we don't question, and we don't get to the bottom of it, then our students get short changed, and our kids get a bum rap,” he said.

Paine said the Virginia Department of Education, when submitting its state accountability plan, urged the USDE to take more of a “common sense” approach to the law, with which he said he personally agreed.

Addressing other matters, Paine said the W.Va. Board of Edu-

cation would be conducting a review of its policies and taking a greater look at its role as the chief education policymaking body in the state.

He also said the WVDE was working with principals across the state to review the factors that may inhibit them from fully performing their role as a school's instructional leader.

The state department has been criticized by Mezzatesta for taking instructors out of the classroom, which he reiterated at LOCEA's meeting, specifically requesting the Office of Education Performance Audits to monitor such.

Paine said the department had initially provided training for educators to answer the many questions in the field arising from NCLB's complexity. A more coordinated and systematic approach would be taken in the future, with less of a “knee jerk” response, he said.

— *Keeling is WVSBA executive assistant.*

BRIEFLY

- Education Subcommittee B: Public Education, on Dec. 8 finalized its 2003 interim report for the Joint Committee on Education, which will convene in January preceding the 2004 regular session.

The subcommittee made no recommendations relating to the school calendar, compulsory school attendance age, library services, the grievance procedure, or transportation. The only recommendation was to give the W.Va. Department of Education and Regional Education Service Agencies a greater role in administering school counselor related issues.

Sen. Larry Edgell (D-Wetzel), the subcommittee's chair, said the areas in which no recommendations were made could still be considered during the upcoming regular session.

- More coordination may be needed between public and higher education officials to address a state shortage of Registered Nurses, according to the W.Va. Department of Education's Stan Hopkins in Dec. 9 comments before the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability. Creating a framework to advance Licensed Practical Nurses within community and technical colleges could possibly achieve such, he said.

PERFORMANCE STUDY

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affect its performance, according to Hicks. The research's conclusions were drawn from 1997-2001 data.

The study also found no correlations between teacher experience or salaries with educational outcomes.

The affects of the above factors within elementary schools, the efficiencies of school resource usage, and the affect of non-standard test takers on school performance are yet to be determined, he said.

Hicks, whose report was conducted at the request of Senate Education Chairman Robert Plymale (D-Wayne), said the center would be establishing policy recommendations in terms of where additional funding could best be allocated to benefit education. A more thorough review could be conducted by forming a team to specifically identify more effective education-related measures for future study, he said.

Hicks, in his presentation before members of the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability (Dec. 9), said economies of scale was one factor that also merited analysis, but that the respective cost figures would have to be obtained to evaluate such. See www.marshall.edu/cber for the full report.

— *Keeling is WVSBA executive assistant.*

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