



Committee on Legislation to Meet Again in January

The W. Va. School Boards Association's Committee on Legislation (COL) will meet on Saturday, Jan. 8 in Charleston to finalize WVSBA's 2005 regular session *Priorities and Philosophies*. Complimentary meeting space has been provided by the St. Paul Lutheran Church, ELCA. Directions to be forwarded in advance of the meeting.

The COL met Nov. 14 in Charleston, with committee members discussing the 2005 regular session and focusing on revisions to the organization's long-standing listing of *Legislative Philosophies*. That document, first developed in 1990, is revised annually to reflect organizational sentiment regarding legislative issues such as school funding, curricular matters, student achievement and other matters of policy,

according to COL Chairman and WVSBA Executive Director Howard M. O'Cull, Ed.D.

During the Nov. 14 meeting, the committee discussed phrasing of an objective involving inter-district sharing of administrative services, and well as statements of philosophy regarding the Budget Digest along with school funding and Ethics Commission "revisions," according to O'Cull, who said the COL will "revisit these and other issues in January."

During the week of Nov. 29, COL members will receive a mailing for planning of the January session, O'Cull said.

Given association policy, the Jan. 8 COL meeting is open to all WVSBA members, county superintendents, W. Va. Board of Education members and the public.

Training Standards Reviewed in Morgantown

The W. Va. School Boards Association/W. Va. Board of Education County School Board Member Training Standards Review Committee (TSRC) met Nov. 16 in Morgantown (Ramada Inn).

These are among items considered at the meeting:

- County board member training records were reviewed for the year ending June 30, 2004. According to WVSBA records, which are maintained on behalf of the WVBE, 290 county boards members served in FY04 (includes appointees), with 277 members receiving training credits. The average WVSBA member received 14.08 credit hours training. (Members not receiving the required seven clock hours training were appointed following the Primary Election filing period, although several of these 15 members did receive some clock hours training.)

- The WVSBA staff, using the report provided to WVBE members, determined that the association's 2003 Fall Conference drew participants from all but two counties (Braxton and Gilmer), proving to be the most widely-attended meeting. Similarly, the organization's 2004 Winter Conference also was well-attended.

- The TSRC received a report regarding FY05 train-

ing hours credit received by WVSBA members. According to that report, 161 members have received the required seven clock hours training. Shirley Davidson, WVSBA Administrative Assistant, pointed out that several members will have received the seven clock hours training once required superintendent evaluation training verification is received along with other outstanding training requests. Members have until June 30, 2005 to receive the seven clock hours training.

Online Training

- The committee, based on an inquiry posed by the association executive board, concurs that online training should be continued, but that this type training be for a "short" period, and that it should include an "optional" segment regarding narratives supplied by program participants. WVSBA members would enroll in advance and once the enrollment "window" ends, no additional enrollees would be accepted. The program would be open to WVBE members and county superintendents. The prototype online training initiative was conducted in conjunction with Duquesne University (Pittsburgh) last year. While training modules would be "basic," concentrating on "mechanics" of school board service—school law, for example—more indepth programming shouldn't be excluded, according to the TSRC directive. Dreamcatcher Inc., a Charleston-based Internet-provider firm, will provide technical hosting for the program. TSRC officials concurred to support a WVSBA initiative to use W. Va. School Board Effectiveness Project (WVSBEP) to underwrite the program. WVSBA has requested these dollars from the WVDE.

School Finance Workshop

- WVSBA officials should encourage county board members to participate in various types of training, includ-

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"We are a nation of many nationalities, many races, many religions – bound together by a single unity, the unity of freedom and equality." – Franklin D. Roosevelt

Leadership Program Planning Has Begun

Planning for the Association's 2005 May Leadership Conference in Morgantown (Lakeview Scanticon Resort and Conference Center) has begun, according to Association Executive Director Howard M. O'Cull, Ed.D. The program will be held May 20/21.

In lieu of the annual Spring Training Teleconference, 2005 legislative matters will be discussed at this Conference, based on a videotape to be forwarded to members in advance of the conference program. (The same format was utilized for county superintendent evaluation training.)

In addition to the legislative programming, several other venues are being planned, including review of a new school board governance study which seeks to "redesign" school boards through a more "corporate model." O'Cull was introduced to that study in a recent educational research summit held in Cleveland, Ohio: "While some of this information isn't transferable to school boards, the gist of the work

is," he said.

Other programming will feature an "interdisciplinary approach" to governance, as well as more on "informational leadership." There also will be some "nuts-and-bolts" programming, according to O'Cull.

"This will be an intense, high quality program both for county board members and county superintendents," he said.

The program is being modeled after a 1992 WVSBA program which was dubbed a "university of boardsmanship." It was held at Marshall University.

"We plan to develop this concept, expanding the venues, and scheduling it biennially," he said.

Program content is to be approved by the W. Va. School Board Association/W. Va. Board of Education Training Standards Review Committee (TSRC) early next year. TSRC members were briefed about the program in their Nov. 17 meeting in Morgantown (Ramada Inn).

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ing training offered by "vendors" such as the WVDE. In discussing this matter, WVSBA Executive Director Howard M. O'Cull, Ed.D., mentioned that several county board members have expressed interest in a "board members-only" school finance workshop to be offered in Fall 2005. Members have requested that the Office of School Finance con-

duct this program. According to Joe Panetta, who heads this Office, fewer board members attended the 2004 program. Several members have said they would attend a WVSBA-only program conducted using a Friday/Saturday format. As permitted by statute, this program could be considered a "second part" of new board member's orientation, although the TSRC and WVBE would have to approve that recommendation, based on committee guidelines and state board policy.

WVDE Leadership Training

- On basis of a review of recent association training programs, the WVSBA staff was encouraged to continue high quality training, blending both the "theoretical" with the "practicalities" of boardsmanship. In regard to the WVDE's school team training, the TSRC recommends that county board members not participate in these sessions per se, but that county superintendents provide members with information about "on-going" programs—prior to completion of a five-year plan regarding school improvement. It is suggested that some "informational training" regarding school leadership teams be undertaken by WVSBA in cooperation with Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs).

- Due to the success of the association's recent use of videotape training, the TSRC said WVSBA should continue to explore this venue, although reiterating that all seven clock hours training shouldn't be received via this format—or the on-line training format mentioned above.

- Committee members urged the association to continue its annual programming with the W. Va. Association of Counties, the County Commissioners Association of West Virginia and the state Municipal League. WVSBA staff did comment on the difficulty of scheduling this session given various meeting-related activities of the groups involved. TSRC Chairman Ron Spencer (Doddridge) commented on the value of all local officials "sitting down to work together" as did several other committee members.

Spencer, a WVBE member, chairs the committee. Sheila Hamilton (Jefferson), another WVBE member, chairs a sub-committee responsible for initial screening of members' non-WVSBA training requests. O'Cull is TSRC secretary.

WVSBA Monthly provides county board of education members, superintendents, and state policymakers with information regarding WVSBA programs and activities. This publication does not necessarily reflect the official views, opinions or policies of the WVSBA, unless specifically stated.

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Project Leadership Evaluation Taking Shape

The W. Va. School Boards Association has contracted with RMS Strategies, a Charleston-based public opinion/research firm, to determine components for a proposed leadership induction program for executive-level public school administrators, according to WVSBA Executive Director Howard M. O’Cull, Ed.D.

O’Cull announced that the online evaluation survey will be conducted in early January 2005, and will involve a “cross-section” of the public education community, including county schools superintendents, members of the W. Va. Board of Education, county board members, House and Senate Education members, among others, as well as a representative sampling of persons having participated in Project Leadership, a prototype induction program conducted by WVSBA in 2002 and 2003 and underwritten by the Claude E. Worthington Benedum Foundation (Pittsburgh) and the W. Va. Board of Education. The W. Va. Association of School Administrators also participated in the three PL programs.

Guy, Zervos on Advisory Committee

Results from the RMS Strategies survey will be used to develop a prototype executive educators’ academy which O’Cull hopes to have operational by January 2006. A 19-member advisory board, which will include past PL attendees as well as two county superintendents and three county board members, will then design a prototype program. Karen Larry and Lydia McCue, officials with the W. Va. Department of Education, have been appointed by WVDE to serve on the committee as well as Lyn Guy, Monroe County Schools Superintendent, and Nick Zervos, Regional Education Service Agency VI Executive Director. Guy and Zervos represent WVASA. Based on this program design, O’Cull hopes to acquire foundation or grant funding to underwrite the program.

“I’m excited about this type program. We’ll have some good information from the RMS work as well as input from the advisory committee. Once this information is received, WVSBA will seek to secure funding for the program. Given the need for highly-qualified executive-level public education administrators, this program can be of critical utility,” said O’Cull.

Electronic Survey Format

The survey, according to O’Cull, will take about 10 minutes to complete—given the “concise” electronic format.

“Based on PL attendees’ response to become involved in designing a future prototype program, we should be able to garner some useful planning and development information,” said O’Cull, adding that about 80 of the 130 PL attendees “applied” to become part of the PL advisory committee. “This is an excellent response, indicating that our work was and is on track, and that we can meet the training needs and desires of those who want to become executive administrators, including county superintendents,” O’Cull said.

The executive director will suggest that any executive level program, or portions thereof, be considered for “conversion” to graduate/doctoral-level coursework, seeking to secure this programmatic approach from W. Va. University or Marshall University.

The original PL programming was designed for school administrators who, at some point in their career, desire to become county superintendents. The first PL session was held in Morgantown in December 2002.

Student Achievement Efforts

While concentrating to some extent on “student achievement,” future executive level programming should focus more on the “essentials” of executive-level leadership, based on a multi-disciplinary format, according to O’Cull. Although, he cautions that the RMS Strategies and advisory committee input should drive any final program design.

WVSBA members, among other education officials, are increasingly questioning the W. Va. Department of Education’s stress of “student achievement” seemingly to the “exclusion” of more inclusive executive educator leadership development, according to O’Cull.

The W. Va. Education Association and the state Federation of Teachers are beginning to make these observations public, especially with their claims that additional demands have been placed on teachers, according to WVEA’s Tom Lange, who has communicated such a sentiment to W. Va. Department of Education officials—a move prompting WVDE officials to secure letters from county superintendents supporting the Department’s county leadership program.

According to O’Cull, WVSBA members, meeting in mid-November, also voiced similar concerns—concerns which were shared with the committee that sets school board training needs.

“The upshot is that school administrators are being held captive to a school achievement monolith which, in many respects, leads to less overall knowledge regarding educational leadership, or which leads to inordinate rigidity and concentration on this type induction when there is so much more to educational leadership than school improvement per se,” said O’Cull.

WVDE Listserve Started

All county board members and superintendents having supplied their e-mail addresses to the W. Va. School Boards Association staff will receive periodic e-mailings from the W. Va. Board/Department of Education in regard to upcoming WVBE meetings and state board policies placed on comment, among other matters.

WVBE members Barbara Fish (president) and Priscilla Haden (secretary) spear-headed this initiative.

Contact WVSBA Administrative Assistant Shirley Davidson at sdavidson@wvsba.org to be placed on the listserv and to update if your e-mail address changes.

“We thank all state board members, State Superintendent Dr. David Stewart and W. Va. Department of Education officials for their desire to communicate with county board members, especially for this two-way means of communication,” said WVSBA President Dr. Rodney Thompson (Wayne).

The initiative was discussed at WVSBA’s October Presidents Retreat and at the November WVBE meeting in Beckley.

WVSBA Meetings Policy Clarified

W. Va. School Boards Association President Dr. Rodney Thompson (Wayne) and Executive Director Howard M. O’Cull, Ed.D. have issued the following statement regarding WVSBA meeting attendance:

1. All association meetings are open to WVSBA members, county superintendents, W. Va. Board of Education members, W. Va. Department of Education staff members and the public.

2. If or when WVSBA Executive Board members “should” or “are” to be present at an association meeting, mailings will indicate such. Otherwise, executive board attendance is optional with members being “copied” as to the schedule of meetings.

3. The watchdog group West Virginia Wants to Know has expressed an interest in attending and “monitoring” WVSBA meetings. Consistent with WVSBA meeting policy, that request will be honored, although WVVTK officials have not attended the last few association meetings. Officials from Challenge West Virginia, a small schools group, also may be interested in attending WVSBA meetings, according to county school board members who are part of that group. Again, CWV members’ attendance would be consistent with membership meeting policies, although CWV officials have yet to attend a WVSBA meeting.

4. WVSBA members, when receiving pocket calendars

later this year, will be given a listing of upcoming association meetings, including some meetings scheduled through the 2007 Presidents Retreat.

5. As requested by the WVSBA Executive Board, the association’s Web site will be updated to include a “calendar of events,” which also is to be published in various association publications. “This calendar will be most helpful in planning,” according to Thompson.

6. Members wishing to have items appear on executive board agendas should contact either O’Cull or Thompson.

7. Finally, members may receive remuneration for their meeting attendance, according to W. Va. Code §18-5-4, although such remuneration is subject to local or county board policies, according to O’Cull

For more information regarding meetings, please contact O’Cull or Thompson.

Stay informed.

On the Web at:
WVSBA.ORG

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