



Retreat / Legislative Committee Two Meetings Upcoming

The W. Va. School Boards Association's Committee on Legislation, commonly referred to as the Committee of 55, will meet Friday, October 15 in Davis (Canaan Valley Resort and Conference Center). The meeting commences at 11:00 a.m., to be followed by lunch.

Committee-related materials will be forwarded to members early next week.

The meeting coincides with the association's annual Presidents Retreat, which will commence at 1:00 p.m. on October 15.

Retreat Program

The retreat program includes these items:

1. An interactive workshop relating to use of information needed for effective board decisionmaking, concentrating on acquisition of information, interpretation of information and evaluation of information both as an individual board member and as a corporate board and county superintendent. All participants will be involved in role-playing activities.

2. A review of laws and W. Va. Board of Education policies which are directed at board presidents in particular, as well as advice on complying with Open Meetings Laws and the like.

3. Presentations by various state officials. This will occur on Saturday morning October 16.

4. Review of current trends and issues in public education, including state educational initiatives.

5. The annual 'sharing time' for participants.

Although not designed specifically for county superintendents, these officials are invited to attend. Over the past few years, a few superintendents have attended.

The Committee on Legislation will consider issues WVSBA likely will promote in the 2005 Regular Session.

WVSBA Executive Director Howard M. O'Cull, Ed.D., serves as committee chairman.

The program is open to county board presidents, vice presidents and/or other persons, as designated by each county board.

High Marks Given for Anniversary Conference

Programming for the W. Va. School Boards Association's 50th Anniversary Conference received high marks from the 226 attendees, based on meeting evaluations.

Members particularly appreciated the W. Va. Department of Education's program focusing on student achievement, leading many of those completing evaluation forms to say that the emphasis gives boards, in the words of one participant, "a place at the table when it comes to what we're (boards and superintendents) really about."

The Marshall University presentation regarding factors that affect student achievement also was well-received, although several participants said they wished to hear from Ohio University researcher Craig Howley at a future session. Other participants said they would have welcomed a panel discussion. Howley has written several reports about the subject of school consolidation and also has conducted research relating to factors affecting student achievement.

WVSBA and W. Va. Association of School Administrator officials' presentation on the newly-required county superintendent evaluation policy drew favorable response, although some participants wished it had been one session and said it should have included a "panel-like" presentation in the words of one participant.

While workshops were given high marks as far as timely content, some sentiment was expressed that these sessions should be held first on the Saturday portion of the conference, with a motivational presentation placed at the end of the conference (general session).

WVSBA Executive Director Howard M. O'Cull, Ed.D., said the conference-related suggestions – along with several recommendations that the conference be confined to one day so that members would lose less employment time – will be reviewed. As for a change in conference format, members will be polled in regard to this suggestion using a scientifically-structured poll.

Past Presidents

Several past presidents were honored at the banquet, each making brief inspirational comments to county board members regarding the value of the association, some of its trials and woes, and, in the words of one member, "its many accomplishments" since being founded in 1952 (incorporated in 1954). Ms. Rosalie Detch (Greenbrier) was the most senior of past presidents attending, having served in the post in the late 1950s when legislation was enacted which allowed boards to join the organization. She received a standing ovation for her inspirational remarks about the organization's early mission and its success over the years.

See **HIGH MARKS** on page 3

INSIDE

- Groups Address Evaluation Policy Inquiries.....2
- Board Evaluation Questions Answered.....3
- -Odds and Ends -4

"The purpose of education is to keep a culture from being drowned in senseless repetitions, each of which claims to offer a new insight." — *Harold Rosenberg*

Groups Address Evaluation Policy Inquiries

Editor's Note: Several county superintendents and county board members have posed inquiries and questions to W. Va. School Boards Association and W. Va. Association of School Administrators officials concerning the required county superintendent evaluation. The following are responses to those questions, based on the statute and policies requiring this evaluation and discussions with W. Va. Department of Education staff members familiar with the evaluative process. As WVSBA and WVASA officials understand, the department officials are issuing suggestions relating to the evaluation that will be consistent with the information provided below.

The following are among questions WVSBA and WVASA officials have received concerning required superintendent evaluation (W. Va. Code §18-4-6, adopted in 2003, and W. Va. Board of Education Policy §5309, adopted in January). Based on the organizations' interpretation of both the statute and policy, county boards will be in compliance if their evaluation policy addresses the following:

1. **Adoption of goals** for the superintendent to accomplish during a given period of time which may exceed one year. Goals do not have to relate exclusively to student achievement, although that is likely to be a central focus. Goals, as adopted, must include a means of measurement and, as listed above, timelines. Most county boards, as reported to the association, are adopting between five-seven goals. The W. Va. Board of Education-approved template provided to all county board members and superintendents

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provides a format for listing goals, their timelines, components and measurement. Goals are to be adopted by September 15. **Based on discussions with W. Va. Department of Education officials, it is not necessary to provide the WVDOE with a listing of actual goals adopted. Rather, county boards are to report that this part of the process has been accomplished. (Goals, as adopted, become part of the superintendent's evaluation process and arguably 'personnel file.' Goals, however, can be adopted in a public meeting as some boards have done.)**

2. **The means the county board will use to assess the superintendent's performance in regard to "student achievement generally."** The WVSBA/WVASA-provided template, which has been approved by the state board of education, provides a listing of various evaluative items which can be used for this purpose. Boards using the template may use one, some or all of the provided assessment components. Evaluation of student achievement generally is a central part of the statute and state board policy.

3. **The means the county board will use to assess the superintendent's performance in regard to 'low-performing' schools.** This, too, is a central part of the statute and state board policy. 'Low-performing' schools—the term the statute and policy uses—is not defined, but may mean schools not meeting the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Adequate Yearly Progress requirement, or as defined by the county board and superintendent. The WVSBA/WVASA template lists suggested evaluative items in this category. Just as listed above, boards using the template may list one, all or some of the components. And, as stated above, the template has been approved by the state board.

4. **Information regarding the "process" of the evaluation.** This is a central tenet of both the statute and state-board approved evaluation policy. As illustrated in the WVSBA/WVASA materials provided to all county board members and superintendents, process is central, under-girding the entire evaluation effort. Refer to the WVSBA/WVASA template for a state-board approved process.

5. **The statute and policy spell out other OPTIONAL areas for evaluation, including school finance, personnel laws, informational leadership and the like.** The state-board approved template lists evaluative items in these areas. Due to the state board's emphasis on student achievement, some boards are confining their evaluation efforts to the required components listed above (Items 1-4). As with the other template items, boards may use one, all, or several of these components.

The following are some additional questions WVSBA and WVASA officials have received. Again, responses are based on the statute and state board policy as well as responses from WVDOE officials. These questions include the following:

Q. Does our board have to use the WVSBA/WVASA materials?

A. No. All evaluative documents are subject to WVDOE approval. The template, as adopted by the WVDOE, provides a state board of education "approved" format, including

evaluative components and a process for evaluation. The value in using the template components and process is that it is approved by the WVBOE. Modified template items or the addition of other evaluative components and/or processes also must receive WVBOE approval—and must meet the requirements of law and state board policy.

Q. If we've already turned in an evaluative document—prior to release of the WVSBA/WVASA materials, will it be approved?

A. By reading the law and state board policy, any previously submitted documents must encompass Items 1-4 listed above. Of central importance, within the law, is emphasis on process. Any such evaluative process documents also must meet the muster of state law and WVBOE policy.

Q. Will the WVDOE approve processes “other” than that outlined in the two associations’ documents?

A. That is a matter for WVDOE officials to decide. The two organizations, which represent both county boards and superintendents, have worked to provide a meaningful way to interpret the law and state board policy, with our ‘interpretation’ (template) having been approved by the WVBOE in August. Again, state department of education officials may interpret the evaluative process, or what’s required in the evaluation process ‘differently.’ The associations’ materials provide boards and superintendents guidance and, as we understand, are consistent with WVDOE interpretations of the evaluative process.

Q. Why was this statute adopted?

A. Given the emphasis on NCLB as well as student achievement, the procedures outlined in both the statute and process bring a fair, proper focus on this important educational endeavor. In combination with the WVBOE’s “West Virginia Achieves” effort, the evaluation procedure high-

lights student achievement.

Q. Is there too much emphasis on student achievement as part of this process?

A. Of course that is a matter of interpretation. WVSBA/WVASA officials see the entire evaluative process—and the student achievement thrust—as being exciting, positive and providing focus for county boards. County boards, however, are responsible for other areas and matters—as illustrated by the law. These, too, can be made part of the evaluation process.

Q. What are some ways county boards can use to concentrate on student achievement?

A. Boards may wish to take a cue from Grant County Superintendent Marsha Carr-Lambert, Ed.D., who has carved a place on each board agenda labeled ‘Student Achievement.’ At each regular board meeting a different ‘area’ of student achievement will be discussed by the GCBOE with possible recommendations. Carr-Lambert also has restructured county principals’ meetings to reflect this emphasis. By doing so, she says proper emphasis has been placed on student achievement—but not to the exclusion of other board items of business.

Q. Will the statute, policy and law be revisited?

A. Probably. After the first round of evaluations—WVSBA is responsible for compiling the various evaluation documents (not the actual evaluation results)—revisions may be in order.

Q. Our board has been “taken over” by the state. Are we responsible for evaluating our county superintendent?

A. No. The state superintendent, however, can require this type evaluation.

If you did not receive the WVSBA/WVASA materials, including the template and training videotape, please contact WVSBA.

Board Evaluation Questions Answered

The W. Va. School Boards Association staff has received a few questions concerning required county board evaluation. These are among questions:

Q. Can our board turn in completed evaluations earlier or later than the WVSBA-recommended schedule?

A. Yes. The schedule provided to members by WVSBA was to help manage the review and report process for each county’s evaluation. WVSBA Executive Director Howard M. O’Cull, Ed.D., spends about three hours preparing each board’s analysis and report.

Q. Will a different instrument be used in the future?

A. Yes. WVSBA has bought copyrights for the “(School) Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire” for three years. By that time, given evaluative results, a different instrument will be used. The statute requires the W. Va. Board of Education to select ‘an instrument’ (interpreted by W. Va. Department of Education officials as *one* instrument for statewide use). WVSBA is seeking a grant for establishment of a broad-based committee whose charge would be to develop a West Virginia-customized instrument, especially one that emphasizes student achievement. It will include components of the county superintendent evaluation template.

Q. Will there be training based on evaluation findings?

A. Yes. That’s one reason the statute requires a specific

instrument. Once evaluation results are aggregated, common training themes can be explored.

For additional questions, contact WVSBA.

HIGH MARKS

continued from page 1

Washington Post education writer Jay Mathews served as banquet speaker, outlining the positives and negatives of the “federal intrusion” emphasis on student achievement. He said time on task, high expectations and regulatory flexibility were keys to success with student achievement.

Committee Chairmen/Elections

In other conference-related business, the following persons were appointed to Committee positions:

- W.Va. Board of Education Policy Advisory Committee. Sue King (Greenbrier), chairperson;
- Committee on Policy and Resolutions. WVSBA President Dr. Rodney C. Thompson (Wayne), chairperson;
- Committee on Fiscal Management. Immediate Past President William Raglin (Kanawha), chairperson;
- Committee on Communications. President-Elect

- ODDS AND ENDS -

Debbie Thompson (Pleasants), chairperson. (She is no relation to R. Thompson); and,

- WVSBA Handbook Committee. Gene Bailey (Mercer) and a WVBOE member will chair this committee. State Board member Delores Cook (Boone) served as co-chair last year.

The Policy Advisory Committee will provide WVSBA's response to major state board policies. The Policy Committee will develop, for membership approval, a catalog of resolution statements about educational issues, outlining WVSBA's stand on each. Their work will be modeled after a similar National School Boards Association document. The Fiscal Management Committee will examine matters relating to association finances. The Committee on Communications, to which a WVBOE member will be invited to serve, will discuss matters relating to various WVSBA communications efforts. The Handbook Committee will work to publish the second edition of the organization's 2004 Handbook. Their revised Handbook will be issued in 2006.

Stilley, Wiseman

Lori Stilley, Ph.D., was elected as WVSBA Region VIII associate director for a term ending in March 2005. (She is eligible for reelection). Jack Wiseman (Jackson) was elected to represent the association on the W. Va. Secondary Schools Activities Commission for a three-year non-renewable term. One additional person was nominated for the Region VIII post, and four additional persons were nominated for the WVSSAC position.

The Association's FY06 Annual Business Meeting will be held in March 2005, with officers to be elected at that time.

- The Project Leadership Replication Grant Committee will meet in late October. Phil Boyle, Ph.D., will facilitate discussion regarding the establishment of an induction program for county superintendents. Once the model is developed, the W. Va. School Boards Association will solicit funding to establish the program.
- Doug Eadie, Ed.D., will present at the 2005 WVSBA Winter Conference, to be held in Charleston on March 11/12 (Embassy Suites Hotel). He has authored several books and articles on effective board/superintendent relations and its tie to student achievement. He has presented to both the National School Boards Association and the American Association of School Administrators.

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