



Executive Board planning retreat set for July 15 *Session will cover RESA issues, director evaluation*

The West Virginia School Boards Association's executive board will meet July 15 for a planning retreat in Dunbar. The meeting, which will be at the Regional Education Service Agency III offices, was announced this week by incoming WVSBA President Debbie Thompson (Pleasants).

The first retreat segment is a joint WVSBA-RESA executive directors' planning session.

"Our two groups will discuss common issues and look at ways RESAs can better serve county boards, especially boards with lesser efficiency of scale in terms of students or declining student enrollment," said WVSBA Executive Director Howard M. O'Cull, Ed.D.

O'Cull and RESA directors set preliminary retreat arrangements at a May 23 RESA meeting in Wheeling.

Thompson, who is a member of the RESA V board of directors, said she welcomed the idea of a joint meeting. "The association's governing board has discussed this type meeting for some time, and we're glad we've worked something out," she said.

WVSBA-RESA session to address common concerns

Thompson said the joint session is devoted to discussing common WVSBA and RESA concerns, including accept-

ing shared central office services; effectiveness of RESA programming; accountability for RESAs and similar issues.

RESA III Executive Director Chuck Nichols, a spokesman for the RESA directors, said he also welcomed the meeting.

"This is a time for dialogue — a time to see what we have in common and a time to build bridges between our organizations," Nichols said. "I want to commend our organizations for agreeing to this session."

President encourages all WVSBA members to attend

Among other items, the retreat agenda includes association planning for fiscal year 2006, the executive director's evaluation, a review of WVSBA programs and establishment

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Morgantown conference-goers want more *Leadership program guest speaker a hit with attendees*

"I was a bit concerned as to what I might gain from this conference but was pleasantly surprised and pleased by the session. Very good!" — Morgantown Leadership Conference participant

"Finally, we have a top notch speaker with important information and we don't have enough time. Please schedule him again. Also, more time for depth and specifics on how to develop the schedule." — Leadership Conference participant referring to Dr. R. Lynn Canady presentation

The WVSBA's Leadership Conference was well-received by the nearly 75 county board members, superintendents, administrators and educators who joined in its interactive sessions May 20-21 at Lakeview Resort in Morgantown.

The meeting clearly included a first: In his inaugural presentation, R. Lynn Canady, Ed.D., received one of the highest numerical program evaluation remarks of any WVSBA meeting presenter since county board member training was mandated in 1990.

Message resonates: School boards can promote student achievement

"Dr. Canady's message resonated with county board members," said WVSBA Executive Director Howard M. O'Cull, Ed.D. "He made it clear that school board members are not only responsible for certain aspects of student achievement, but their role is pivotal because it can promote accountability for administrative-driven issues such as school scheduling.

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"If you think education is expensive try ignorance."
— Derek Bok

Executive Board endorses governor's pension bond

Board votes on directors' recommendations

At its May 21 meeting in Morgantown, the West Virginia School Boards Association Executive Board endorsed Gov. Joe Manchin's proposed constitutional amendment for the sale of bonds to cover unfunded liabilities of state pension plans, including the Teachers Retirement System (TRS).

The Executive Board vote was unanimous upon a motion by Dr. Lori **Stilley** (Jefferson), Region VIII Director and Martha S. "Susie" **Cvechko** (Barbour), past President (2001-2002).

To promote the bond amendment, which will be voted on June 25, county board members may link to the association's Web site, www.wvsba.org, which includes talking points developed by the Governor's Office.

Additionally, WVSBA Executive Director Howard M. **O'Cull**, Ed.D., is writing an op-ed piece, which will be distributed to news media outlets throughout the state, to promote the bond amendment.

Members also are encouraged to write op-ed pieces for local newspapers or to support the amendment in other ways.

The Jefferson County Board of Education will make a strong appeal for the amendment, urging other boards also to take this stance, **Stilley** said.

For more information, please contact **O'Cull**.

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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Other board action

In other Executive Board action, the board:

- **Voted to use a Charleston branch of Bank One as its depository for association funds.** The association currently uses a bank in Elkview, based on refinancing of a loan that has been paid. Based on a study of several area banks, including interest the organization would receive, minimum deposits, transaction fees, etc., **O'Cull** recommended the move to Bank One. The motion to approve his recommendation was made by President-Elect **Debbie Thompson (Pleasants)**, and seconded by **Kenny Vance (Pocahontas)**, Region IV director.

- **Voted to accept the executive director's recommendation for an employee self-insurance plan.** Under terms of the plan, a \$9,000 fund will be established for health care self-insurance with a component for optical and dental coverage. Under terms of the plan, a \$2,500 deductible – \$5,000 for the two families covered by the plan – will be established for each individual covered. Based on research conducted by WVSBA staff, including a meeting with a representative of the association's health care provider, total savings to the association could amount to \$8,568. Additional savings of \$1,845 would be secured by self-insuring the staff's current optical/dental plan. As determined by the association's health care provider, a "worst-case" scenario (use of the entire amount of funds placed in escrow to support the plan based on catastrophic illness) would be \$1,414 annually. **O'Cull's** recommendation was approved upon a motion made by **Debbie Thompson**, and seconded by **Stilley**. The board approved a proviso to the motion so that an annual report regarding program efficacy, including cost-effectiveness, will be presented annually. Region VII Associate Director **Steven Cook (Monongalia)** succeeded in having that proposal included in the main motion. Current health insurance premiums would have been \$25,268 in FY06. WVSBA is insured by Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Continue county legal fees plan

- **Voted to accept the executive director's recommendation that the \$250 per county legal services fee plan be continued.** Following discussion, **Mary Frances "Missey" Smith (Fayette)**, Region IV associate director, and **Debbie Thompson** made a subsequent motion that the association charge individual county boards for any legal fees exceeding \$250. That motion also stipulates that **O'Cull** inform all county boards of legal "rulings" of interest to boards/county superintendents in general and that the plan provide particulars about how individual members access legal services, which has become an issue with some boards. (The \$250 fee was established at the FY05 Annual Business Meeting, with a required report to be submitted to the executive board at the conclusion of the current fiscal year.) The association contracts with the Bowles Rice McDavid Graff & Love law firm to provide the legal services plan. It can't be used for pending or ongoing litigation.

- **Directed O'Cull to continue efforts to establish a**

WVSBA foundation. The executive director reported on preliminary efforts to set up the foundation, one of whose purposes would be to secure grants as well as to procure non-dues income within the parameters of WVSBA's 501 (c) (3) tax status. That motion was made by Past President **Arnold Harless** (Wyoming), seconded by Region V Associate Director **Carlene Frederick** (Calhoun). **Harless** was president in 1996-1997.

State superintendent search

- **Voted against a motion that would have asked the state Board of Education to take "more time" in the appointment of the state superintendent of schools, utilizing an interim superintendent so that a more "thorough" search could be done.** Following discussion, that motion failed on 5-11 vote. The motion was made by **Stilley**, seconded by **Dr. Mary Ellen Komorowski** (Marshall), Region VI associate director.

Honoring Paul Morris

- **The board adopted a resolution honoring work of the late WVBE member Paul J. Morris.** Prior to adopting the motion, **O'Cull** discussed Mr. **Morris'** service to the state board and his support of WVSBA, stating that **Morris** was a member of the original school board member "training committee" established in 1989, which was before board member training was required. **O'Cull's** motion was approved upon a recommendation of **Stilley**, seconded by **D. Thompson**. A copy of the resolution will be forwarded to the **Morris** family.

Information and reports

The executive board received reports about the following:

- **West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission (WVSSAC). This report was presented by WVSBA representative Jack Wiseman (Jackson).** In his report, **Wiseman** provided an update on **WVSSAC** issues regarding youth participation, transferring schools, home schooling, Board of Control, residence and transfer rules, etc.

- **Notification that West Virginia Board of Risk and Insurance Management (BRIM) premiums are projected to increase \$472 for FY06.** With that increase, **BRIM** premiums will total \$6,796.

- **Various Financial Matters.** **O'Cull** reported that the association had a 100 percent **membership status** for **FY05**, as the organization has had for the last several years. Additionally, he reported that, as of May 20, 15 county boards have joined **WVSBA** for **FY06**. Additionally, a **staff-prepared financial report** was presented by **Shirley Davidson** and approved upon a motion made by **Harless** and seconded by **Smith**.

- **An overview of the 2005 Regular Session West Virginia Legislature.** **O'Cull** presented this brief report.

- **Situations involving various county boards of education including Doddridge, Hampshire, Mingo and Putnam counties.** **O'Cull** commented on the situations in these counties, including a citizens' petition to remove three Hampshire County board members from office. **BRIM** said it would not cover legal fees for their defense because those petitioning for the members' removal hadn't asked for dam-

ages.

Discussion of Mingo County centered on executive board action in March not to "become involved" in pending litigation wherein three county board members have sued in opposition to the West Virginia Board of Education's intervention in that system (partly due to a proposed school merger/consolidation plan). The executive board's rationale was the **MCBOE** was itself divided on the issue – as was the Executive Board and that such association involvement would set a precedent.

The Putnam County matter involved brief discussion of a Confederate Flag issue, and the Doddridge County discussion centered on matters regarding intra-board relations.

- **The FY05 Winter Conference (Charleston – Embassy Suites Hotel).** **Sally Cann (Harrison), Region VII director** asked **O'Cull** to elaborate on problems the staff saw relating to the meeting. He said that, in addition to lodging snafus that consumed considerable staff time, the first general session speaker and format were "highly unsuccessful," meaning the staff must rethink general sessions, including both presenters and format. While the presenter, **Doug Eadie**, made good points in his presentation, the format wasn't suited for a large audience and was considerably too long in terms of information. Additionally, some members advise that the organization downplay "global approaches" to governance, concentrating on the "practicalities" of boardsmanship, including student achievement.

- **The May 23 Meeting with Regional Education Service Agency Executive Directors (Wheeling – RESA VI Offices)** **O'Cull** will attend this meeting which he spearheaded with **RESA** executive directors. A central topic for discussion concerns provision of regional services to county boards, particularly those having lessened economies of scale due to declining student enrollments.

- **The 2005 Interim Legislative Meetings.** **O'Cull** commented on the probable issues to be considered by these committees as well as **WVSBA's** participation in the meetings through monitoring and presentations.

- **The 2005 Special Legislative Session:** Board members commented on the session set for September or later in the fall, with issues regarding personnel pay raises, employee laws and possible school employee mediation or binding arbitration for grievances.

Waiver proposal

- **Governor's Waiver Proposals:** **O'Cull** suggests that county boards, through the association, take advantage of the provisions of this recently enacted law. He is contacting association counsel and counsel from the Governor's Office regarding this legislation.

- **WVSBA Online training venture:** **O'Cull** discussed creation of two online training modules. One will deal with county board oversight and monitoring, and the other with meeting management.

- **Listserv.** **O'Cull** recommended continued use of the E-mail Listserv, based on recent successes. The executive board will determine if the Listserv will be expanded to in-

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CONFERENCE FEEDBACK

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“Several members said it was a ‘breath of fresh air’ to have a presentation about what county boards can do to promote student achievement.”

O’Cull said they also enjoyed Canady’s humorous delivery style, including “his zingers and self-deprecation,” noted by one audience member.

Other audience comments about the conference include:

• “I really enjoyed the varied panel after Dr. Canady’s presentation. I like to hear the views from various counties on how they improvise their scheduling and other things such as safety in the schools, alternative education, etc. We can all learn from each other on how to meet our individual needs in each county, and I appreciate hearing how other counties handle their problems (some of which are similar to all counties).”

• “More sessions like this one with application level content. Too short – we could have had him speak all day!”

• “Very good. It was nice hearing what we all feel. Wonderful interaction. Scheduling is a big issue in my home. My 16-year-old daughter and my 13-year-old son debate this issue (scheduling) almost every day. The information was truly helpful.”

New legislation review, oversight sessions also popular

Most conference evaluations echoed similar thoughts, with many members asking that Canady make a second presentation at the WWSBA Conference ‘05, which will be September 16-17 in Morgantown.

One member wrote that the association, in terms of meeting programming and content, should move away from “global perspectives on governance,” and concentrate on how to hold systems – and school administrators “at all levels – accountable for what we’re all about...student achievement.

“This is the flaw of the top-down approach to student achievement the (state Department of Education) has invested so much money and time in. It’s doomed to fail because there’s really no accountability for governance folks built-in except in terms of how administrators, especially principals, perform without us [county board members] having literally no input—especially in the closed approach some superintendents have used.

“Then the WVDE expects us to wholly embrace sending passels of people to Charleston, largely at our (board’s) expense without us (county board members) being informed about what they did...or learned...while they were away at the (Stonewall Jackson....).”

Presentations led by WWSBA counsel Howard E. Seufer Jr. of Bowles Rice McDavid Graff & Love, and Kenna Seal, Ed.D., executive director of the Office of Education Performance Audits (OEPA), also received high marks.

Regarding Seufer’s presentation, one county board

member wrote:

• “As always, Howard’s presentation was excellent. It was effective because he does not need PowerPoint. He presents information with PowerPoint used as a guide. I gained a lot of useful information from this session. And, yes, we always need updates on school law.”

Regarding Seal’s presentation, a board member wrote:

• “I liked Dr. Seal’s presentation and know it will help me with my decisions. I am a new member of Hampshire County Board of Education. Since I came on board, we have

all been trying to correct the errors made by our current and previous superintendent. After being in trouble, all board members need more of this. This presentation was most informative and I really gained a lot of information that will help me.”

Seal’s session was based on recent OEPA findings relating to the Mingo and Hampshire county school boards.

A committee comprising Seal, O’Cull, Putnam County Schools Central Office official Barbara Brazeau and WVDE official Jack McClanahan developed the initial program.

WWSBA to offer online training in oversight

O’Cull said he is working with Seal to convert his presentation into an online program relating to accountability, monitoring and oversight.

“We expect to have two modules – the oversight and monitoring module – and a module relating to parliamentary procedure and meeting management,” he said.

Each module will encompass about 45 minutes of training that may be counted toward the required seven clock hours’ training, if approved by a committee responsible for setting standards for county board members’ training.

The modules will feature an interactive format, including readings, case studies, true-and-false questions, open-ended questioning, and fill-in-the-blank questions for post-study assessment.

The last conference program was a review of legislation enacted during the West Virginia Legislature’s 2005 Regular Session. O’Cull said videotaped copies of that segment will be available soon to county boards.

“Even though the heavy-lifting will happen at the special session slated for September or later this fall, many significant pieces of legislation were enacted during the session,” he said.

The special session will be devoted to school personnel legislation, according to officials from the Governor’s Office, legislative leaders and news articles.

In other action, the association held its quarterly executive board meeting in conjunction with the conference.

County board members, superintendents, school administrators and other educators attended the program – the second such leadership conference. The programs are held every other year, when orientation isn’t slated, according to WWSBA conference registrar Shirley Davidson.

“We can all learn from each other on how to meet our individual needs in each county, and I appreciate hearing how other counties handle their problems (some of which are similar to all counties).”

- Conference attendee

E-mail discussion group participation increasing

More than 60 join in timely, easy communication method

Membership participation in the West Virginia School Boards Association's Listserv e-mail discussion group has increased significantly over the past few weeks, according to Executive Director Howard M. O'Cull, Ed.D.

Currently, Listserv participation is any member in the association but O'Cull said the WVSBA executive board will vote in July on whether to extend the discussion list to non-members.

"We've had requests by state Board of Education members to be included, as well as some county association members and some outside the organization," he said. "My recommendation in July at the executive board planning retreat will be to make the Listserv as inclusive as possible."

Recent Listserv mailings address board policies and education news. Recent Listserv electronic mailings have related to WVBE policies on comment, association news, links to West Virginia Department of Education press releases, association meeting agendas, WVSBA meeting registration information and general information, O'Cull said.

"The Listserv has proven popular because it's a quick way for the WVSBA staff to communicate, and it allows

members quick access to state board news," said Dr. Rodney Thompson (Wayne), WVSBA president.

"As one example, we quickly learned who our county's Golden Horseshoe winners were and other WVDE news. We could have gone to the Department site itself but Dr. O'Cull working with the Department has made it easier and quicker for us."

Thompson thanked Dr. David Stewart and the WVBE, particularly Barbara Fish (Wood) and Priscilla Haden (Kanawha) for providing impetus for the project. He thanked WVDE staff members Liza Cordeiro and Jennifer Abbott for coordinating the effort.

About 60 people are members of the Listserv, said Shirley Davidson, who manages the program for WVSBA.

NOTE: Thompson said he urges Listserv members who respond to WVDE policies on comment to send copies of comments to Sue King (Greenbrier), who serves on the WVSBA/state Department of Education liaison committee.

Additionally, Davidson asks members having difficulty in downloading file documents to contact her for alternate ways to receive the information.

TEAMWORK INTEGRITY COMMITMENT



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PLANNING RETREAT

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of a WVSBA foundation.

All association members may attend.

"We were pleased at the number of members who attended the recent executive board meeting in Morgantown," said WVSBA President Dr. Rodney Thompson (Wayne).

"The association is transparent in terms of involvement. Any member can – and

should – participate in our sessions. Dr. O'Cull promotes openness and involvement of anyone ompson said.

Members should RSVP

Members who wish to attend the retreat should contact WVSBA Administrative Assistant Shirley Davidson at sdavidson@wvsba.org, so she can prepare an adequate number of meeting packets.

For more information on the meeting, contact Debbie Thompson (debthom@charter.net), O'Cull (hocull@wvsba.org) or Davidson at the above e-mail address.

Note: Rodney Thompson and Debbie Thompson are not related.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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clude non-association members, as the executive director recommends.

- **Meeting of various association committees.** O’Cull commented on the need for various association committees to meet, including the **Communications Committee** (to examine various WVSBA publications) and the **WVSBA Handbook Committee**.

For information regarding other executive board action, please refer to articles elsewhere in this publication. If you are a member of the Listserv group, you will receive a copy of the minutes, or you may request a copy from the WVSBA staff. Contact Shirley **Davidson**, administrative assistant at sdavison@wvsba.org.

Eighteen of 24 executive board members attended the meeting. The remaining members were absent due to employment conflicts and illnesses.

Stay informed.

On the Web at:
WVSBA.ORG

Future Meetings

WVSBA Fall Conference '05
September 16/17, 2005
Radisson Hotel, Morgantown

Presidents Retreat '05
October 7/8, 2005
Stonewall Resort, Roanoke

**The November Workshop:
School Aid Formula & School Law**
November 5, 2005
Stonewall Resort, Roanoke

WVSBA Winter Conference '06
February 17/18, 2006
Marriott Hotel, Charleston

Orientation '06
June 14-16, 2006
Stonewall Resort, Roanoke

WVSBA Monthly

A West Virginia School Boards Association Publication
P.O. Box 1008
Charleston, WV 25324