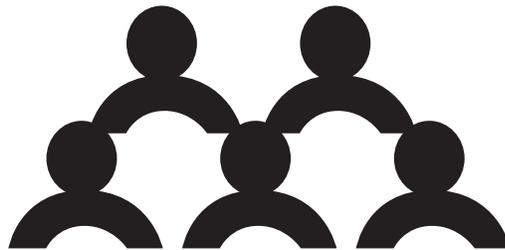


Report

Citizen Participation Aspect of Wood County Schools Superintendent Search

April 18, 2018



West Virginia
School Board Association

“The report provides guidance as to sentiments expressed by those persons presenting to the board in terms of desired skillsets.”

I. Introduction

In March 2018 the Wood County Board of Education (WCBOE) contracted with the West Virginia School Board Association (WVSBA) to guide the board in a superintendent search. WVSBA's superintendent search proposal encompasses several steps, including, among other things, the following:

1. Surveying county board members to assess various characteristics or criteria – literally “skillsets” – preferred in terms of the incoming county superintendent as well as a county board assessment of Wood County Board of Education - Trends in the Community Context of the County Board of Wood. Survey results have been compiled and will be utilized as the board deliberates in latter phases of the search process.
2. Posting of a Notice of Position Vacancy, approval of an application process, and advertising of the position. Based on these efforts 13 persons have applied for the position.
3. Conducting a session open to the public whereby interested citizens, representatives of various constituency groups, school employee organizations and others discussed desired skillsets for the incoming county superintendent. That session was held April 18 at the county board central office. This step is the central focus of this report.
4. Remaining activities in the superintendent search include county board review of applications received and, based on that review, determination of screened applicants to be interviewed by the county board; contemplation of a “meet-and-greet” session whereby screened applicants, prior to county board interviews, will be present to introduce themselves to the community and to make brief remarks regarding their vision, goals and plans for Wood County Schools;
5. Structured interviews of screened applicants, including possible second interviews, and announcement of the successful superintendent-elect.

April 18th Citizen Participation Session - Summary

This Report contains findings of the April 18 citizen participation session whereby 15 presenters provided information to the county board regarding skillsets the presenters believe the incoming county superintendent should have to both promote and advance public education in Wood County. (The county board did not comment regarding presentations at the April 18 meeting.) Presentations were limited to 3 minutes. Presenters made remarks in the order they registered for such. Tom Heywood, Esq., managing partner of Bowles Rice LLP, a law firm having several offices in West Virginia and which has a specialty public education law group, facilitated the public comment segment of the county superintendent search.

As part of that effort, WVSBA requested that each presenter provide a hardcopy of his or her remarks. All but two of the presenters provided this detail. The remarks provided by the presenters are set forth in this Report.

Ad Hoc Committee and Object of Report

WVSBA, working with an ad hoc committee, prepared this Report for the Wood County Board of Education, interested county citizens, constituency groups, news media and each of the persons having applied for the position.

The ad hoc committee is comprised of Patti Hamilton, CAE (Certified Association Executive) proprietor of Imagine LLC and former West Virginia Association of Counties

(WVACO) Executive Director; Amelia Courts, Ed.D., President/CEO of The Education Alliance which operates programs and advances policies to improve achievement by public school students in West Virginia; Joshua A. Cottle, Esq., a Bowles Rice LLP associate, and WVSBA Executive Director Howard M. O’Cull, Ed.D.

Word frequency

Taking the remarks provided by the presenters at the Citizen Participation Session, we used a computer software program to determine the frequency of words and terms most-often used at the Citizen Participation Session. The software yielded the following words or terms as prevalent at the session:

- Students/parents
- System/school
- Community
- Vision/goals/plans
- Future
- Support
- Knowledge/experience
- Communicate
- Create
- Trust
- Transition
- Responsibility
- Bold

Organization and Qualification of Report

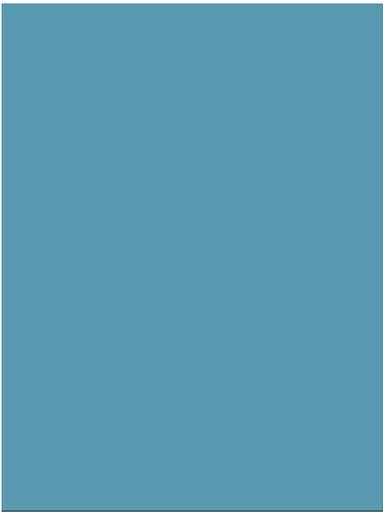
- The presenters’ comments are arranged as presented. The comments have not been edited except for formatting purposes.
- The Report is organized and presented pursuant to what we believe were the two pivotal considerations and/or themes of presenters: That the incoming county superintendent demonstrate necessary skillsets as a “strong change agent” and “community team builder.” This general organization of the Report is based on the ad hoc committee’s determination. Other readers of the comments made at the Citizen Participation Meeting might conclude differently.
- The report provides guidance as to sentiments expressed by those persons presenting to the board in terms of desired skillsets. Thus, the information and report itself are qualitative - not a scientifically-based analysis involving a cross-sectional poll of Wood County citizens or representative constituency groups.
- The report can inform the incoming county superintendent as he or she works with the Wood County of Education to advance public education in the county. Thus, the report is more a prompt to construct an exemplary school system - report content being its “strength” and strict application its limitation. Indeed, report findings should not be viewed as a directed path or plan that demands strict adherence by the county board and county superintendent.
- Other extant documents which guide county superintendent duties and responsibilities include state laws, including provisions of §18-4-1 *et. seq.*, and state Board of Education Policy 5800: Standards of Professional Practice for West Virginia Superintendents, Principals.

Release of Report

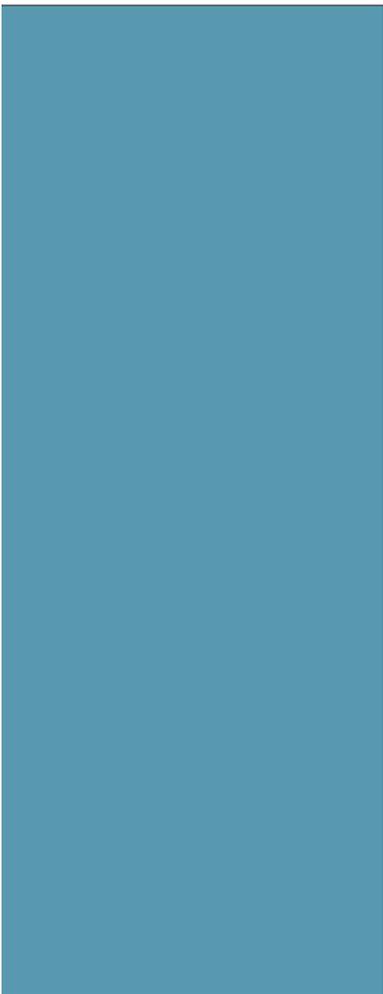
WVSBA, which utilizes a similar format during most of its county superintendent searches, often releases such findings to the county board following structured interviews of candidates for the purposes of informing board deliberations for selection of an incoming county superintendent.

In this case, the ad hoc committee determined the report should be released prior to interviews so the county board, applicants for the county superintendent position, citizens and constituency groups would realize the report content and be assured the comments made were utilized as a productive part of the search process. ❖

Prepared by Joshua A. Cottle for the Ad Hoc committee.



“ We need someone who is strong-minded and focused to move Wood County Schools to the forefront of West Virginia education.”



II. Report

A. Report Summary

Written remarks of participants at the April 18, 2018, citizen involvement session are listed below. Remarks are divided into two major headings - “Strong change agent” and “Community team builder.”

There is considerable overlap in terms of the groupings of comments “under” the headings of change agent and community team-builder. Moreover, remarks are included as provided to the West Virginia School Board Association which is conducting the Wood County Board of Education County Superintendent search. Remarks have not been edited.

B. Selected Initial Remarks of Citizen Participants

“I have been very concerned with the decline of student achievement scores in Wood County over the past years. I also have been dismayed by the decline in resources and the lack of support for public education in general during the same period. It has always been the case that education is not only the job of the school system but the responsibility of our entire community, and this is true today more than ever.

As someone who is very active in my community, I know firsthand that there are many who want to work with Wood County Schools to create a first-class school system. Please ask applicants: What is your experience working with diverse sectors of the community? What have been your challenges and successes? How have you brought the community into decision making in a meaningful way?

While this public forum is a start in providing a way for the public to have input into this critically important decision, many of us wish that there was a more interactive way for the public to weigh in on the goals for our children’s education... It is our hope this approach emerges from tonight’s session and continues with new leadership...”

We want to see our county’s school system continue to move in a positive direction ... academically, through sports and extracurricular activities, through community outreach ... all of this can happen with a superintendent who supports the employees and creates, communicates, and carries out a vision.”

- Community advocate

“People sometimes get caught up in the good old days, but we are interested in the good new days. What can bring us to excellence? So many of the employees in this county are doing a great job every day, and they will continue to do that. How can we harness all that greatness into the next level ... a level of excellence? The selection of a superintendent to make that happen is a daunting task, especially for such a large system...”

- School employee representative

C. Text of Citizen Participant Comments

We have set forth the content of the remarks provided by the citizens and groups at the Participation Session. Again, we have noted what we believe are the overarching themes of the comments: (1) a strong change agent and (2) a community team-builder. Under those overarching themes, we have provided what we believe are the sub-themes and/or categories. We provide these themes for guidance. The reader should analyze the community participants’ remarks to determine what he or she believes were the key principles of the community participants’ remarks.

1. Strong Change Agent

a. Vision

- First, we need a Superintendent who will be a Change Agent. They must have a vision and be able to lead change positively and enthusiastically. Many institutions have high degrees of xenophobia, but I hope we all agree that our school system is not perfect and can be improved to build better schools for our youth.
- The superintendent must be capable of setting short and long term-goals (and) have the vision to take the school system towards both short- and long-term goals.

i. Clear vision, goals

- (We would like to see a) superintendent (who will) create, communicate, and carry out a vision for the public-school system here in Wood County. (We) would like to see a vision for the county system that is lofty, but practical ... ideal, but realistic. The employees will do their part to see such a vision is more than a promise for our students.
- My dream is that the next superintendent will lead us down newer paths of bold and innovative solutions to... realize the dreams for ALL students: that no matter what their circumstance, no matter what their disability, no matter what their obstacle, every child counts and they can succeed in Wood County Schools.
- Superintendents infuse a purpose in the school system and become an advocate for the education of others. We need to make sure we find a superintendent who has a vision and takes us forward to a result where everyone benefits.
- We will bring life to...(a) vision (for the school system) and the leader must show the way.
- (The superintendent must have the) vision to take the School System towards both short and long-term goals.
- (We need) clear vision and strategic goals for superintendent AND Board of Education. Current decisions being made and can't tell whether it is a witch hunt or if there is an end plan. Should some decisions be saved until new super is hired and super and BOE can make plans together?

ii. Strategic vision and direction for future

- (The county superintendent must have the) ability to assist (county board of education) in setting strategic vision for future. (The county superintendent must have the) ability to organize/ marshal the Central Office and building level staff to achieve county goals; the ability to lead a continuous improvement model while making all levels of the system accountable; the ability to understand that budget decisions and being financially prudent assists the strategic vision (and that) involvement of key stakeholders in a collaborative model. How will the BOE plan to work with the new superintendent to share wants and needs of the county?

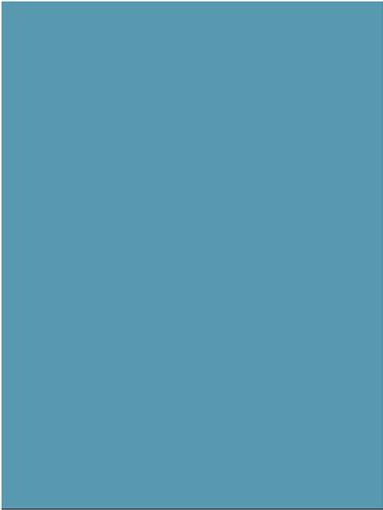
b. Leadership

i. District Leader Skillset

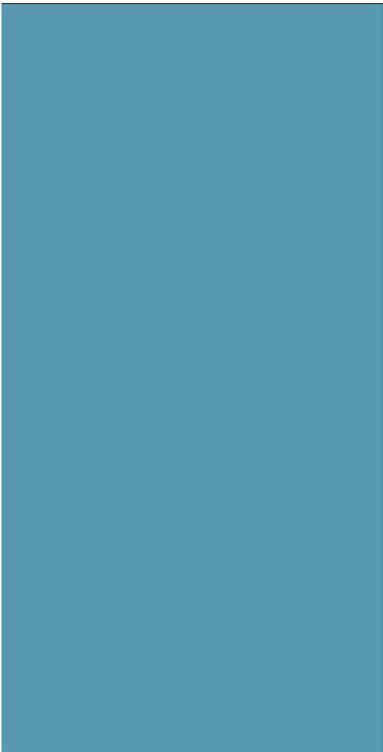
- The superintendent is the leader who wears many hats...He or she must have a clear focus and true passion for his (or her) job and the people who work in the system...We need a leader, not a director or micromanager. We need someone who is strong-minded and focused to move Wood County Schools to the forefront of West Virginia education. We deserve to be the system seen as the best in the state. We were beginning to be recognized around the state for our progress...(We) need long term leadership.... not someone using us to "springboard" to a higher position somewhere else. We need a leader who is in this for the long haul. If you feel the need to find a new superintendent, please choose one who can make bold goals and turn them into reality as our previous leader was doing.

ii. Organizational Leadership

- (The superintendent must) develop trust with central office leadership, Board of Education, and community.
- (The superintendent must) ensure educational leadership in all schools and central office functions through sound management processes.
- (The superintendent must) develop respect of staff across the school system through demonstrated principled behavior with planned interactions.



“...we are failing to meet the basic educational needs of 1 in 3 college-bound youth and this has direct impacts on their academic success, college matriculation rates and raises the cost of earning a degree.”



c. Strategic Planning, Goals and Implementation (student achievement and student-centered)

- My dream is that the next superintendent will lead us down newer paths of bold and innovative solutions to face this challenge and to realize the dreams for ALL students: that no matter what their circumstance, no matter what their disability, no matter what their obstacle, every child counts and they can succeed in Wood County Schools.
- We are serving a new generation of students who enter our buildings with a wide variety of circumstances that affect their lives at school. We can no longer label any students as “bad students” that should not attend our schools. No child is dispensable. There are no “bad students.” There are students who struggle emotionally, students who struggle with difficult family lives, students who struggle academically or behaviorally, and students whose situations make attending a normal school setting very difficult for them. We are currently losing these students. We have about 80 students on Outside School Environment and about 700 who have left our schools to be homeschooled due to a wide variety of reasons. These students all matter and many of these students would and could be in school if we had the means to serve them properly.
- I would like to see our next superintendent willing to go the extra mile to serve . . . students in ways that we are not currently serving them. A superintendent who is willing to think outside the box for our students who do not fit in the box we call school. Our next superintendent is faced with the challenge: how do we reach these students? How do we teach these students? And how do we keep these students in our schools in ways that meet their needs. It may mean re-allocating funds from serving personal interests to serving the personal needs of all students.
- (The incoming county superintendent should realize) most of our teachers and principals do all they can to teach all the students in our county every day. Many teachers go out of their way to help special needs and struggling students. As a county system, however, we can do better.

i. Students with and without disabilities

- What I want from the next Superintendent of Wood County Schools is a Superintendent who believes in progressing the education of students with and without disabilities. Students with disabilities should be afforded the opportunity to explore employment, training, and post-secondary education options despite having a disability...(It) has been my experience that many students with disabilities are unprepared to join the workforce or enter further training after graduating high school. Many students are offered only the minimum to prepare them for life after they graduate. An example of this is one student who...had never been taught how to use his own wheelchair. This is a simple skill that can improve the life of this student and help the student to reach his fullest potential. There are many stories just like this one, and it is important that the next Superintendent hold schools and administration accountable for the success of all students. No student should graduate without a solid plan for transition and for their future.
- Transition services such as school-to-work programs, programs that help students with disabilities explore training and post-secondary education opportunities improve the odds for our students in the future. Let’s be a part of the solution.

- (The forum participant also cited several other recommendations). Two of the recommendations included:
 1. (Increasing) the effectiveness of school-based special educators by refining and implementing Wood County's professional growth opportunities and supporting decision-making based on research and best practices in special education, psychology, social work, health, counseling, student support team, and related services.
 2. Increasing transient student base (social and family dynamics result in children changing schools mid-month, some multiple times during a school year. The opioid epidemic contributes to children moving to various family member households as parents struggle with drug abuse and other issues.)

ii. Need for change

- The need for change is shown through a variety of evidence. Here are two of those:
 1. At the end of 2017, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) released data that showed that 33% of youth who graduated from Wood County Schools and attended a WV public college or university in the fall required remedial programs in Math &/or English. This shows we are failing to meet the basic educational needs of 1 in 3 college-bound youth and this has direct impacts on their academic success, college matriculation rates and raises the cost of earning a degree.
 2. 700+ youth are choosing to be home-schooled – While many families have religious or family-based reasons to home-school, we see increasing numbers of families choosing to home-school do to frustrations battling the school system hierarchy. While most professionals and administrators feel they are doing all they can to support these families, the families often feel that everyone thinks someone else should be the person to go to, and that the bureaucracy is actively working against them. That everyone is doing (or not doing) things based on that are not in their child's best interest and no one in the school is advocating on their child's behalf. Aside from family impacts, each time a family is so frustrated they leave the school system, the funds needed to support that child also is removed from the school system.

d. Knowledge and expertise

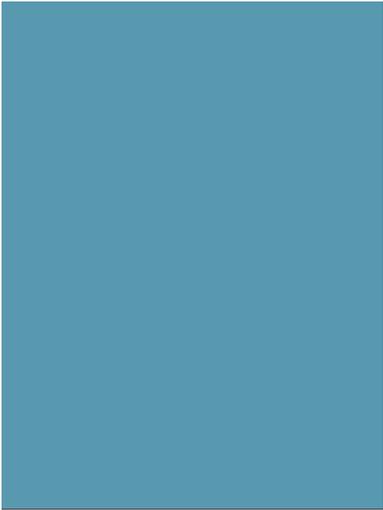
- (The incoming superintendent should have a) strong educational background, a strong marketing background and a strong business background.
- (Our school system) needs a strong educational leader. (The) school system is losing hundreds of kids a year and need someone to promote and celebrate publicly the successes of public education and “recruit” students back. (The) school system has a lot of waste and to have public support, need someone who has a strong business background who can support a strong education while also running a fiscally sound multimillion dollar budget.

e. Direct Resources

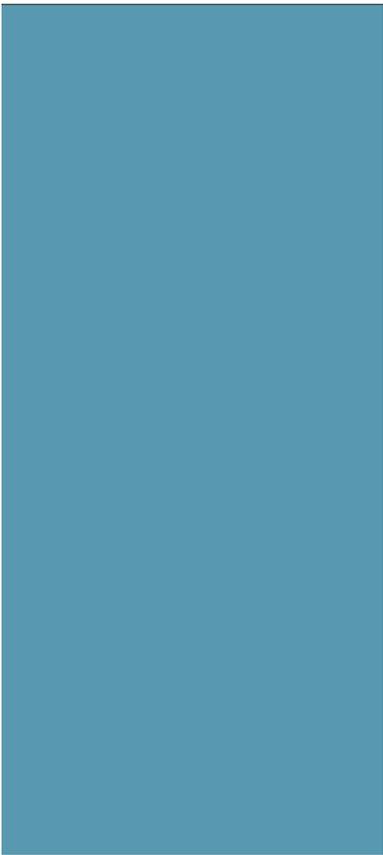
- Each year when it comes budget time we always look to see which classroom positions will be lost due to decreasing funding. We need someone to break this mold. It seems whenever there is a shortfall Wood County always starts reducing costs by eliminating teachers. We need to look at sharing the pain of reductions with the entire county and not put this burden on the backs of the classroom teachers every year.
- (The county superintendent should have) administrative skills in directing resources to meet goals and objectives.
- Yes, the superintendent, and this board, must have managerial skills and a basic obligatory attitude of fiscal responsibility as good stewards of the people's money.

i. Challenges, buy-in, facilities

- (The incoming superintendent must) seek and establish buy-In to strategically manage and allocate appropriate resources (including money, people, time, etc.) aligned to meet the individualized needs of students.
- Aging facilities and changes in neighborhoods/population bases will require the need to review school consolidation and investment in new facilities (never popular, but for the long-term success of our students and financial viability of the system...(We) need to expand infrastructure and technology in our school facilities (IT, devices, wireless, broadband).



“ The one necessary requirement is that the candidate needs the ability to build, lead and nurture a team of individuals that can run a school system the size of Wood County. ”



- Wood County has many challenges regarding finances both immediate and in the future. We have a major building project in the works, buildings that need immediate attention, and some tough decisions that need to be made in the future. We also have our continuing excess levy coming up for election in the fall. The candidate needs to be able to quickly gain an understanding of the finances of the county and be ready to act to ensure passage of the continuing levy.

ii. ‘Tough decisions’

- Wood County Schools has some very tough decisions to make in the very near future regarding the possibility of closing schools. It is not a pleasant topic. It is also not a topic that can be done quickly without input from the Board, Employees, Employee Associations, Students, Community Leaders, Local Businesses and Parents. We need someone who understands this complicated process and possesses the skills to lead the county through this successfully.
- (The incoming superintendent must ensure) facility and resource alignment with current and future student enrollment including consolidation of appropriate age level schools (and) integration of bond levies, excess levy, with academic and athletic facility resource needs into a cohesive plan.
- (The county superintendent must) ensure responsive and efficient services including appropriate due process in the best interest of students with exceptionalities.

2. Community Team-Builder

a. Communicator

- (The county superintendent must) communicate effectively, efficiently, and in a timely manner with parents, teachers, administrators, and students with messages exchanged.
- This person (incoming county superintendent) should be able to listen and speak on behalf of the school, students, staff and (board of education) with both individuals and organizations. Honesty, transparency, and empathy are essential.
- We need a superintendent who is going to communicate well with both employees and the community in general. To accomplish this the candidate needs to be visible in our schools and available to employees and the public. This communication needs to include oral and written correspondence in all areas including email/text, informal conferences, and formal occasions.
- (In terms of communication the superintendent must have the) ability to communicate the strategic vision; (an)organized way to communicate necessary information at all levels; Transparency; (and a) formal way to meet and discuss issues with employee stakeholder groups; Regular scheduled meetings with Building Level Administrators; Collaborative focus.
- (The county superintendent must) create proactive systems that garner feedback from school-based personnel to inform district-level policy and practice.

b. Collaboration

- We need a... superintendent who is not only willing but eager to join in partnership with the community, diverse sectors of the community, to face our

weaknesses and make and implement changes that will create a true learning community and a school culture of safety and respect for all children and their families. This culture starts at the top with the Board and with the expectations that are established for the CEO... We hope the Board and the new superintendent will provide many more opportunities for dialogue with the community. True, genuine community engagement comes through processes whereby the board is open to a continuous path for communication and dialogue.

i. Stakeholder collaboration

- (We need to) increase parent/stakeholder involvement and buy-in... Without involvement and buy-in, decisions by the Board and superintendent are constantly second-guessed without knowledge of all facts and opportunities to learn more about the big picture.
- (This superintendent must have) a willingness to relate to outside organizations. A strong candidate will understand that learning and networking never ends. One should be able to reach out through organizations both locally and nationally that can build support for the school system and allow the Superintendent to grow in learning from others as a leader and educator.

ii. Partner

- We need a Superintendent who will be a partner with the local community. They must value collaboration and recognize that schools cannot meet every need of every child -- And that they don't have to try to do so alone. Many organizations and agencies exist in our community to support our youth and families, including the those here today, the Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, Children's Home, and many others and our superintendent should actively form partnerships and collaboration as well as expect the same from all areas of their administration. Many departments already do this very well, but some others do not and are place less value on the impact partnerships can have for students, leading to many missed.

iii. Team-building

- We need a superintendent who will work with all the audiences to guide the system on improvements, help facilitate the hard decisions, and celebrate the accomplishments and a superintendent who works as a teammate with the Board members and is given the tools/resources/support by the Board to make the best decisions.
- One person cannot be and do everything that is required to run our school system. The one necessary requirement is that the candidate needs the ability to build, lead and nurture a team of individuals that can run a school system the size of Wood County.

iv. School employees

- We used to have monthly meetings with the superintendent to discuss issues and plan for future issues. In the past we would have met and discussed the plan for reduction of personnel long before timelines had become an issue. We would work together to gain passage of levies and construction bonds. We need to get back this type of collaboration for the good of the system.
- I express the strong desire that a superintendent be a source of support for employees. A superintendent should support the employees in this county. We all work hard, we all have the students' best interest at heart, and we all want to see learning occur. There should never be an "us versus them". mentality when it comes to those in the school buildings and those in the central office. The superintendent can set the appropriate tone by showing support for and interest in what the employees are doing.

c. Positivity

- (The incoming county superintendent must understand) that success breeds success.
- The incoming superintendent must encourage positivity, projecting a positive image of the school system; (must) identify successful aspects of the system that might be replicated; and, understand that success breeds success.

d. Other areas of expertise and Qualities

- The superintendent should be someone that everyone (board of education, Administrators, Teachers, Support Staff,

Students, Parents and Community Leaders) can honestly believe is working for the betterment of the school system for the whole community. You don't have to necessarily agree on every issue, but you need trust that even when you disagree, the Superintendent is an honorable and trustworthy person.

i. Morale

- (The incoming superintendent must understand) morale of teachers and service personnel (is dependent upon) consistent communication from system leadership (the recent work stoppage to seek remedy at the state level for salaries and PEIA benefits has helped morale because their concerns were addressed, and the superintendent rallied alongside them.)
- (The incoming superintendent must) create proactive systems that garner feedback from school-based personnel to inform district-level policy and practice.

ii. 'Hands on'

- (The incoming superintendent must) visit the buildings, attend school and county functions and (be willing to) be an active member of the community; (desire) business and community involvement in the system.

e. Academic Leadership

i. Academic Leadership: Curriculum

- (The county board should) choose a person who is knowledgeable of best practices in the classroom and supports staff as they strive to achieve those goals.
- (The county superintendent must have) up-to-date knowledge of curriculum requirements and State Standards; (be) committed to developing a diverse and rounded curriculum; (understand) assessments (and) the role of technology in moving county forward.

ii. 'Keys to effective educational leadership'

- (The effective county superintendent must ensure) effective analysis, baseline, and (curricular/learning) objectives (are) established. (He or she must focus on) school and student improvement; Curriculum integrity with integrated up-to-date technology and proper preparation and connectivity for next steps beyond Wood County Schools

iii. Best practices

- We need a superintendent who brings best practices from other systems to benefit our schools, students, employees and stakeholders.

iv. Special needs students

- (The superintendent must have) expert understanding of special education law, including legal mandates and regulations governing the provision of special education and related services.

v. Specific curricula

- There is a gap between the financial education our children are receiving and what is required for them to make sound financial decisions in 2018. Our goal is not to fix or replace the education currently being offered, but

“ The policies, attitude and focus of the Superintendent will have a direct impact on those youth and will be the example set to be followed by all other administrators and professionals. ”

to supplement current programs with information and resources that reflect the financial challenges facing our young people as they transition into adulthood. CCCS is more than willing to share resources with our schools and educators in helping prepare our students for life beyond graduation.

- Civic education is also an area that has been long neglected with the consequences that students graduate without the knowledge and experience of how democracy works. There is a general lack of the skills needed to talk to people they disagree with and to work together with those whose experience is different than their own. Please ask applicants about how civic education fits into their goals and their knowledge and experience ensuring that students have the skills necessary to be citizens in a democracy. Please look for a person who will support student voice and consider school communities laboratories of democracy.
- Student preparation for career readiness and/or higher education (increasing need for remedial math and English for those students entering higher education or career readiness programs) adds costs and time when there is the expectation that students should have mastered these in high school. In addition, guidance counselors have so many added responsibilities today the traditional role of “guiding” students to realistic career paths and identifying the best fit for future education-apprenticeship, trades, certificate programs, 2-year, or 4-year degrees – has been overshadowed.

vi. Parental rights and localization

- If we are going to take back our schools, if we are to develop an educational plan that works for our students, we must fill our leadership roles with those that adhere to these fundamental beliefs of parental rights and the 10th Amendment (U.S. Constitution).

f. Empathy

- The Superintendent must be Understanding. Compassion and student-centered decisions must be made so we can meet youth and their families where they are, without judgement, so each student is able to move progress as far and as fast as we are able to do. Our students need a superintendent that will put the needs of kids first.
- Many youth in Parkersburg are in crisis and their families are in distress. We have students who leave at the end of the school day to find their parent dead at home, overdosed while they were at school. Students who are bullied to the point of considering suicide. Students who don't know if they'll be eating this weekend and others that are scared to stay home because of what might happen to them. Students who have seen their siblings killed at the hands of their parents and those who have lived in four different foster families since the school year started. While the superintendent will not frequently deal with these student-level concerns directly, their teachers & principals do – Every. Single. Day. The policies, attitude and focus of the Superintendent will have a direct impact on those youth and will be the example set to be followed by all other administrators and professionals.



West Virginia
School Board Association

2220 Washington Street, East
Charleston, West Virginia 25311

The author presents these materials with the understanding that the information provided is not legal advice. Due to the rapidly changing nature of the law, information contained in this publication may become outdated. Anyone using these materials should always research original sources of authority and update this information to ensure accuracy when dealing with a specific matter. No person should act or rely upon the information contained in this publication without seeking the advice of an attorney.