WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §18-2-36

§18-2-36. Framework for initiating comprehensive transformation of school leadership.

(a) Legislative findings.--

(1) The report and recommendations of Imagine West Virginia on Transforming School Leadership in West Virginia are clearly on point that school leadership and the essential role of the principal in achieving a high performing school are well documented, long studied and too often set aside. The report and recommendations also clearly recognize the value of providing teachers with authentic opportunities and resources to lead, influence professional practice, and assume shared responsibility for school and classroom improvement. The recommendations related to school leadership, the role, preparation and selection of the principal and a career ladder for teacher leaders once again bring the importance of strong school-level instructional leadership, including mechanisms for career advancement for teachers in leadership roles, to the forefront of discussions on school improvement. The state board posted the report recommendations for comment with the intent of providing a starting point for deeper deliberation and stakeholder input.

(2) Among the general conclusions of the Education Efficiency Audit of West Virginia's Primary and Secondary Education System is the need to drive more educational decision-making down to the level closest to the students, to the classroom and building level, allowing principals to lead and teachers to deliver the most effective curriculum for their students, and then holding them accountable for student success. Such a system heightens the imperative for strong school leadership. The school climate and culture observed in high quality schools reflects strong leadership that develops shared beliefs and values among the staff, high expectations for all, and a safe, orderly and engaging environment. A key concept in developing good school leadership and then holding schools accountable for student performance is that they have the authority, resources and flexibility to affect the outcome.

(3) An increasing body of knowledge concludes that unless teachers are collectively involved in the planning and implementation of school improvement, it is unlikely to be sustained. Successful schools are distinguishable from unsuccessful ones by the frequency and extent to which teachers discuss professional practices, collectively design materials and inform and critique one another. Even successful schools must be self-renewing systems, learning organizations marked by deliberate effort to identify helpful knowledge and spread its use within the organization. Again, leadership by the principal combined with authentic roles for teacher leaders are necessary ingredients.

(4) The school responsibilities for accreditation adopted by the state board to implement West Virginia's performance based accreditation system embodied in section five, article two-e of this chapter, the Process for Improving Education, include a collective and collaborative process for continuous school improvement led by the principal. The process

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includes data analysis, goal setting, strategic planning, progress review and results analysis. It includes identifying what and where improvement is needed, establishing goals and a strategic plan for improved student learning, defining the roles and responsibilities of all team members, securing the professional development needed to achieve the goals, and sharing the responsibility and rewards for the results. The principal must foster and develop distributed leadership in order to focus collective action for improved school performance. The school's faculty and members of the Local School Improvement Council must participate effectively in the self-assessment and annual and cyclical reviews of school performance to effect a process of continuous improvement.

(5) The prior studies and Imagine WV report in which they are cited recognize that the job of principal has become overwhelming. The report focuses on instructional leadership as the most important role of the principal, but notes that it has become a less prominent function in the overall job of being a principal. The diminished time devoted to instructional leadership has been a gradual crowding out by other necessary functions, rather than a conscience choice. Just as important for high performing schools is the strong leadership role necessary for operations management, establishing the climate and culture of the school as a learning environment, and instructional leadership. All require strong leadership skills, but in a different context. They require different skill sets, all of which are needed to lead high quality schools. The reality, however, is that these many responsibilities inherent in the operation of high quality schools compete for time and it is difficult for principals to do them all well. Various scenarios have been discussed for enabling a heightened focus on instructional leadership, including the introduction of school manager positions or the broader use of assistant principals in all schools to allow greater principal attention to instructional improvement. A further scenario builds upon the research that high quality schools are distinguishable by the collective and collaborative involvement of teachers in sustained school improvement. It brings a heightened focus on instructional leadership to assist, and under direction of, the principal by providing authentic opportunities for teacher leaders to participate and assume greater responsibility. This scenario involves various approaches to reward excellent teaching, to provide the time necessary for excellent teachers to lead instructional improvement, and to enable excellent teachers to advance in their teaching careers and levels of compensation through instructional leadership positions without leaving the classroom completely.

(6) Emerging research and policy direction toward distributed leadership and shared responsibility for results as cited in these findings, elevate the focus for all teachers on instructional improvement, and particularly for excellent teachers to assume instructional leadership roles. In most schools today, excellent teachers rarely have authority, time, or sustained incentives to lead while teaching. Developing models for supporting new teacher induction, for professional development and mentoring for struggling teachers, and for teacher collaboration on instructional improvement all involve a role for teacher leaders. As professional educators, teachers should have an established structure through which they can advance their careers as experienced instructional leaders without leaving classroom teaching completely. Like other professionals, teachers should be afforded an opportunity to

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take on more responsibility, share their expertise with other less experienced teachers and advance their teaching career as teacher leaders. Like other professions, teaching should provide for a routine progression of continuing education for license maintenance and opportunities for salary advancement as additional knowledge, skill and expertise are acquired that directly affect student learning. Examples of leadership roles that may be performed by teachers include serving on the school leadership team, leading collective and collaborative processes for strategic improvement planning, leading teacher collaboration processes within the school day, leading the faculty senate, serving on the local school improvement council, supervising student teachers, serving as mentors and models for new and struggling teachers and teachers-in-residence, and helping arrange school level professional development. Ideally, in an opportunity culture for teachers, career paths and teacher pay will recognize and reward the value of excellent teaching and teacher leadership roles for extending excellent teaching to all students consistently.

(7) Education is a human resources intensive endeavor. It competes for talented professionals with other occupations with higher levels of compensation, particularly in the STEM fields. While opportunities for career advancement and added compensation for teachers under career ladder type arrangements may improve the attractiveness of the profession for excellent teachers, it will not replace the need for general salary increases. In West Virginia and nationally, the enrollments in college and university teacher preparation programs are declining. For West Virginia particularly, the need to recruit and retain excellent teachers is exacerbated by the increasing numbers of retirements of a very senior teaching force. Increasingly important will be a variety of methods for encouraging and supporting an interest in the teaching profession, preparing the next generation of educators, actively recruiting top talent graduating from teacher preparation programs and supporting their development through the first years of their careers. In the human resources intensive business of education, human resource development should not be left to chance.

(b) Legislative purpose, intent, process for stakeholder input; items for recommendation.--

(1) The purpose of this section is to provide a framework for development of the statutory and policy changes needed to support and sustain a comprehensive transformation of school leadership. A further purpose of this section is to initiate the comprehensive transformation of school leadership through a general statement of legislative intent to pursue this change in public policy and, thereby, provide assurances and parameters under which the work toward this change may proceed. It is expected that the transformation will affect both the public education system and the educator preparation programs at institutions of higher education to develop, prepare and credential teacher, principal and administrative leaders to accomplish a systemic change in school leadership. It is expected that the transformation will involve multiple, and in some cases sequential, steps that may require a period of years to accomplish to ensure that the necessary supports are in place to enable school leaders to meet the expectations of new roles and responsibilities and to finance the necessary improvements.

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(2) It is further expected that the transformation will involve roles and responsibilities for leadership that may not match the certification and training of all of those currently in leadership positions. Therefore, the options for implementation will need to take the existing legacy into account to minimize cost and system disruption while bringing new models of leadership for instructional improvement to every school expeditiously. Finally, it is expected that district size and resources, school size and programmatic level, existing leadership positions, and differences in school performance may all be factors that will affect the transformation of school leadership within the various school systems and they should be afforded ample local flexibility for establishing priorities and implementation within their schools.

(3) The findings set forth in subsection (a) of this section provide a context for considering a leadership framework that promotes instructional improvement and for determining the statutory and policy changes needed to enable it. It is the intent of the Legislature to begin this transformation through a process of broad stakeholder input to consider and make recommendations to accomplish this task. Therefore, the state board shall convene the relevant stakeholders, including, but not limited to, principals, teachers, superintendents, county board members, educator preparation program personnel, legislators or their designees and a Governor's designee to assist the state board in developing state board policies, practices and recommended statutory changes consistent with the findings of this section. Among the issues the state board shall consider are:

(A) Issues relating to principal leadership that include, but are not limited to, the following:

(i) A clear definition of the role and responsibilities of principals and assistant principals in statute and policy that include leadership for instructional improvement;

(ii) The role and responsibilities of the principal as the legally responsible party in charge of the school with the added need for authority and flexibility to delegate responsibilities to accomplish a distributed leadership model for instructional improvement;

(iii) Leadership standards that include the essential role of the principal for leadership in developing a culture of collegiality and professionalism among the staff so that improving student learning is a shared responsibility;

(iv) The scope of topics to be covered in the preparation programs and certifications for principals and assistant principals;

(v) A process of preparing new principals that may include clinical experiences and mentoring through a partnership between higher education and county boards. It may include a commitment of county board resources to assist in the training, as well as a commitment from the candidate to stay in the system for some period of time;

(vi) The additional school-level tools needed to give good principals the flexibility and authority necessary for success, including additional independent, school-level authority

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needed to adequately fulfill the responsibilities;

(vii) A method of implementation under which the capacity of the principal for leading is a condition precedent to implementation of methods for distributed leadership;

(viii) Limitations on the employment of new principals to those candidates prepared and credentialed under the new standards, or some comparable standards approved by the state board, and limitations on the applicability of Master's degrees in education administration for advanced salary classification if earned after a certain date following state board approval of a new preparation program; and

(ix) Differentiation and improvements in the salary schedules and increments for principals subject to the newly defined roles and responsibilities for school leadership;

(B) Issues relating to teacher leadership that include, but are not limited to, the following:

(i) Various approaches that reward excellent teaching, provide authentic opportunities for excellent teachers to influence professional practice and enable excellent teachers to advance in their teaching careers and compensation without leaving the classroom completely including, but are not limited to, incentive increments, career lattice steps and career ladder positions;

(ii) Incentive increments in the salary scale for advanced degrees, approved course work or advanced certification in the teacher's area of certification and for excellent teaching;

(iii) Career lattice steps that provide extra pay and/or extra time for teachers for specific types of assignments made by the principal or, in some cases, by the faculty senate for instructional and school improvement work. These types of steps may not be permanent and may change or involve different teachers and team members from time to time depending on the needs of the school and the ability of teachers to participate;

(iv) Career ladder steps that are permanent steps for master teachers who possess the appropriate leadership certification to progress in teacher leadership positions with additional compensation and reduced teaching load to assume duties under the direction of the principal without leaving the classroom completely;

(v) A clear definition in statute and policy of the role and responsibilities of career ladder teacher leaders that includes leadership for instructional improvement;

(vi) Career ladder teacher leader standards that include the essential role of leadership in developing a culture of collegiality and professionalism among the staff so that improving student learning is a shared responsibility;

(vii) The scope of topics to be covered in the preparation programs and certifications for career ladder teacher leaders;

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(viii) Appropriate limitations on the number of teachers in career lattice positions and on the number of teachers in career ladder positions, separately, for schools of different size and programmatic level; and

(ix) An additional incentive increment in the salary scale for excellent teachers and principals who accept transfer to a low performing school for a certain number of years;

(C) Issues relating to a leadership development pipeline that include, but are not limited to, the following:

(i) A comprehensive leadership development process for school systems to identify, recruit and train outstanding leadership candidates consistent with numbers needed to meet the projected needs of the school system;

(ii) A method for school-level identification of those teachers who most clearly demonstrate budding leadership qualities as potential candidates for development into the career ladder teacher leaders, assistant principals and principals of the future;

(iii) Appropriate school district and higher education partnerships for preparation, support and credentialing at each step so the focus on instructional leadership will become pervasive; and

(iv) Allowances that may be necessary to fill positions during the transition to new leadership models; and

(D) Issues related to local and state systems of support that include, but are not limited to, the following:

(i) Information management tools that enhance the capacity of school leaders and leadership teams to quickly assemble performance information on student learning and other aspects of the school's learning environment into the actionable intelligence needed for strategic planning, adjusting instructional strategies and focusing on individual student needs;

(ii) School-level tools or resources that give principals a flexible, timely and targeted way to meet the professional development needs of teachers at their school;

(iii) Methods to help ensure the uniformity and inter-rater reliability of the portion of the professional personnel performance evaluation based on teaching standards;

(iv) Additional state-level infrastructure that may be needed to support the additional credentialing and monitoring of course work and degree attainment for salary progressions and new leadership positions;

(v) Methods to support, encourage and facilitate school-level leadership for instructional improvement, to endorse and encourage innovation to improve the success of all students rather than rely on top-down enforcement of one size fits all approaches to education; and

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(vi) Methods to establish an emphasis on human resource management including, but not limited to, approaches to improve the position posting and recruitment of new graduates for shortage area positions, and improving the retention of new professional personnel.

(c) Reports and recommendations to Legislature and Governor.--

(1) Not later than regular session of the Legislature, 2018, the state board shall make a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and the Governor on transforming school leadership including, at a minimum:

(A) Recommendations on a general leadership structure and definitions of the roles and responsibilities for principals and teacher leaders;

(B) Identification of affected statutes and policies, including pending and completed policy revisions, and recommendations for statutory amendments, if any, needed to effectuate its recommendations;

(C) An outline of sequential implementation of the changes needed to transform school leadership, and recommendations for phased implementation, if any; and

(D) The estimated costs of implementation of the recommendations and statutory changes necessary to effectuate the recommendations along with potential funding sources from improved efficiencies or other cost savings from the 5 elimination of unnecessary operations or programs.

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