



Vision Shared Education Committee

Launch Meeting, Charleston

10 a.m. Jan. 19, 2011

Participants: Lloyd Jackson (co-chairman), Michael Keener, Betty Knighton, Pat Kusimo, Scott Lavigne, Jorea Marple, Tim McClung, Kelly Merritt, James Owery, Renate Pore, Howard Swint, Juliet A. Terry, Newt Thomas (co-chairman), Jennifer Wood

By Phone: Pat Getty, Cheryl Moore, Judy Sjostedt

Newt Thomas convened the meeting. After introductions, he provided a background on Vision Shared and the strategic planning process that led to the creation of four new volunteer committees. He then explained Vision Shared's annual Performance Measures Report, highlighting the fourth and eighth grade reading and math scores for West Virginia.

Newt said the state has been losing ground since we started tracking those numbers. Even though there have been improvements in the system we are still not competing; therefore, Vision Shared set a goal for national dominance in these areas. We obviously cannot accomplish this goal alone, so we need to find out what role there is for Vision Shared to play, learn what's happening in other places and look at the literature.

Lloyd Jackson provided background on a recent NAEP webinar which released a new study on student performance in reading and math. NAEP is the Nation's Report Card, congressionally authorized, the nation's gold standard and only national assessment. Overall, the data suggests the deck is stacked against West Virginia, but the results do show that the state can close gaps and make progress. We have challenges ahead, but we need to build support to make the changes necessary to improve student achievement.

Kelly Merritt said he noticed that in some areas, West Virginia showed improvement only to drop later on. Lloyd explained that for a few years, West Virginia really made a lot of investment.

Pat Kusima pointed out that one area where the state seems to have a closed a gap – between white and ethnic minority student achievement – the gap has closed because white students are not performing well, not because ethnic students have improved.

Jorea Marple said West Virginia's performance figures changed when Dr. Paine made the decision to test everyone, and the state has a high percentage of special needs students. Most states do not test everyone.

Lloyd said international comparisons between West Virginia performance and other nations is difficult, but soon we'll be able to see a comparison in math scores.

Next, Pat Getty provided an update on the 21st Century Jobs Cabinet. He said it is unclear whether Gov. Tomblin will continue the cabinet. Under Manchin, this group took a few years to

get organized but eventually found a way to take the diversity on the cabinet and turn it into its greatest strength. Pat said Vision Shared could serve as a way to link education leadership together on a few important topics: early child development through the Early Childhood Development Council (formerly PIECES); the NGA Complete to Compete program and seamless alignment from K-12 to higher ed (this includes reducing the need for remediation); using technology to help teachers and students; teacher excellence and curriculum transformation.

Pat said the Jobs Cabinet went through some growing pains, but having the education leadership address issues across their boundaries is critical. He'd like to see Vision Shared encourage that kind of work to continue.

Next, Jorea Marple provided an overview on the Department of Education and some of the changes ongoing in public education in West Virginia. She showed some features of the department's website and discussed the state's role in the voluntary NAEP study. Changing education requires foundation changes, policy/legislation and curriculum.

Jorea said West Virginia's education delivery was very much rooted in rote recall, not critical thinking. The state has new content rigorous content standards and assessment, which were rolled out in 2009. She said the state needs a new assessment measure that isn't deliberately easy enough to help West Virginia measure up to No Child Left Behind standards. The redesigned WESTEST is aligned with new standards and NAEP/international standards. In the second year of WESTEST 2 under higher rigor standards, they are seeing improvement and progress in core subject areas.

Jorea said there are a number of different pieces of legislation to prepare students to be successful, i.e. basic skills legislation update, technology skills. The department has asked the Legislature for \$271 million for all students to have 1:1 technology so students have the resources they need and teachers are instructed in how to use it. She said we also need to support teachers so they can instruct differently, and so the department has the Teach21 initiative. The department has posted all the CSOs for each grade level complete with lessons, instructional guides, etc. Teachers can access this information and learn how to teach differently. The site also includes sample video lessons.

For students, the department has the Learn21 initiative, a site encouraging children to learn 24/7. The site has video lessons for pre-k through grade 12. This site started loading lessons in June 2010, and new lessons are being added continuously.

Other Department of Education results include a 30,000 student increase in advanced course enrollment and an increase in the percentage of students who are college and/or career ready. They also have an increase in teachers seeking additional instruction. Jorea said 67 percent of students are enrolled in pre-K programs. According to Quality Counts, West Virginia failed in achievement based on the WESTEST 2 results, but we were 10th in the nation in establishing the structure needed to reform education. She said we continue to develop support for teachers,

but we have to have technology in our buildings and the IT specialists to service that technology.

Next up, Pat Kusimo provided an update on the Education Alliance's goal of focusing on a new mission and vision that every student completes public education prepared for success in college and careers. They are working on drop-out prevention through a community demonstration project. Their newest project uses Benedum funds for e-mentoring to connect students with mentors via a secure portal. Pat said they'll start out with their first group of students soon for a 10-week process. The student will end the project with a career plan and an education plan to work on with their counselor and parents. The Alliance also is working with the HEPC on the Learn More Earn More campaign.

Cheryl Moore asked how teachers are rewarded for going through these changes. Jorea said the State Board of Education has recognized the need for salary increases for teachers, particularly in those areas where they have difficulty attracting certified teachers. Juliet asked whether there is a similar shortage of school counselors, and Jorea said yes, the state has a shortage of counselors, psychologists, etc. The salary base makes it difficult to attract enough professionals.

Michael Keener said another concern is that the teachers who are retiring are more skilled than new teachers. He discussed a variety of concerns about how hard it is for a principal to determine how good a teacher is. Another issue is giving students the opportunity to accelerate. Overall, he said, there is nothing more important than a good teacher.

Juliet suggested that anyone on the committee with ideas for education reform should send them to her, and she will start to populate a list for everyone.

Renate Pore said she'd like to focus on a few issues at a future meeting: learn more about the new Early Childhood Development Council; quality measures for 4-year-old preschool; teacher education; the community college system.

Newt said students learn through experience and practice. We need to help students find meaning in the content. We also need to come to some conclusion about what the Vision Shared Education Committee can do. He said Vision Shared can be a good facilitator and bring education leaders together to collaborate. Everyone is affected by what goes on in public schools. We need to study some of the various issues being brought up, such as the school calendar, school management, innovation/options, etc. We need to be in agreement on what can be implemented in the system.

In terms of next steps, Pat Kusimo said we need to differentiate between the challenges of teachers and the challenges of students, which include student motivation and how students and their families experience and interact with schools. Student attendance is a big issue.

Mike said other top issues are school climate, family dynamics and Title 1 programs, which goes to schools that meet enrollment numbers for students living in poverty. Jorea said 52 percent of West Virginia's population signs up for free or reduced lunch, and in reality, the numbers probably are closer to 60 percent. That population has more chronic problems: disengagement, feelings of inadequacy, difficulty focusing, etc. She said we need to expand the resources going to these programs.

Newt mentioned Geoffrey Canada's work in Harlem.

Judy Sjostedt said she's familiar with Title 1 programs. One of the problems is that if a school population doesn't meet a certain percentage of poverty, they don't get Title 1.

Lloyd said we can do a lot to address many of these issues, but if we don't have a great teacher in front of those students, we won't improve. We need to get our arms around what sort of recommendations we need to make to the Legislature about teachers.

Jorea said in five years, we will be in a crisis in this state with the number of teachers retiring, particularly in poor counties.

Jennifer Wood said she was in Dallas recently, and that area already is in crisis. They cannot physically staff a human being to supervise children let alone find a qualified teacher.

Newt asked whether students are in a position to learn. Renate asked what does a child need to succeed from womb to adulthood. Stress changes brain development. Twenty-one percent of Kanawha County children are born into a family with a drug problem, for example.

Howard Swint said he saw a report by the Minnesota Federal Reserve Board about the importance of early child investment.

Pat Getty said we need a system to identify when a woman is pregnant and stick with that child all the way through school. Early childhood programs help, but once the student reaches middle school, the needs are the same but all the support goes away and those families are not "fixed."

Newt asked the committee to think about where Vision Shared can add value to this debate. We need to develop not just what needs to be done, but how to get it done. Lloyd said we also need to figure out a way to share thoughts with each other to continue the conversation between meetings. He said he hopes this group can narrow down and come up with specific policy recommendations.

Newt suggested this following list as a place to start: school governance and management; school calendar; innovation/options; compensation/incentives/evaluation; and support services.

Juliet said she will set up an online discussion group and also receive suggestions and input to share with the group.

Pat Getty said we need to think about what a group like Vision Shared can do. We'll have to focus. Vision Shared has been effective when we're able to advocate for policies to the Legislature that have support from a broad-based constituency. We can be a convener, and we can be an advocate.