



Attendees: Newton Thomas, Pat Getty, Greg Burton, Bob Dunkerly, Tracy Straub, Mike Keener, Gene Coulson, Kelly Merritt, Charles McElwee, Lisa Ketchum, Tim McClung, Newt Thomas, Dr. Dan Foster, Rebecca McPhail-Randolph

I. Welcome/Introductions

Committee Co-Chair Newton Thomas called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and welcomed those in attendance. He explained that the intent of the meeting review the findings of education audit forums conducted by Vision Shared in June and July, 2012.

II. Education Audit Presentation

Rebecca Randolph provided a brief review of the findings of the community forums hosted by Vision Shared June and July, 2012/ Ms. Randolph explained that Vision Shared hosted eight forums throughout West Virginia in aimed at soliciting input for recommendations related to section two of the audit of West Virginia's Public education system released in early 2012. We focused our efforts on section two of the audit and recommendations related to improving student outcomes and education delivery.

The goal of the forums she noted, was to identify potential "starting points" for acting on recommendations within the audit to strengthen West Virginia's school system. Participants were also asked to identify:

- Resources needed
- Possible challenges
- Possible solutions to those challenges

She provided the following information regarding forum participants:

- 313 individuals participated in the forums (some of these 313 attended multiple forums).
- 42 percent of participants appeared to be employees of local school systems
- An additional 20 percent of participants had direct ties to the education system (universities, RESAs, State Department of Education, State and local boards of education and union officials).
- Less than eight percent of participants represented the business community.

Ms. Randolph noted that the second section of the audit contained recommendations for three sub-sections:

- Enhancing collaboration between education and workforce development
- Supporting and improving school building leadership and classroom teaching
- Making WV the leader in remote technology and distance learning

Participants were asked to select one of the three sub-section for break-out discussion. At each forum a majority of participants elected to participate in the discussion of sub-section 2:2 – Supporting and improving school building leadership and classroom teaching.

With regard to section 2:1 of the audit, Ms. Randolph noted considerable consensus. She explained the following recommendations received a “thumbs up” by group participants at three or more of the eight forums:

- Enhancing strategic planning and collaboration between education, workforce & economic development
- Developing integrated performance measures in workforce & education
- Improving the use of job forecasting data in secondary & post-secondary planning
- Supporting different design approaches
- Better integrate career preparedness into the standard curriculum

She informed the committee that participants appear to recognize a lack of coordination among these entities and identified resources they felt necessary to improve these efforts as noted on page six of our report. Possible methods include:

- Facilitated planning processes among stakeholders
- A commitment by stakeholders to work across traditional boundaries
- More communication between business & industry (education’s consumers) and the system in an effort to develop meaningful performance measures
- More interaction between CTCs, employers and public education.
- Better data – employment needs in WV and beyond the borders (regional)

With regard to section 2:3 of the audit, Ms. Randolph noted that participants also identified several recommendations that received a “thumbs up” by group participants at three or more of the eight forums:

- Continue to work with private sector to ensure high speed access
- Ensure all public school students and teachers have accessible computers or similar mobile devices
- Ensure access for all students to high quality digital content and online courses
- Hire an adequate number of Tech Integration Specialists to support teachers
- Increase training in curricular use of technology

She noted that Participants expressed a need for considerable resources for enacting these recommendations including:

- Investment in broadband access
- Funding to purchase, maintain and upgrade hardware

- Increased flexibility at local levels related to lease-purchase agreements
- 1:1 ratio of hardware devices so students are forced to wait
- Increased funding for support
- Assurance to teachers that technology will be a supplement and add value to the classroom instruction rather than replace teachers

Ms. Randolph explained that there was little consensus achieved among recommendations in section 2:2 of the audit. She announced that no consensus was reached regarding recommendations within the following objectives:

- Mandating 180 days of instruction time (PG 7 for concerns – personnel costs, summer educational development time lost for teachers, belief among many participants that more classroom time won't translate into better student outcomes)
- Evaluation system modeled after national best practices (PG 9 – some sentiment that the “current evaluation pilot being conducted should be allowed to run its course and be analyzed before there is additional consideration)

She explained that out of 45 recommendations, only a few in section 2:2 were identified by participants as potential starting points. These include:

- Providing scholarships at state universities for aspiring teachers and active teachers seeking to pursue advanced degrees and who pledge to work in WV for five years
- Initiate a substantial loan forgiveness program for students majoring in designated shortage areas
- Evaluate principals at least annually

In summary Ms. Randolph explained that participants support progress in linking workforce and education through improved communication among stakeholders and that there is a high level of support for changes relative to remote technology and distance learning an increasing investment to train teachers in the curricular use of technology was supported at ALL eight forums. She noted that these are all good places to start with regard to facilitating change in the system. However she reminded the committee that with regard to more difficult issues most recommendations proposed in section 2:2 were not well supported by the majority of participants. She concluded that based on observations communication among professional educators, parents, the business community, and other stakeholders would be useful in building the necessary consensus in improving public education

III. Education Audit/System Discussion

Mr. Thomas noted the need for a comprehensive change in the education system and the existence of parallel efforts to assess the methods needed for change - WVEA forums, WVBOE evaluation and preliminary response, and the work of a myriad of non-profit organizations dedicated to improving the education system. All of these efforts he explained provide valuable input but in his judgment, there must be a process and strategy to develop a plan forward. He explained that there is difficulty in accomplishing this because of divided authority to make. He informed the committee that the Legislator's response to the WVBOE presentation appeared to be soliciting recommendations for action.

Mr. Thomas explained that Vision Shared is in the position to be a facilitator and assist with developing a long range, comprehensive plan for improving student outcomes. Mr. Thomas asked Gene Coulson to address question of who ultimately controls the education system. Mr. Coulson noted that many who work at the Department of Education feel charged with doing anything possible to assist teachers and provide a strong education for students within the boundaries which within they must work – but explained that there are significant limits. Mr. Coulson noted that there is some uncertainty with recent changes in the West Virginia Department of Education. He noted that a meeting of the West Virginia State Board of Education, later that day, would provide additional information about the department's future.

Mr. Coulson noted that the information at hand (audit, Vision Shared's report, WVBOE response), is helpful in identifying some of the potential changes. He feels that technology and workforce are reasonable and probably starting places. Mr. Thomas asked if any changes have occurred in the WVDE in response to the audit. Mr. Coulson noted that some of the recommendations have been enacted - mostly to do with the reduction of staff and positions.

Mr. Thomas noted that despite years of change and investment, outcomes have remained relatively unchanged with regard to student performance. Mr. Coulson explained that within the state and federal limits and curriculum limitations, the WVDE is not adverse to change. The difficulty is taking all of this change and implementing it down through the ranks.

Mike Keener noted that there is a difference in business and education. He explained that there are inputs in both business and education but that they are very different. He explained that business can select inputs, but education does not have the luxury of turning away a difficult input at the door. Further, he noted that the WVBOE and business community speak different languages and that the business community doesn't understand the message that the WVBOE is attempting to send. Discussion ensued regarding instructional time, achievement and teacher quality. Mr. Keener noted that there is a real leadership issue in West Virginia's education system.

Mr. Thomas questioned the identification of leaders and experts in education. Kelly Merritt with the Higher Education Policy Commission noted his agreement in the importance of leadership in the education system. He spoke about the centralization of the system and the need for change within this, and noted that the system should be opened for more communication at the school level, bringing in diverse stakeholders and allowing plans and methods to filter upward. Mr. Coulson noted that innovation zone schools are an example of how this type of communication works and could be replicated. But, he noted, there is difficulty in moving beyond the regulations that exist in order to operate as in innovation zone. He provided specific examples of how this system has worked, noting that there is demonstrated success at the local level.

Mr. Keener noted that the call for the audit in his view, was the wrong call because it is more directed at efficient than effective. He explained that few teachers are likely to subscribe to performance based pay when they are not able to select their students, many of whom suffer from external factors that impede their ability to achieve educational success.

It was noted that the WVBOE is undertaking efforts to assemble a group to help define teacher effectiveness. Mr. Thomas noted that there could be a quantitative measure for this. Bob Dunkerly explained that one of the issues is that although change is needed, the way we have attempted to make change simply isn't working. He noted that local control of schools is very important. The Center for Professional Development, he explained does not have measures in place to support innovation within the schools. He further explained the critical nature of quality instruction - the students who most need the best teacher often don't have access. He questioned how we may most effectively structure learning environments so that the neediest of students have access to the best teachers. He concluded that there is a significant leadership issue. He said that the culture of school and professional development also need to be changed.

Mr. Thomas discussed a past project of the Education Alliance as to what makes an effective school. He noted that the results indicated, that even in difficult circumstances, dedicated teachers could achieve results. **He suggested that the committee work on a process to put all of these measures into a package and get them into the system.**

Charlie McElwee noted that after spending several months focused on the education system that his thinking has been too channeled. The channeling he explained was too focused on one learning model - this model he said was oppression originated and rigid. He noted several negative components within this model - prescribed age/grade, amount of instruction time, curriculum focus, students are forced to be passive.

Mr. McElwee explained that the first step should be to look at the current learning model and determine its validity. He explained that only patching problems in the system have occurred in the past. Mr. McElwee indicated that there are several legislative items that should be addressed - irrelevant, archaic and ineffective items by his definition. He feels as though the system must be rebuilt from the ground up.

Mr. McElwee's conclusion with regard to students is that we must first begin with "how to learn", followed by "what to learn" (creativity, curiosity, etc.) while providing students with the "opportunity to learn". Mr. McElwee spoke of a book called *The One World Schoolhouse*, noting that the author provides a stark contrast of the traditional model versus a more innovative model that takes away age grouping, grades, classroom walls, etc. This model, he explained focuses on "self-paced, mastery learning and students must demonstrate competency in subject matter before building to the next level. He noted that this model could be internet enhanced.

Mr. Coulson asked how to we might get from where we are to the model which Mr. McElwee explained. Mr. McElwee explained that rational sequencing is needed of the current public school system. The first step in that he indicated is "how to learn" and how students' best learn and build a system around that. Then the role of the teacher and quality of an effective teacher must be considered. Next, it must be determined if effective teacher qualities are predictable and if so how to identify and develop them effectively. Mr. Thomas noted that this is an interesting concept and that with more control at the local level, this could become as a pilot project.

Tim McClung noted that he views the audit as a distraction, because it is focused on making something that isn't working better. Concern was expressed among several of the

Vision Shared committee members regarding the potential for the audit to become the blueprint for West Virginia's education system. Mr. McElwee noted that regards to the relative authorities of the state Legislator and the State Board of Education, a lawsuit is necessary at the Supreme Court level. He concluded that there have been misinterpretations of the constitution by these governing entities. He feels that based on precedent, that the state board actually has the real authority, over the Legislator. This would invalidate a significant piece of the code. These are bold moves that would enable significant change according to Mr. McElwee. (invalidate Chapter 18 and 18A)

Pat Getty noted that the adversarial relationship among education unions and other education leaders must be addressed. As long as change is being imposed on the profession, it will be difficult to foster change. He said that he thought it would be very difficult to make major strides in student outcomes unless the relationship is changed to one in which teachers, instead of being on the defensive, are responsible and accountable for their performance as professionals. He suggested that an effort be considered to encourage educational leadership to work with teachers and their unions on changes which would achieve better student outcomes, such as greater flexibility in the classroom, improved professional development, and other areas which have been demonstrated elsewhere to enhance teacher effectiveness, the surest path to better outcomes. **A neutral facilitator must be identified, he noted, and this may be a role for Vision Shared.**

IV. Steps Forward.

Leadership, Mr. Thomas noted, is critical and there was some sentiment that only the Governor could serve in this role. Discussion ensued regarding the difference between teachers and union leadership. Mr. McClung questioned the entrusting of only teachers with the success of the schools and their students? He noted a considerable lack of trust among those directly in the system and a need to instill in them the ability to be leaders.

It was suggested that Vision Shared should create a statement noting its support of local control for schools. Mr. McElwee noted that the audit provides some of this control by school leaders. He explained that some of the recommendations in his opinion cause the audit to lack credibility. Mr. Getty noted that when these items were discussed during a forum he attended, there was a total lack of confidence in school leaders by the teachers. He explained that even union leaders felt that strides could be made if school leaders and teachers could work together; versus school leadership have all control.

Mr. Coulson noted that for teacher leaders to rise and take authority in their school, you must recognize that some teachers simply do not want to. He explained that the identification of leaders among teachers and school administrators must happen to really make change.

Dan Foster noted that clearly what we have is not working; he explained his belief about education is that it all happens in the classroom. He shared his feeling that we must work harder to identify quality prospective teachers, educate them well, and pay them a wage

that is worthy of their efforts. He doesn't feel that the issue is hopeless, and that this group is important to making change. He concluded by saying that the Governor may take legislative actions, but that is now an unknown. Mr. McElwee expressed that comprehensive legislative would be a mistake for the 2013 session.

Mr. Thomas noted that Mr. Getty's idea may be a good starting point for Vision Shared - bringing the two unions together. He also added that he and Lloyd Jackson have had conversations with union leadership separately to discuss reaching compromise on many of these issues. Mr. McElwee noted his opposition to this method as he feels that nothing will happen and such confrontation should be avoided. He emphasized the need for the education of citizens with regard to the problems in education and their involvement is needed in efforts to reform system. He further explained that that the lack of interest in education by West Virginians is causing significant issues and contributes to an absence of accountability.

Mr. Thomas thanked all participants for their valuable input. He explained that the committee will be informed of any direction determined between now and the next scheduled quarterly meeting which is set for Tuesday, February 5, 2012 at 3 p.m.