

Elevating West Virginia's Public Schools

WHEREAS, AFT-West Virginia believes in and stands ready to fight for public education, as a high-quality public education is an economic necessity, an anchor of democracy, a moral imperative and a fundamental civil right; and

WHEREAS, years of disinvestment in public education have led to overcrowded classrooms, schools without nurses, librarians, counselors and the specialized personnel that ensure children's well-being; deteriorating school buildings with outdated materials and technology; unhealthy and unsafe environments; and a too-narrow array of academic, enrichment and extracurricular programs; and

WHEREAS, AFT-West Virginia recognizes that the burdens of poverty are felt in communities where members live and work, and we fight for equitable educational opportunities for all students; and

WHEREAS, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, and youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to lack access to high-speed internet and to a device (tablet or laptop); and

WHEREAS, delivering virtual distance learning, where students spend most of their school day online—interacting with their coursework, teachers, and peers through technology—is only an emergency option and does not meet the full needs of any student; and

WHEREAS, research shows that teachers are integral to the success or failure of technology use in schools, and educators must have meaningful input on the purchase of technology, virtual distance-learning plans, and professional learning opportunities.

RESOLVED, that AFT-West Virginia will advocate for our State's public-schools with:

- **A renewed sense of urgency to provide schools where families want to send their children, students are engaged, where educators want to teach, where curriculum is rich and inclusive, where there is joy in teaching and learning, and where all students will be prepared for college, career and citizenship;**
- **A vision for public education that meets the needs of educators, school staff and students, and assists affiliates to mobilize members and unite with their communities around state and local spending practices that result in a more equitable distribution of education funds;**
- **A goal for the strategic establishment of statewide community schools where students and families can access tailored health services and social services in one place, and marginalized communities can have access to services and support;**

- **Advocating for partnerships at the state and local levels that will allow the state Federation and local affiliates to collaborate with internet/cable providers to improve access issues in their community; and**

RESOLVED, that AFT-West Virginia will support social emotional learning and the well-being of students and staff by:

- **Advocating for the adoption of “whole child” supports and practices that facilitate students’ sense of belonging, including positive school climate, productive instructional strategies, social emotional development, and individualized student support;**
- **Advocating for additional school staff who have expertise in mental health to serve staff, students and families;**
- **Increasing our collective capacity to provide or partner on training on trauma-informed practices, social emotional learning and bereavement support; and**

RESOLVED, that AFT-West Virginia will support meaningful teaching and learning by advocating for:

- **Adequate staffing necessary to provide specialized instruction, related services and other supports to ensure that students with disabilities are receiving the supports that allow them to access instruction and support staff who specialize in the physical and emotional health of students;**
- **Increased time for planning, collaborating and creating student-centered learning environments, whether in person or virtually, in which pedagogical practices ensure that the students are active, not passive, participants.**