



AFT-West Virginia

2021 Legislative Agenda

1. Providing a Safe, Equitable, and High-Quality Work Environment

- a. Provide legislation and resources that facilitate resolutions to problems encountered with “sick schools”, including, but not limited to, breakouts associated with infectious disease.
 - Additional language in the Safe Schools Act pertaining to infectious disease
 - Legislation requiring Safe Schools Act training countywide
 - Full transparency on who has an “infectious disease” for staff members in their worksite, and consistent reporting guidelines that shall be utilized statewide.
- b. Evaluate and upgrade building operations, including HVAC systems, ventilation, and all mechanical systems, to CDC recommended best practice guidelines in order to reduce or prevent the spread of infectious disease.
- c. Provide all resources necessary to ensure mental health and 1-on-1 comprehensive counseling services for students and staff, as well as appropriate and sometimes alternate placements for students who exhibit emotional/mental health/behavioral disorder problems that impede the learning process for all students, including constant and consistent service personnel supervision of students who impede the learning process. Additionally, service personnel need to be provided time for planning, collaboration, and training to effectively support these services and assist students. All such services shall maintain privacy rights as per HIPAA.
- d. Address and revise legislation to ensure employees are appropriately protected from danger and abuse, including cyber bullying, by instituting and ensuring safeguards in areas such as, but not limited to, work environments, employee to student ratios, classroom aides in first grade, and safety aides on every bus.
- e. Address and revise legislation to allow employees to expeditiously allege and resolve potential violations of the Safe Schools Act by allowing these actions to immediately proceed to a Level 3 Hearing for consideration and resolution. Also, provide legislation and resources that facilitate and require Safe Schools trainings for all employees.

2. Attracting and Retaining High-Quality Educators and Support Staff for All Students

- a. Fully-fund PEIA by securing sustainable funding sources and allowing sensible and non-discriminatory utilization of this state-provided healthcare that reflects input from stakeholders.
- b. Implement an aggressive and attractive student loan forgiveness plan for current and newly hired WV education employees and provide appropriate funding for a 3-year salary package; \$7,000 raise across-the-board for teachers, service personnel, and public employees with automatic cost of living increases. This salary proposal would be in accordance with SB 391, a bill passed in 2014 that called for a beginning WV teacher salary of \$43,000 by fiscal year 2019.
- c. Ensure increased planning time and collaboration time for all educators and support staff. Protect uninterrupted planning periods, the 8-hour workday, and provide for the uninterrupted duty-free lunch to be set at a reasonable, mid-day lunch hour defined as starting at least two hours after employees' report time, and no less than two hours before employees' dismissal time.
- d. Ensure class-size equity for all grade levels and content areas with grades k-2 class sizes not to exceed 20 students and grades 3-12 not to exceed 25 students. Permit overages of three students per class and provide financial compensation for teachers and aides when a class size overage occurs. All limitations and overages are applicable to both in-person and virtual classes or a combination of the two.
- e. Revise legislation and provide funding to ensure school districts must hire the most highly qualified applicant, as determined by certification and years of experience, in every classroom, in every school and for every student.
- f. Provide a state tax exemption of up to \$1,000 on out-of-pocket classroom expenses accrued by educators.

3. Addressing Transparency and Reduction of Top-Heavy Administration

- a. Administration has the obligation to inform employees, students, and the community at large immediately upon possible exposure to infectious diseases, including, but not limited to COVID-19. All BOE meetings will be live streamed with accessibility for public comments.
- b. Close the salary gap between the administration and the workforce across all divisions of public education and state agencies by creating a percentage/proportional pay scale for administrators and employees, including the requirement that administrators will be paid no more than 1.5 times the daily rate.

- c. Provide legislation that defines a reasonable cap, as defined by all stakeholders, for the creation of and continuance of administrative positions in relation to teacher positions at the county level.
- d. Require all county school systems to post job vacancies on WV K12 Job Bank; additionally, all county boards of education will post expenditures and pending hires prior to the county board meeting and publish the same in the meeting minutes.

4. Improving Salary and Benefits for All Retirees

- a. Provide automatic cost-of-living increases for all retirees.
- b. Provide a state tax exemption for retired educators and retired public employees.
- c. Provide retired teachers and retired service personnel their daily rate per employment as a substitute, with restrictions on daily rate as well as the 140-day limit being removed.

5. Providing for the Quality of Education and Financial Stability of Higher Education Institutions

- a. Restructure the appropriation calculations to provide a more equitable distribution of funding, especially to provide for the smaller state institutions, and ensure an exemption for higher education from any proposed budget reduction, especially in the teacher education programs.
- b. Ensure a tenure system that provides security and respect to the profession.
- c. Provide an annual cost-of-living increase for staff and faculty with merit increases given only after the annual cost-of-living increase is given.
- d. Provide for additional salary advancement increases beyond the salary increase for achievement of the rank of full professor.

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