

Superintendent Shawn Dilly' Column No. 1 for June:

The school year for 2014-15 is wrapping up in Mineral County. Students' last day was June 2, and staff will soon be leaving for the summer as well.

It has been an interesting and challenging year. One in which funding and staffing have occasionally collided as we tried to plan for the 2015-16 school year and beyond.

It also has been a major learning process for me as your superintendent of schools. During the year, I introduced the Transformation of Our Schools as a way to generate new tools and ideas to link staff and community participation in providing expanded opportunities for our students. I want to take the time to talk more about this process and how our staff and others will be affected.

This process will continue through the summer as we put together groups of teachers, parents, businesses and others to work toward a more cohesive focus for the Transformation. We started with a summit in May that included panelists from various areas of the community. While it was well attended, we would have liked to have had more members from the business segment as well as parents.

However, the discussion that occurred was very helpful in moving us forward.

Shortly after the summit, we had a visit from West Virginia Superintendent of Schools, Michael Martirano, who visited several of our schools, speaking mostly with students, and taking note of some of the things we do well here in Mineral County. He also attended our high school graduations.

His suggestion was for us to build on what we have and we have a lot.

So as we move toward the next school year we will be doing just that with the help of our staff and the community.

The panelists who presented at the Transformation Summit are being asked to continue their service on the new Transformation Advisory Committee. Others who are interested will be asked to participate on this committee as well. Teacher committees also are being formed to begin the exchange of ideas that will help in this Transformation process.

Much of what we would like to accomplish is dependent on the Mineral County Schools budget for the next year. That budget was prepared by Assistant

Superintendent/Treasurer Steven Peer with input from myself, Director of Human Resources Susan Grady, Assistant Superintendent Jeff Crook, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for PreK/Elementary Education Susan Ray, and Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Secondary/Technical Center Education Scott Staley as we looked at programming for the coming year.

The Mineral County Board of Education approved the budget at its last meeting in May.

A big focus of our central office staff now will be the need to prepare for renewing the Mineral County Excess Levy which expires in July 2016. The levy has been renewed every five years since the 1950s through an election. Mineral County voters will be provided many opportunities to ask questions about the levy and what it means to the schools and to the county as a whole over the next months.

The excess levy in the 2015-16 budget provides more than \$775,000 for instructional supplies in many areas, \$4 million for local salary supplements, salaries for employees who are paid outside the State Aid to Education Formula, supplemental salaries, athletic salaries and the employee Dental/Vision Plan. The Transportation budget is supplemented by \$200,000 plus from the excess levy; \$1 million plus additional support to the Maintenance and Operations budget; and \$60,000 support to Community Services such as 4-H, libraries, Camp Minco, Highlands Arts, Health Department and the Sheriff's Office.

There will be many opportunities for the community to participate in learning more about Mineral County Schools in the coming months. While you are learning you also will have opportunities input into our plans going forward.

In the meantime, here are some questions you might want to think about our schools system and how it operates.

1. Did you know that the West Virginia State Funding Formula for schools provides no funding for athletics?
2. Did you know that increases in enrollment allow for additional funding professional and service personnel staffing while decreases in enrollment mean the county loses money from the state for positions?
3. Did you know that in the last five years the county has lost 450 students in enrollment (though we gained five students this year) but we have not reduced staff?

4. Did you know that Mineral County Schools provides income to 1,000 regular and part-time employees.

Future columns will talk more about the budget specifics including how the revenue is generated and how the expenditures are determined.

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