

business + schools

The  Education
alliance
Business and Community for Public Schools

2013 Annual Report

July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013





The Education Alliance's 30th anniversary provides a good opportunity to look back at our past, reflect on where we are today, and project where we want to be in the future. The education environment is much more complex today than it was 30 years ago. There are new social challenges, diminishing resources in schools, ever-changing and higher-level skills needed for career preparation, pervasive poverty in many communities, and difficult home environments for some students. Just as our state is attempting to figure out its economic future, schools are trying to chart new courses for themselves.

The Education Alliance clearly is still evolving. With our recent legislative successes in the education policy arena, we are beginning to find our voice in the debates and dialogues about education in West Virginia. As an organization, we have communicated to the governor, the legislature, and the public what the research says will improve student achievement in West Virginia.

During these exciting times of change, the board wishes to extend our sincerest gratitude to Dr. Patricia Kusimo for her excellent leadership during the past five years and wish her tremendous success in her retirement. This annual report is a tribute to her tenacious energy and highlights the successes of the past year.

The board would also like to welcome Dr. Amelia Courts as the new president/CEO. We are excited to have another intelligent and respected voice to lead our team. With her extensive background, Dr. Courts is the perfect leader to spearhead The Education Alliance's ongoing efforts to achieve meaningful and lasting reform of West Virginia's public schools.

In coming years, we will expand these efforts on a more wide-ranging basis by extending our message to community leaders throughout the state. We will continue emphasizing to legislators that all education initiatives should be tied directly to measurable benefits for students—in terms of statewide tests, GPAs, behavior, school completion, and student enrollment in more demanding course options.

We have shown that real change is possible, and over the next few years, our collective voices will grow even stronger as we continue to advocate for all West Virginia children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Thomas".

Jim Thomas
Chairman of the Board



What Is The Education Alliance?

The Education Alliance is a nonprofit organization that advocates for a quality public education for all West Virginia children.

Vision

Every West Virginia public school student will graduate ready to begin a career or pursue additional education and training.

Mission

The Education Alliance is an independent voice, earnest advocate, and statewide participant that advances policies and practices to continually improve public school student achievement in West Virginia.

Values

We believe in the worth of all West Virginia children; believe each and every child deserves a quality education; and support educators having tools and skills necessary to engage students in their own success.

- Honesty, truthfulness, and **integrity**
- **Credibility** through objectivity (research and fact-based)
- **Respect** for all education stakeholders, regardless of background, opinions, or organization of origin
- Commitment to excellence through **quality**, success, and achievement
- **Effective leadership** and professionalism
- **Learning** through education and experience
- **Results-oriented** based on sound data and measurements

About The Education Alliance

The Education Alliance was established in July 1983 as the first statewide public education fund in the nation. It was the brainchild of West Virginia business executives, who saw the importance of supporting public schools and giving the business community a voice in education.

From the College Bound program in the 1980s to our new AmeriCorps project, The Education Alliance has continually placed students first and demanded higher levels of excellence from our public education system. From the very beginning, volunteers have been the key to the organization. Without these dedicated men and women, The Education Alliance would not be where it is today or looking forward to another 30 years of improving public education in West Virginia.

One of The Education Alliance's very first programs, Partnerships in Education, was rooted in volunteerism. Partnerships in Education paired every school in the state with a business. As the state's economic landscape changed over the last three decades, it was no longer possible to maintain these one-to-one partnerships. As a result, the program has evolved into a new initiative that honors its original mission.

This new initiative, the Education Elevator program, continues this volunteer tradition. Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, business and community volunteers will help children that need a caring adult's support to develop positive attitudes and better literacy skills. It is funded by the law firm of Jackson-Kelly, the Education Elevator Foundation, PLLC, and the McJunkin family.

The Education Alliance has developed a series of products to stimulate dialogues about the future of public education in West Virginia. These products are geared toward the general public, community and business leaders, policy makers, and educators. They are available on The Education Alliance Web site at EducationAlliance.org/Products.





Over the last 30 years, The Education Alliance consistently has engaged in advocacy efforts by working with policy makers and the public to raise awareness of current research on relevant issues. Over the last two years, however, it has become much more of a policy advocate.

During the 2013 legislative session, The Education Alliance promoted two key initiatives: 180-day instruction and third-grade literacy. The staff provided legislators with research and data to show how the new policies could lead to concrete improvements, and many members of The Education Alliance Board—comprising education and business leaders from across the state—met personally with legislators to emphasize the significance of this legislation. As a result, Senate Bill 359, which was signed by Governor Tomblin, will help ensure that all West Virginia children receive 180 days of education each school year. In addition, Governor Tomblin directed the state Board of Education to take steps to ensure that all children can read at grade level by third grade.

As the next step in this policy work, The Education Alliance plans to work diligently to ensure that the third-grade reading initiative is rolled out properly. As a starter, a forum on early literacy is being planned for fall 2013. In the future, The Education Alliance plans to become an even more vigorous advocate by encouraging governmental officials to enact proven strategies and by framing the issues in an understandable way to garner public support for these policies. No one entity can produce successful change—it takes a collective and persistent effort.



During 2012-13, the WV eMentoring program served 1,059 students in 17 high schools in 14 counties. This nearly tripled the total number of students served since the program began in January 2011.

Students often fail to see how school relates to the real world, particularly when they are projecting how their lives and careers will eventually unfold. Interactions with successful people from the real world can help these young people understand how their educational and career dots will eventually connect. This is the philosophy behind WV eMentoring, an online program geared to students in grades 8-12.

Students choose mentors based on a career interest and communicate with them weekly via e-mail. They log on once or twice a week and complete 10 online activities that help prepare them for college or a career after graduating high school. The activities are targeted specifically to each student's needs. The topic can cover a wide range of subjects, such as how to apply for financial aid, selecting courses that best prepare them for their chosen career, or breaking down traditional gender roles.

In the end, these students come out with a better grasp on their career goals and postsecondary choices. WV eMentoring students typically are surprised by their various options, and for some, the mentors provide the only positive educational support they receive outside school.

wvmentoring.org



Some of the benefits that students mentioned about the WV eMentoring program:

“[It helps you] bloom where you are.”

“The program helped you decide what you want to do later in life.”

“It helped connect skills to the work world and reality.”

“[Our mentor] taught us that it doesn’t matter how much school [you attend] or how long it takes as long as you get what you want.”

“It helped me learn how to manage my time.”

“It opened my mind to other jobs.”



This was the last year of the five-year Walk the Talk initiative, which was funded by the AT&T ASPIRE Foundation. The program followed cohorts of at-risk students in four schools from 9th to 12th grades. The students received face-to-face support and guidance from mentors from the business community.

A great example of this program's impact involves a young woman who was struggling in mathematics. Her mother was loving and supportive but, since she had not attended college, did not emphasize the importance of a postsecondary education to her daughter. Originally, the young woman's postsecondary plan was to work at Captain D's

because she thought a minimum wage job was the ceiling of her career possibilities. After meeting regularly with her mentor, though, she began opening up, becoming more self-confident, and realizing her own potential. This young woman made up some failed mathematics classes and graduated on time with a 3.2 GPA. She will start her postsecondary education at a community and technical college in fall 2013. When asked about her favorite experience in high school, she said it was having a mentor "because it was the only extracurricular activity I had in high school and because I had someone who continually cared for me and supported me." The mentor helped her realize that you can want more for yourself than even your family expects of you.

Although the Walk the Talk initiative has been completed, the lessons learned from the last five years have helped inspire the promising AmeriCorps project, which was launched in 2012-13.





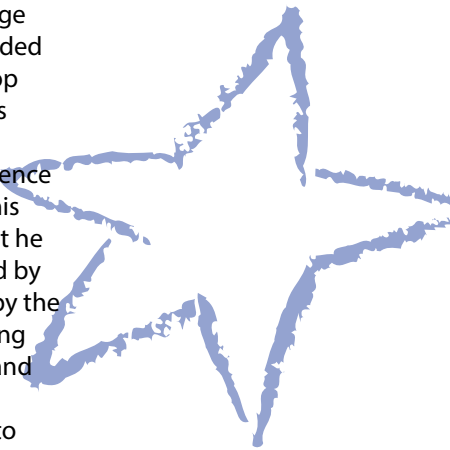
This new initiative reflects lessons learned from The Education Alliance's Walk the Talk and Frontline Network projects. These prior projects pointed to a need for mentors to be housed in schools, readily available to support students and to work with educators. A major grant from Volunteer West Virginia, the state's Commission for National and Community Service, helped kick-start the AmeriCorps on the Frontline initiative, which is slated to last for three years.





In 2012-13, this project helped 575 at-risk students in seven counties: Cabell, Calhoun, Doddridge, Monroe, Pleasants, Pocahontas, and Raleigh. The students were selected for participation based on attendance, behavior, and performance issues.

Just in this first year, there were scores of great success stories. One of the most gratifying involves a young man in Doddridge County. A senior, he was struggling to pass his classes, particularly language arts; had serious attendance issues; and had decided to drop out. The school convinced him not to drop out and to pursue a G.E.D. One of the AmeriCorps volunteers was assigned to this young man. He quickly realized that the student had little confidence in completing the program, let alone obtaining his G.E.D. The volunteer continually assured him that he could succeed by attending school every day and by practicing the reading-and-writing skills taught by the alternative education instructor. He began working conscientiously to improve his reading, writing, and comprehension skills. After weeks of hard work, he passed all areas of the G.E.D. exam. He came to school the next day to fill out the paperwork dressed in a suit and tie, beaming with a look of pride and confidence—a successful young man with a bright future.



Annual Dinner

Each year, The Education Alliance honors an individual or group that has made significant contributions to education. This year, The Education Alliance paid tribute to Lewis D'Antoni and family of Wyoming County.

The father, Lewis D'Antoni, was born in 1913, the son of an Italian immigrant. A star athlete at Mullens High School and Concord College (now University), he became an outstanding high school coach, leading Mullens High School to a state boys' basketball championship. In addition, he served as the school's principal for 11 years. When he retired, he left behind a lifetime legacy of teaching, coaching, and mentoring youth. Lewis D'Antoni and his late wife, Betty Jo, had four children.

Kathy D'Antoni formerly served as Vice Chancellor of the Community and Technical College System of West Virginia. Today, she is the Associate State Superintendent of Schools.





Dan D'Antoni, a standout basketball player at Mullens High School and Marshall University, earned a master's degree in psychology and was a highly successful high school basketball coach in South Carolina. He was named teacher of the year in 1986 and was a leading fundraiser for educational causes in Horry County, SC. He currently serves as the assistant coach of the Los Angeles Lakers.

Mike D'Antoni was also a basketball star at Mullens and Marshall, where he was named an Academic All-American. After playing in the NBA and ABA, he went on to become a basketball legend in Italy. He later was head coach of the NBA's Denver Nuggets, Phoenix Suns, and New York Knicks and is currently head coach of the Los Angeles Lakers.

Mark D'Antoni played college basketball in South Carolina and, like his brother Mike, was named an Academic All-American. He eventually earned a law degree from West Virginia University and currently is a partner in the Charleston law firm of Bowles Rice. The Education Alliance was privileged that all five of the D'Antonis participated in the Annual Dinner, including Lewis, six weeks shy of his 99th birthday.



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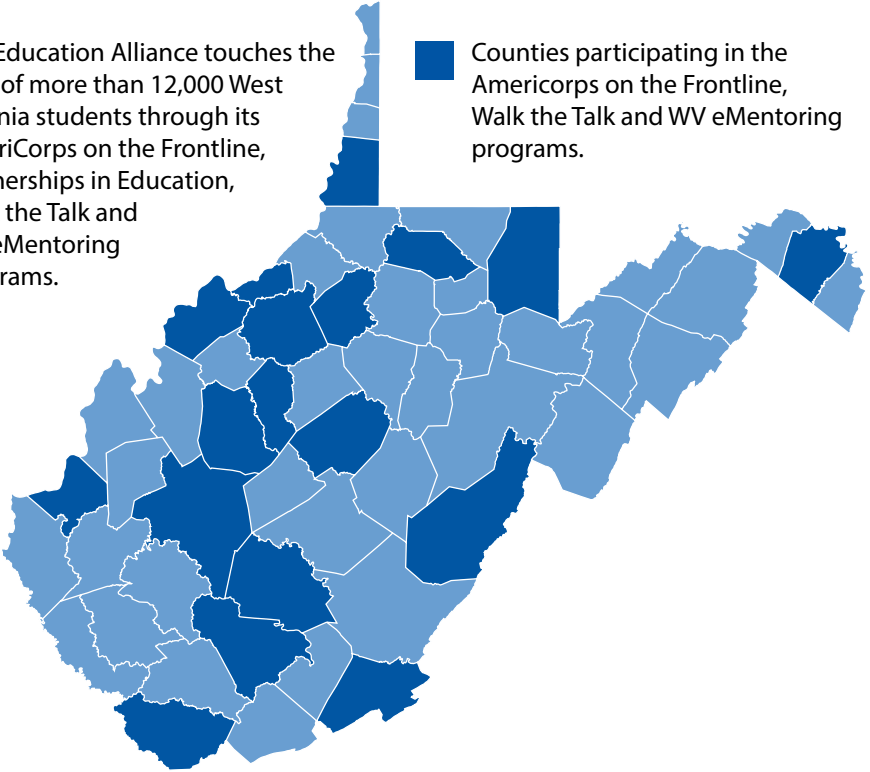
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The Education Alliance touches the lives of more than 12,000 West Virginia students through its AmeriCorps on the Frontline, Partnerships in Education, Walk the Talk and WV eMentoring programs.

■ Counties participating in the AmeriCorps on the Frontline, Walk the Talk and WV eMentoring programs.



The Education Alliance's Partnership in Education and WV eMentoring programs are available to all 55 counties. Starting in Fall 2013, tools and resources will be available for business and community volunteers who are interested in supporting the development of positive attitudes and better literacy skills for kindergarten through third-grade students.





Mailing Address:

PO Box 3071
Charleston, WV 25331-3071

Office Location:

803 Quarrier Street
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(304) 342-7850
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