




ANNUAL REPORT
2014

Connecting to the Future

STUDENTS WITH MENTORS | SCHOOLS WITH PARTNERS |
VISION WITH ADVOCACY

The  Education
alliance
Business and Community for Public Schools

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD AND PRESIDENT/CEO



West Virginia is in a significant period of transition from both an economical and educational standpoint. The Education Alliance is playing an active role as a catalyst in this transition by continuing to connect communities, businesses, educators, and students to shape a new West Virginia.

Evidence of this can be seen in the overwhelming success of our Education Summit, where business, community and education leaders volunteered their time to share strategies for improving public education. Thanks to the success of our inaugural event, we are already making plans for our next summit in the fall.

This past year has been an exciting one. The Alliance launched several new initiatives and programs that build upon the positive momentum of the past and expand our work into more areas of the state. Just in the last year, we have added four new counties to those being served by our programs, added part-time staff in those regions, doubled our social media followers, and kicked off our new speaker series, EDTalks, in two of the fastest-growing sections of the state: the north-central and eastern panhandle regions. By designing programs specifically for these areas, we are targeting our organization to have a statewide impact and help address the needs of all West Virginia students.

We are working hard to evaluate all of our efforts and to measure our impact by concrete results. This year's annual report provides a robust analysis of the powerful impact that our outreach efforts are having on West Virginia students. While the lists and statistics are substantive, the personal stories are even more impressive. Please take a moment to share in our progress as you read personal stories about the individual lives our organization is touching.

We want to thank our Board of Directors and our state's business and community leaders for their support and demonstrated commitment to a stronger public education system. Together, we can change the future!

Sincerely,

Amelia Courts, Ed.D.
President/CEO

Sammy Gray
Chairman of the Board

WHAT IS THE EDUCATION ALLIANCE?

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.

Vision

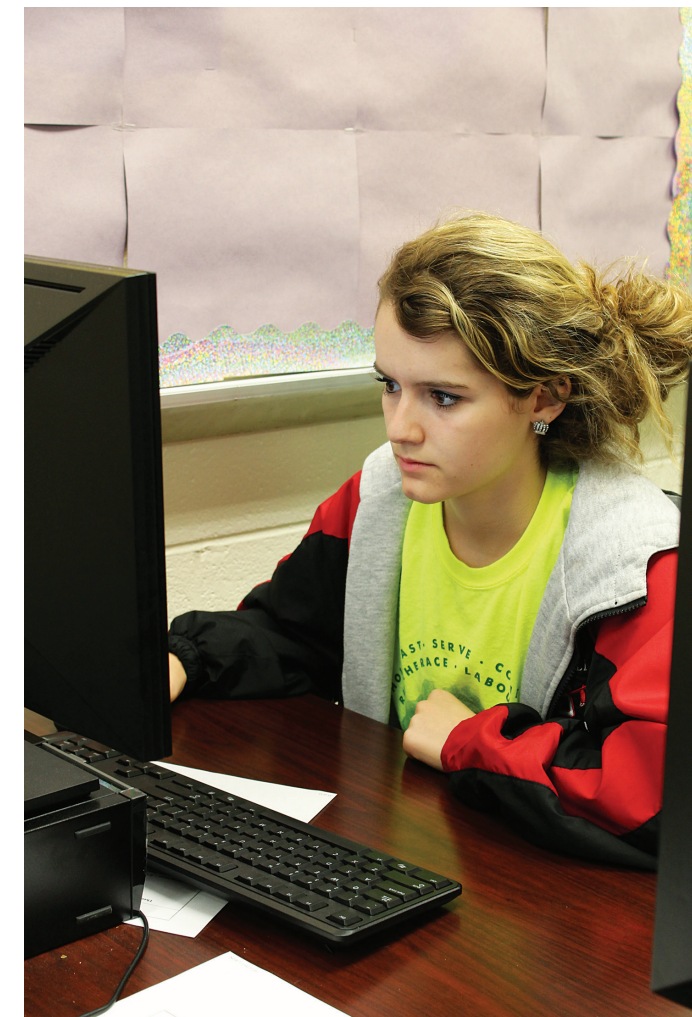
Every West Virginia public school student will graduate ready to begin a career or pursue additional education and training.

History

The Education Alliance is a nonprofit organization that advocates for a quality public education for all West Virginia children. It was established in July 1983 by business executives who saw the importance of supporting public schools and giving the business community a voice in education. As a nonprofit organization, it is supported 100 percent by grants and donations from businesses and individuals. Through statewide advocacy efforts and student-centered programs, The Education Alliance



- Serves more than 21,000 students annually
- Utilizes more than 1,300 volunteers to provide more than 28,000 hours of service
- Matches more than 1,300 students with a caring adult role model
- Pairs 98 percent of West Virginia schools with at least one business partner
- Provides sound research and data in public dialogues about education



From the Partnerships in Education program in the 1980s to our current AmeriCorps on the Frontline, WV eMentoring, and Education Elevators programs, The Education Alliance has continually placed students first and supported higher levels of excellence from our public education system. From the very beginning, business and community partners have been the key to the organization. Without these dedicated men and women, The Education Alliance would not be where it is today. Together with our partners, we look forward to a strong collaboration to improve public education in West Virginia.

CONNECTING TO OUR FUTURE

As we reflect on the past year and look ahead to the upcoming year, there is clearly a common thread that unifies and strengthens the important work of The Education Alliance. It is the **connections** that are facilitated by you, by our many business and community partners, and through the tireless work of the Alliance's staff and volunteers on a daily basis.

As this year's annual report highlights, The Education Alliance is connecting to our future. The connections occur within three important spheres of influence. First, we are connecting individual students with responsible role models through WV eMentoring and AmeriCorps on the Frontline programs. These programs illustrate the tremendous difference that can be made in the life of a student when a caring adult provides mentoring, guidance, and consistent support.

Second, we are connecting schools across the state with business partners to provide support through our Partnerships in Education program. This concept underlies several new programs that were initiated during the 2013-14 school year. Born Learning® Academies and Education Elevators provide schools with resources and structures they need to tackle specific challenges such as strengthening family engagement and fostering positive youth development. And STEM Works provides resources for schools to help prepare students for careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. These types of networks highlight the powerful role that business can play to help support our schools.

Finally, The Education Alliance is working to promote long-term systemic change to improve public education. We are connecting vision to advocacy by promoting dialogue and building support for the necessary changes. This past year, we launched several new initiatives to do just that. The Education Summit and EDTalks, provided important forums for connecting business leaders, community members, education leaders, and public officials to help transform education in the Mountain State. These forums help connect education with jobs and, consequently, West Virginia's young people with the state's future.

In moving forward, The Education Alliance will continue to facilitate these connections — specifically, by creating more opportunities for direct dialogue and partnerships among schools, businesses, parents, and other community members.



Connecting STUDENTS WITH MENTORS



AMERICORPS ON THE FRONTLINE

AmeriCorps on the Frontline connects at-risk students directly with a caring adult role model — an element lacking in many of their lives. This connection helps the students see that success is possible despite any negative situations they might currently face in their lives. Over the last few years, there have been numerous instances of a mentor recognizing a child's potential when the child — or often, the educator — does not.

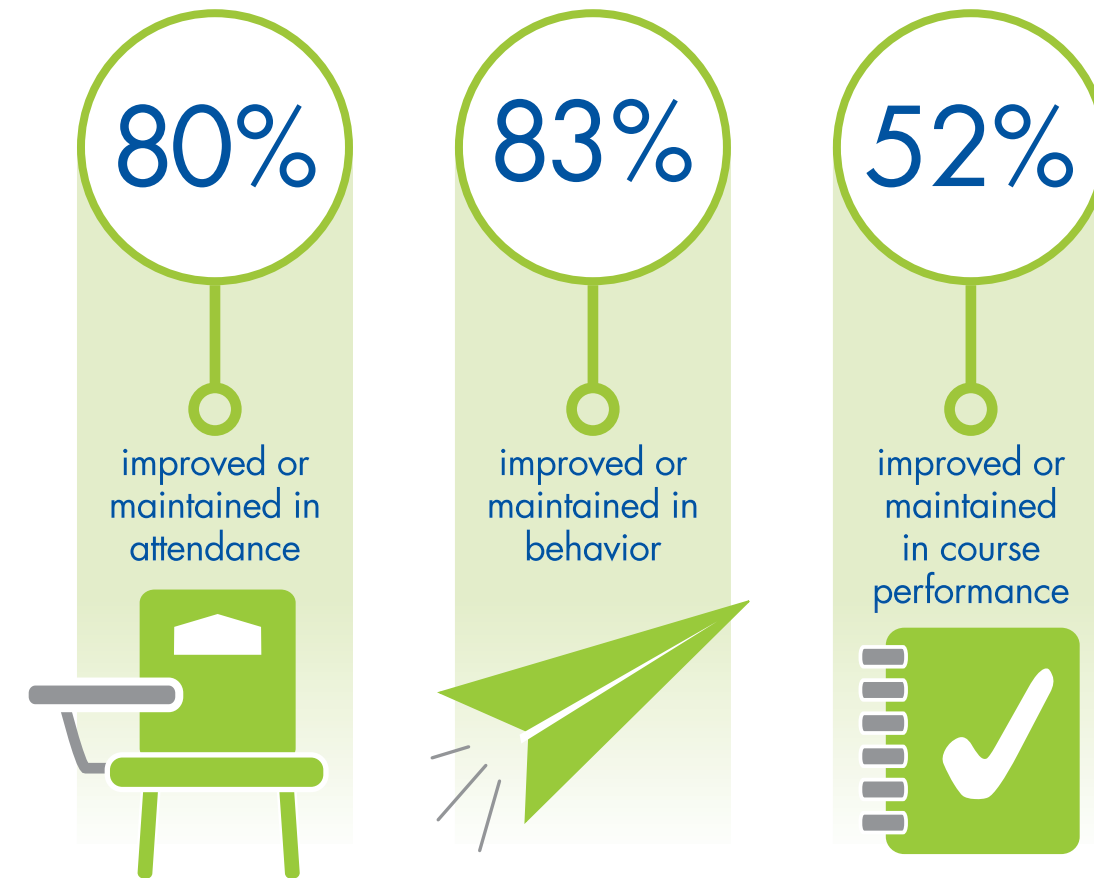


These mentors have been able to make meaningful impacts on student lives, particularly in the areas of attendance, behavior, and course performance. During 2013-14, AmeriCorps on the Frontline involved 20 mentors in seven counties. Next year, it will expand to 35 mentors in 11 counties.

AmeriCorps on the Frontline mentors make real differences in young people's lives. This past school year, Matt* was called to court for repeated truancy. Just 30 minutes before his court appearance, he learned that his brother had been sentenced to prison. Despite these circumstances, Matt maintained his composure. The judge informed him that he had improved his behavior so dramatically that he did not need to appear again in court. At the end of the court appearance, the student turned around and said, "This is my mentor, Amanda*, and she is helping me turn my life around." This is just one example of why this program is so important to West Virginia teens.

** This report highlights stories of real West Virginia students and mentors whose names have been changed to protect their identity.*

Of the students who participated in the AmeriCorps on the Frontline program this year,



WV eMENTORING

This was the third full school year for the WV eMentoring initiative. This year, the program connected young people in 14 high schools across the state with adult role models based on the students' career interests. The program occurs online through online messaging and activities that help prepare students for a college or career path.

During the 2013-14 school year, WV eMentoring also sponsored field trips for students who participated in WV eMentoring to local universities and community and technical colleges. These trips, which were made possible by a grant from the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, allowed students to discuss their potential college and career paths with higher education advisors. For more than 95% of students who participated in these field trips, this was their first experience stepping foot on a college campus. Students got to see firsthand how they could apply in a postsecondary setting the various lessons they have learned from their mentors.

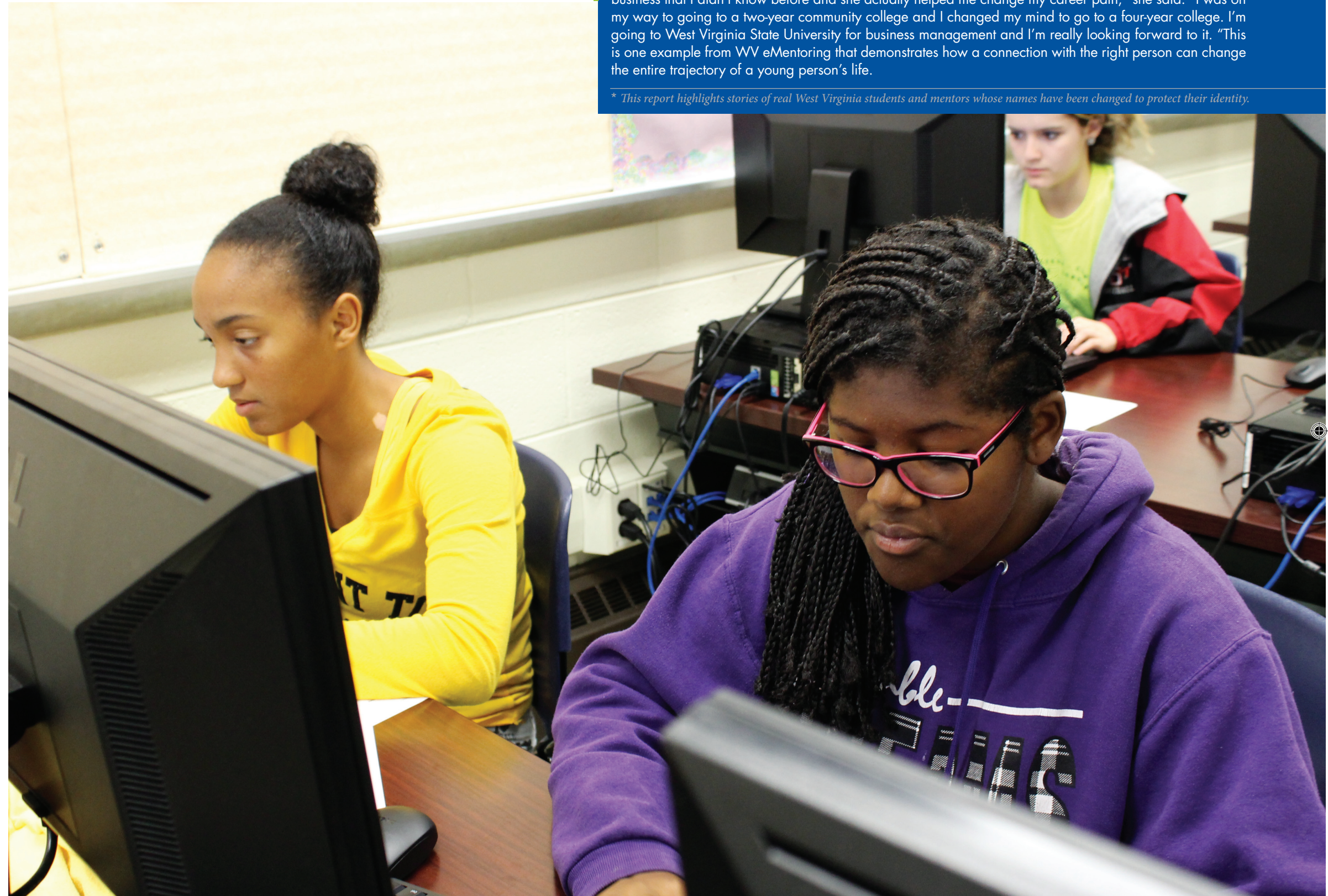
The program has been a resounding success, demonstrated by increased student interest in a postsecondary education. Close to 92% of students surveyed indicated they have a plan for pursuing job training or entering a postsecondary institution following high school graduation. The most impressive successes, though, are in the individual stories of the students. After participating in the WV eMentoring program, students overwhelmingly have a better grasp of what they must do to succeed in college or in a career. In addition, they better understand their options for meeting these goals.



Survey Results about WV eMentoring



of the participating students said they valued their time with their eMentor.



Before taking part in the WV eMentoring program, Sierra*, a student at Charleston's Capital High School, had planned to enter a two-year community college. After discussing her long-term goals with her WV eMentor, however, she changed her mind. "My mentor, Deborah*, was so great. She really told me a lot about business that I didn't know before and she actually helped me change my career path," she said. "I was on my way to going to a two-year community college and I changed my mind to go to a four-year college. I'm going to West Virginia State University for business management and I'm really looking forward to it. "This is one example from WV eMentoring that demonstrates how a connection with the right person can change the entire trajectory of a young person's life.

** This report highlights stories of real West Virginia students and mentors whose names have been changed to protect their identity.*



UNITED WAY BORN LEARNING® ACADEMIES, DRIVEN BY TOYOTA

This upcoming partnership, funded by Toyota Motor Manufacturing, WV, Inc., will connect community members with their local education institutions by bringing parents directly into schools. It will provide parents of pre-K children in Cabell, Putnam, and Wayne counties with tools to help their children succeed in kindergarten and beyond. As part of the academies, the parents will participate in six entertaining trainings, where they will learn how to create teachable moments for their children.

The concept, based on the Harlem Children's Zone Baby College, emphasizes the importance of early learning. This has proven to be an effective approach in low-income areas because, as research demonstrates, adults who have grown up in generational poverty need more help with becoming better parents. For instance, they often need hands-on assistance with building routines in their daily lives and in planning nutritional diets for their families.

The Education Alliance will use the Toyota grant to provide training and resources for three schools (Highlawn Elementary School in Cabell County, Buffalo Elementary School in Putnam County, and East Lynn Elementary School in Wayne County) and assist them in hosting the academies during the 2014-15 school year.

UNITED WAY
bornlearning® academy

“This collaborative approach to early childhood development will meet a critical need in our communities. [This] program engages parents and gives them the resources they need to turn everyday moments they share with their children into learning opportunities to prepare them for future academic successes.”

— Governor Earl Ray Tomblin



EDUCATION ELEVATORS



This year, The Education Alliance launched a new program called Education Elevators. It builds upon a successful program at Charleston's Piedmont Elementary sponsored by the McJunkin Foundation and Jackson Kelly PLLC.

As with the WV eMentoring and AmeriCorps on the Frontline programs, Education Elevators connects young people — in this case, elementary students — with positive adult role models. Once a week, various career professionals visit participating schools and serve as mentors to the students. The program's main purpose is to inspire young children who might lack a positive role model in their lives.

In this first year, The Education Alliance expanded the Education Elevators program to serve students at Grandview Elementary in Kanawha County, Monongah Elementary in Marion County, and Bunker Hill and Tuscarora Elementaries in Berkeley County. The mentors were volunteers from Chase Bank, the Monongah Kiwanis Club, and the 167th Airlift Wing of the West Virginia Air National Guard

Education Elevators offers a great way for business people and other career professionals to get involved in their communities. It helps business and community leaders see for themselves what students really need to succeed — and also understand how a responsible role model can make a major difference in young people's lives.

Research about mentoring shows the following:

Students who meet regularly with their mentors are



52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class.



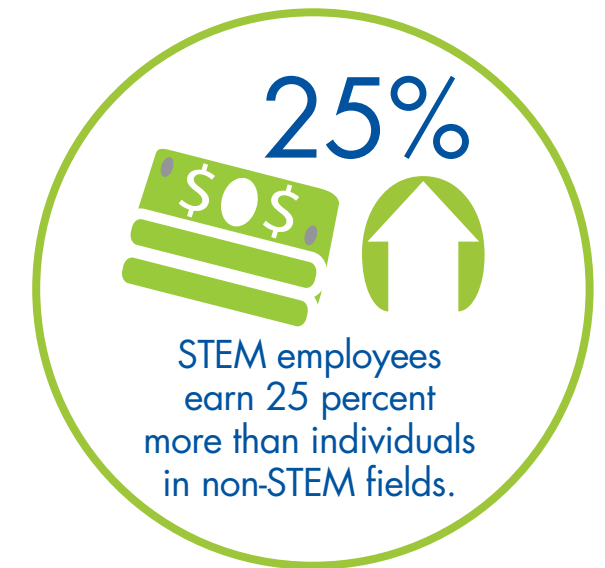
STEM WORKS

During the fall of 2013, The Education Alliance began planning for the launch of the STEM Works initiative, which is being developed collaboratively with business and industry leaders striving to enhance West Virginia's workforce readiness for the ever-increasing STEM-related careers in the state. STEM is an acronym for science, technology, engineering and mathematics. For the last several years, state leaders have been working to improve and diversify West Virginia's economy. Preparing students for careers in STEM is the key to achieving that goal. A strong STEM education will help all students develop 21st century skills such as critical thinking and problem solving that are essential for today's workforce.

We were pleased to receive an award from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation that enabled us to kick start our STEM Works project. STEM Works focuses on three goals: create a broader public awareness regarding STEM career opportunities among students, parents and communities; support a cohort of "Network" schools that become model schools in STEM education; and challenge all schools to redouble their efforts in STEM education and ensure that local business partners are meaningfully engaged in the process.

During the past year, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin issued an Executive Order to bring together business and industry representatives from across the state to form a STEM Council to help tackle the challenges of improving STEM education. The Education Alliance has been privileged to work with the Governor's Council to provide support and research to facilitate the council's work. We look forward to ongoing work with the Council and collaboration with other partners across the state to enhance STEM education for our students across the state.

The STEM WORKS Project



As part of the Education Elevators program, Judy, a mentor in Marion County, sat down for the first time with a Monongah Elementary third grader and asked about her likes and dislikes. The little girl loved baking and jewelry but despised working with fractions. A self-described math nerd, the mentor came up with an activity to inspire the girl. During their next meeting, they baked cookies, and the girl had to figure out how to double and triple the recipe. Then, the mentor pulled out a jewelry brochure, and they went "shopping." The little girl soon understood that it was better to have a 7/8-carat diamond ring than one that was 3/4. Sometimes, a caring adult just needs to find the right angle — or fraction — to reach a student.



Connecting
VISION WITH ADVOCACY

EDUCATION SUMMIT

To raise awareness about the critical need to provide every child with a quality public education, The Education Alliance and Governor Earl Ray Tomblin co-hosted a summit called *Excellence in Education: It's Everyone's Business* on November 5, 2013 at the Charleston Civic Center.

The summit connected approximately 250 business and education leaders to identify solutions for improving education in West Virginia. In a town hall forum, moderated by the Honorable Gaston Caperton, participants discussed specific challenges facing West Virginia including third-grade reading proficiency, achievement standards and an accountability model. West Virginia Board of Education President Gayle Manchin and Board Member Lloyd Jackson reported on the progress of the Board of Education. Then participants heard experiences of other states who have successfully implemented an A through F school accountability system.

Following the summit, many of the participating business and education leaders stated that the Summit had facilitated a broad involvement of stakeholders with serious and relevant content addressed in an engaging and compelling program. The policy discussions begun at the summit continued long past November. During the 2014 legislative session, Governor Tomlin directed the State Board to develop an A through F student performance grading system and the board enacted those policy changes in May 2014. The Education Alliance will host another summit on October 20, 2014. For more information or to register, visit EducationAlliance.org/Summit.

**EXCELLENCE
IN EDUCATION**
It's Everyone's Business



OUR VOICE

As part of ongoing efforts to support systemic improvement in West Virginia's public schools through the Our Voice campaign, The Education Alliance is connecting community members with up-to-date important education news and policy changes. This year the Alliance reached more West Virginians than ever before.

During the 2014 Legislative session, The Education Alliance issued its second annual publication of Policy Briefs that highlight the organization's priorities around three areas that are a continued focus from last year and one new priority focus (STEM education):



- Equipping the public with transparent and measurable student benefits
- Ensuring all students can read at grade level by the end of third grade
- Providing all students with meaningful learning time
- Equipping students to be competitive in STEM-related education and careers

Visit EducationAlliance.org to join our mailing list and follow us on twitter today.

EDTALKS

During the first half of 2014, The Education Alliance launched a new program — EDTalks. The first two EDTalks connected schools, community members, and state education leaders.

The first of the two EDTalks was held in Morgantown on May 20, 2014, and featured West Virginia University President, Dr. E. Gordon Gee, and Sierra Cook, senior at John Marshall High School in Glen Dale. Dr. Gee addressed how colleges and universities are responsible for transforming ideas into jobs.

Ms. Cook won a college scholarship through a high school business plan competition. Her concept, Marshall Mushrooms, outlines a plan for producing and marketing shitake and maitake mushrooms to restaurants and other businesses. She observed, "As a young person, I see entrepreneurship as my opportunity to build a career that I love and give back to West Virginia."

A second EDTalks was held in Charles Town on June 19, 2014. At this event, U.S. Senator Joe Manchin III advocated for implementing a 21st-century version of apprenticeships to help students with the cost of an education; Dr. Wallace Boston, President of the American Public University System, noted the value of online learning; and Erin Sponaule, West Virginia Teacher of the Year, urged state leaders to include teachers in conversations about the future of education and to value the contributions of educators.

More of these community events are being planned for 2014-15. In addition to sharing innovative ideas and engaging community leaders, these events underscore the importance of The Education Alliance as the statewide link for connecting education, jobs, and West Virginia's future.



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The Education Alliance is not a state or federal government agency. As a nonprofit organization, it is supported 100% by grants and donations from individuals and businesses. For every dollar spent, 87 cents goes directly to programs or services that help West Virginia students succeed.

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