



EDUCATION

POWERS TOMORROW

THE FUEL DRIVING WEST VIRGINIA

2015
Annual
Report





MESSAGE From

The Chairman of the Board and President/CEO

This year's Annual Report highlights the theme of our exciting statewide public engagement campaign that is launching as we go to press for this report ... **Education Powers Tomorrow.** Through a statewide media campaign, we are asking West Virginia communities to support and engage in efforts to strengthen public education. The campaign provides specific examples of how individuals can get involved and reminds them that their involvement matters to the lives of our students. We were pleased to receive a grant from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation to support this effort. It aligns with one of our organization's long-term strategic goals to *"stay rooted in our business legacy and, in innovative and creative ways, increase the active presence of individuals at all levels ... to full involvement."*

This theme resonates beyond the message of our public engagement campaign. It exemplifies the underlying vision and mission of The Education Alliance and our Board of Directors. West Virginia is in a significant period of transition. We see tremendous changes in all areas — from basic demographic shifts as our state continues to age, to enormous political, technological and economic changes underway. These changes only underscore the need for a strong education system that will both literally and figuratively "power" our collective tomorrow. The Education Alliance is working hard to be an effective advocate for students, schools and systems that are actively accomplishing that goal.

This past year our programs and partnerships have moved the needle in some key outcomes that you will see highlighted throughout the report. The Alliance launched several new initiatives including an early learning initiative, a STEM initiative and an expanded AmeriCorps program. We continued to build upon the positive momentum of our 2nd annual Education Summit and EDTalks series. 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 the state's business and community partners for their leadership and demonstrated commitment to education. Together, we can support the next generation of West Virginia students preparing them with knowledge and skills to power our tomorrow for generations to come!

Sincerely,

Amelia Courts, Ed.D.
President/CEO

Sammy L. Gray, II
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 32,000 hours of service
- ✓ Matches more than 1,400 students with a caring adult role model to provide more than 24,000 mentoring sessions
- ✓ Pairs 96 percent of West Virginia schools with at least one business partner
- ✓ Provides nearly \$500,000 in resources leveraged directly to West Virginia schools
- ✓ Provides sound research and data in public dialogues about education



From the Partnerships in Education program in the 1980s to our current 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.



Education Powers Tomorrow

The Education Alliance has long believed that *education powers tomorrow*. Each of these three simple words are foundational in the work of our organization. They hold a substantive place in our reflections of the past year and generate excitement as we prepare for the coming one.

the challenges and opportunities facing today's students extend far beyond the academic. This report highlights the powerful impact that our mentoring programs provide when students are connected with responsible role models. Through programs such as *WV eMentoring*, *Education Elevators* and *AmeriCorps on the Frontline* we have demonstrative data that illustrate the tremendous difference that a caring adult mentor can make. Specifically, these programs provide a roadmap for how success in key challenges (student absenteeism, discipline issues, course performance, etc.) can be achieved through guidance and consistent mentoring support. These successes lead to better education outcomes and limitless opportunities for changing the life of a student.

Powers. Throughout this past year, many business and community partners have stepped up in powerful ways to leverage resources, provide programs, and join forces with schools across the state. Through the tireless work of the Alliance's staff and volunteers on a daily basis we see models of such cooperation. *Born Learning Academies* provide schools with resources and structures they need to strengthen family engagement and foster positive youth development. *STEM Works* provides resources for schools to help prepare students for careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. *Partnerships in Education* celebrates the ongoing commitment of the business community to their local schools. This report provides shining examples in each of these areas of people and institutions sharing a problem — or an opportunity — to address it most powerfully through collaborative effort.

Tomorrow. The word reflects the hope and optimism of leaders and organizations across West Virginia as we join forces to promote long-term systemic change to improve public education. We believe this change can occur through research-based vision setting and by facilitating dialogue among leaders and stakeholders. The 2014 Education Summit focused our attention on the importance of transforming our education system to personalize learning for our students. Our EDTalk speaker series reached out to the various regions of the state to discuss strategies for connecting education, jobs and our future. Through the Our Voice program we used traditional and social media to help educate and advise citizens about key legislative and policy issues both nationally and across West Virginia. These forums help inform stakeholders as we work collaboratively for a brighter tomorrow.

Education.

Ultimately *students* are at the heart of all of our programs and outreach efforts. We know that





AmeriCorps on the Frontline mentor helps a sixth grade student with his social studies work in Kanawha County.

In moving forward, The Education Alliance will continue our efforts to support both a mindset and an action plan that embodies an **“Education Powers Tomorrow”** approach. Please contact our organization to find out more about how you can play a role in a mentoring program, in a school-based partnership, or simply by lending your voice and ideas. Business leaders, parents, community members, we ask for your help — please join us in this effort.



POWERING Students With Support



AmeriCorps on the Frontline

AmeriCorps on the Frontline empowers at-risk students to see their potential by connecting them with a caring adult role model — an element lacking in many of their lives. This connection helps the students realize that success is possible despite negative situations they might currently face in their lives. AmeriCorps mentors have been able to make meaningful impacts on student lives, particularly in the areas of attendance, behavior, and course performance.

Major funding for the program was provided by a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service. It enabled 35 AmeriCorps mentors to provide weekly mentoring sessions to at-risk students in grades 3-12. These sessions help students develop positive attitudes towards school and learning, problem solving, social skills, note taking, homework help and time management. Members leverage the support of community volunteers from local business and community organizations to engage students in job-shadowing activities and extended learning opportunities.

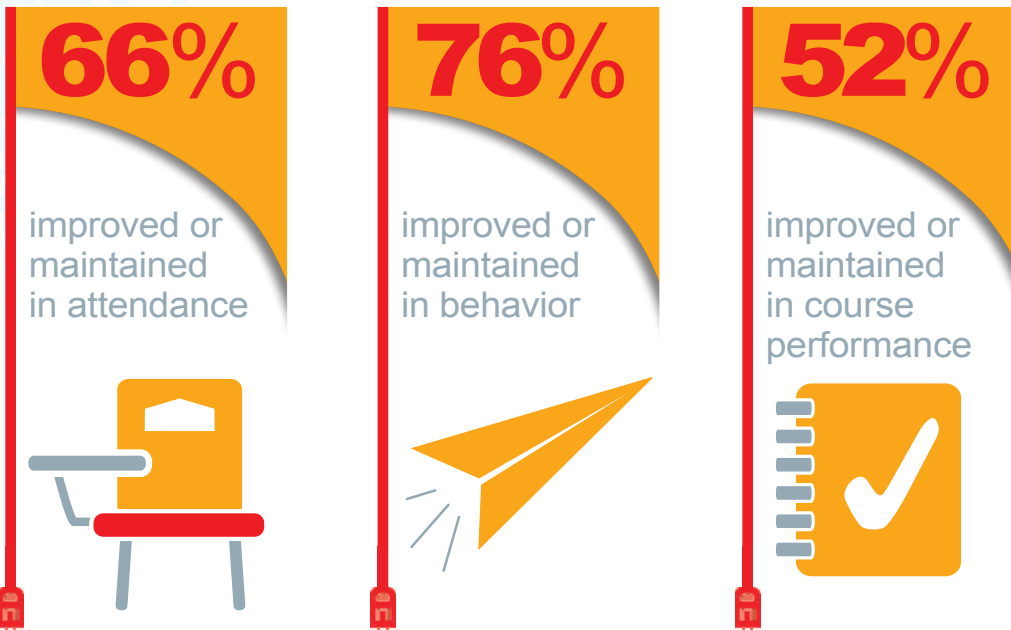
This past year we were honored to participate in the 20th Anniversary of AmeriCorps. A recent study shows West Virginians rank fifth in the nation in terms of AmeriCorps volunteerism. The AmeriCorps on the Frontline program plays a big part in this success. During 2014-15, AmeriCorps on the Frontline empowered 45 mentors to serve more than 900 students in eleven counties.



The AmeriCorps on the Frontline program has had a positive impact on Mackenzie's life. In prior school years, Mackenzie consistently missed school which caused her grades to suffer. This year, her school implemented the AmeriCorps on the Frontline program. With the understanding that her AmeriCorps mentor would call to check on her when she was absent, Mackenzie has improved her attendance. "She now attends school on a regular basis, has formed friendships, and participates in various classroom activities she would have missed out on, including the sixth-grade trip. Mackenzie's reading has improved significantly in the Guided Reading Program in just a few months. She now loves reading," said Pamela, AmeriCorps mentor. This is just one example of why this program is so important to West Virginia students.

** 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,



Education Elevators

Building on last year's successes, Education Elevators continues to empower at-risk youth across the state by providing positive adult role models to help inspire them for a brighter tomorrow. Education Elevators connects young people with various career professionals who visit participating schools and serve as mentors to the students. The program's main purpose is to inspire young children who benefit from the support of a positive role model in their lives.

Education Elevators continued to serve Grandview Elementary (Kanawha County), Bunker Hill and Tuscarora Elementary schools (Berkeley County). Chamberlain Elementary (Kanawha County) also joined the program, which began originally as a pilot program at Piedmont Elementary. Elevators including Energy Corporation of America employees, the 167th Airlift Wing of the West Virginia Air National Guard and West Virginia State University Students from the Political Science/Pre-Law Association helped students "take flight" to achieve their dreams and aspirations. With school visits once a week, Education Elevators create meaningful relationships with their students through reading, supporting and mentoring.



“I visit Matt weekly at his school and we play, read and do crafts. He's the highlight of my week, and I think I'm his too,” said Jennifer, a business professional who participates as an Education Elevator. “His teacher told me he's never been happier and is already doing better in school ... this truly warms my heart!”

Teachers, guidance counselors and principals can also see the impact of Education Elevators, reporting that students who may normally miss school often now want to come to school if that means they can spend time with their Education Elevator.

“It's tremendous to see bright smiles and hear their giggles when these students see their mentors come in every week,” she said. “Students who may not have a reason to smile now do because someone who cares about them wants to spend time with them. The program has just been great for them.”



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





West Virginia Air National Guard officers celebrating program success with their students in Berkeley County.

Education Elevators offers a great way for business executives and other career professionals to get involved in their communities. By taking time out each week to be a positive influence, business professionals can make an impact that will last a lifetime for a student.



“The program helps young adults, like me, investigate careers that we find appealing. It helps us see what our abilities are, how much value we have in ourselves, and shows us what special qualities and talents we have and what job would require those,” said Amanda, a student from Greenbrier County. “My mentor, James, has helped me very much in finding ways I can volunteer and contribute to the community as well as getting experience I need for the dream job I want. The possibilities are endless and I’m so glad that I see there are multiple paths to take in life!”

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



Students in Pocahontas County exploring career options with their online mentors.

WV eMentoring



WV eMentoring is providing students across West Virginia the power to explore the careers and postsecondary options of tomorrow without ever leaving the classroom. Thanks to the generous support of major donors such as American Public University System, WV eMentoring connected close to 400 high school students in five counties 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. Students never meet face-to-face with the mentor they message weekly. The encouragement and personal experiences that are shared empower students to make a better informed decision about their future.

Students who participate in WV eMentoring showed an increased interest in postsecondary education or job training. Close to 96% of students surveyed indicated they have a plan for pursuing job training or entering a postsecondary institution following high school graduation.

During the 2014-15 school year, WV eMentoring also sponsored fields trips for students who participated to local universities and community and technical colleges. These trips, which were made possible by a grant from the Community and Technical College System of West Virginia, allowed students to discuss their potential college and career paths with higher education advisors. For more than 97% of students who participated in these field trips, this was their first experience stepping foot on a college campus. "Seeing a college campus really put it in perspective for me that college is something I can attend after high school," said Brian, a student from Preston County. "It's not just pictures I see in a brochure and if I work hard now then it can pay off later in the future when I'm walking on campus as a college student and not a high school student."

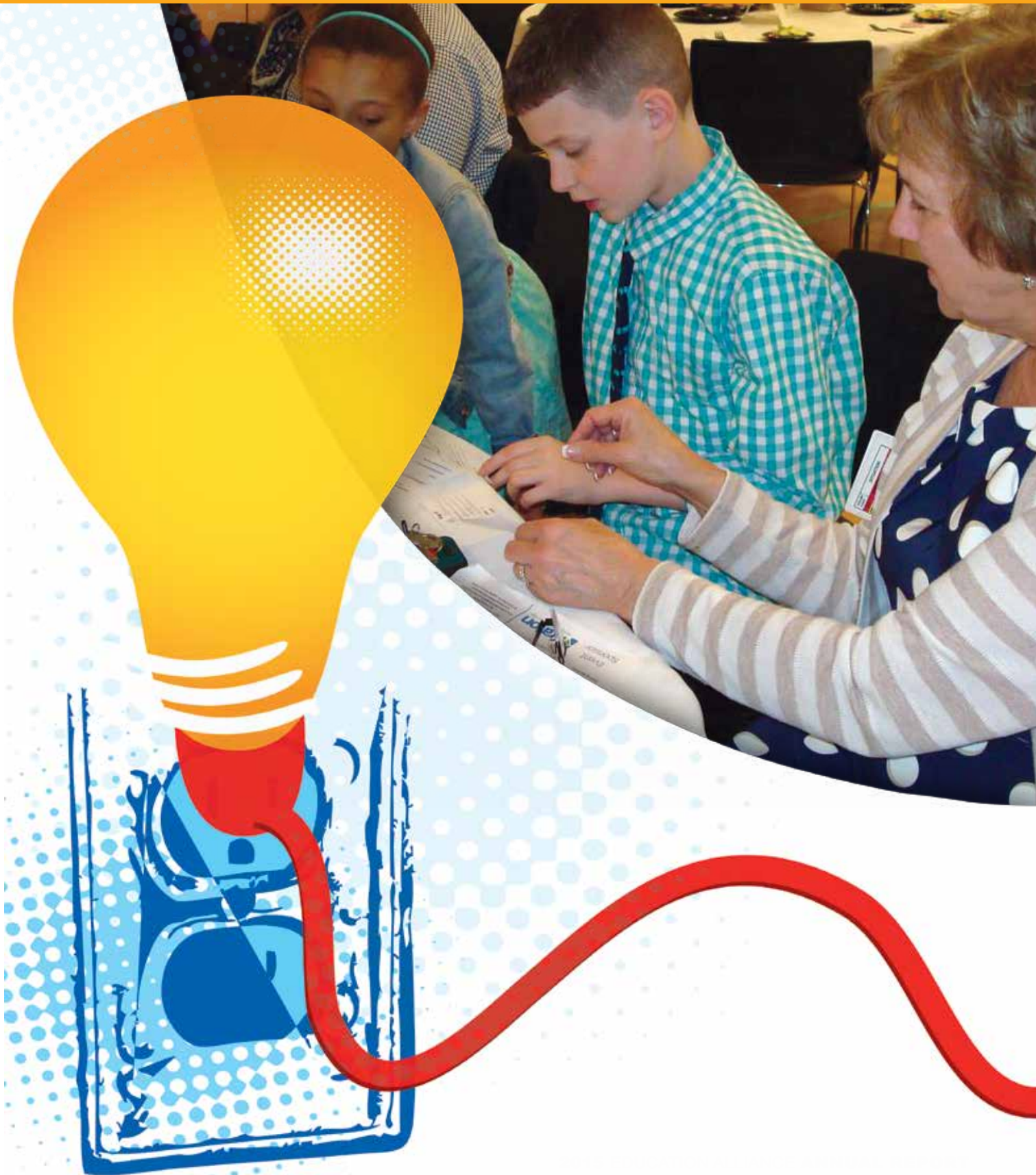
Survey Results

92%

of students better understand the future career options available to them upon completing WV eMentoring



POWERING Schools With Partners



United Way Born Learning® Academy

The United Way Born Learning Academy program, driven by Toyota Motor Manufacturing, WV, Inc., empowers families of young children to connect with local schools during the critical period of early learning prior to school enrollment. In 2014-15, it provided 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 participate in six entertaining academies, where they learn how to create teachable moments with their children.

The concept, based on the Harlem Children's Zone Baby College, emphasizes the importance of early learning. The goal of the academy is to help parents prepare their child for kindergarten entry by providing information about what it means to be ready for kindergarten and by offering them strategies they can use at home to maximize their child's early learning and development. The materials are research-based and the academies provide an interactive and engaging way to support early learning in the daily routines/lives of the families involved. Ultimately, Born Learning helps families form a relationship with their school and enables more children to be better prepared for school when they enter kindergarten.

This year more than 130 families from three schools (Highlawn Elementary in Cabell County, Buffalo Elementary in Putnam County, and East Lynn Elementary in Wayne County) participated in hands-on activities/discussions about what it means to be ready for kindergarten and strategies to maximize early learning/development. Toyota's continued support has made it possible to expand the program to three additional schools during the 2015-16 school year.



UNITED WAY bornlearning® academy

This past school year, Charlotte and her family participated in the Born Learning Academy program at one of the pilot schools. Charlotte is a stay-at-home single mother of five who lives six blocks from the school and walks to the academy session. Prior to the Born Learning Academy program, teachers and staff at the school did not see Charlotte or her family very often; however, this has dramatically changed. She now comes to other school events and makes a point to stop and chat in the office with staff when she's there. She takes home information and tools from each of the sessions and applies them to her family's daily life. Each week, when Charlotte attends the next academy workshop she shares what she has tried and how it worked. "Charlotte tells us each time how much she enjoys the Born Learning Academy and that it has really helped her to grow as a parent and see herself as their first educator," said Susan, Born Learning Academy Coordinator.

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

Of the families who participated in the Born Learning Academy program this year,

96%

plan to use workshop ideas at home

88%

understand how to make reading fun

79%

understand why getting enough sleep is important for learning

Partnerships in Education



Building and sustaining a strong link between our education system and our business community is critical to West Virginia's future. Business leaders persistently report that they cannot find the skilled, productive employees they need in order to succeed in increasingly competitive global markets. Through strong, strategic partnerships, our schools have the potential, perhaps as never before, to prepare students with knowledge and skills needed to thrive in the workforce and to make themselves and our state more prosperous.

Looking ahead to 2016, The Education Alliance will celebrate the 25th year anniversary of the Partnerships in Education program implementation in all 55 school districts. We plan to highlight successful partnerships throughout the upcoming year. Currently, 96% of all schools in West Virginia are linked with at least one business partner and more than 1,600 businesses support local schools.

Today, more than ever, the business community can and does play a vital role in public school education. According to a recent national survey (Harvard School of Business, 2014), schools and businesses can have more effective partnerships by:

Top 3 Strategies for Effective Partnerships:

#1

Communicating educators needs, requests and/or perspectives more effectively

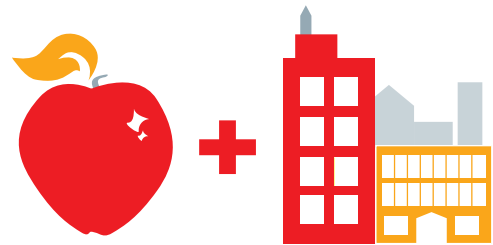
#2

Be more open to change or more welcoming to business

#3

Understand what business needs and/or align education to career paths

“The range of activities our partnerships support is exemplary in itself, as are their direct benefit to students, staff and the larger community,” said University High School Principal Shari Burgess.”



STEM Works

The STEM Works Project 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. Through partnerships with industry leaders and private foundations, The Education Alliance is working closely to align with existing STEM initiatives of the Office of Governor Earl Ray Tomblin and the Community and Technical College System of West Virginia. Major funding was provided by the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation and EQT Foundation and helped support the following four STEM initiatives this past year:

STEM Council

This past year, The Education Alliance was privileged to work with the Governor's West Virginia STEM Council to provide support and research to facilitate the council's work. The STEM Council delivered a report with recommendations for improving STEM education to Governor Tomblin in November 2014. The Education Alliance summarized the

The STEM WORKS Project

council's recommendations and engaged local and national experts to consult in the written report.

STEM Contest

In January, we launched our first WV STEM challenge. Designed to motivate interest in STEM learning, enhance student's creativity and to encourage their participation in STEM education fields, students across West Virginia made and submitted pictures of STEM projects and posted them to social media with the hashtag #makeSTEM. About 350 projects were submitted; including cooking, rocket building and even making clouds appear in a bottle. An elementary student from Marshall County submitted the winning entry showcasing his Lego project featuring a character taking flight in a spaceship.



STEM challenge contest winner from Marshall County accepting his prize.

Maker Movement

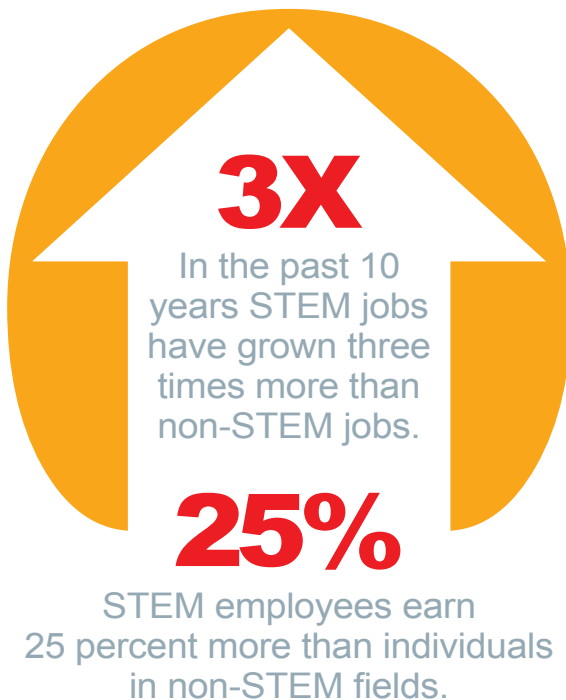
In October, local community, business and education leaders came together with experts from the Maker Movement to hear national expert Dale Dougherty, founder, president and CEO of Maker Media, Inc., discuss this revolutionary initiative and its impact on the state's education system and economy. Hosted by The Education Alliance, the West Virginia Board of Education, and the Clay Center, the meeting focused on the importance of the Maker Movement and included a panel discussion with education leaders as well as a discussion of the current research into its educational impact.

STEMersion

In summer 2015, The Education Alliance, BridgeValley Community & Technical College and the West Virginia Manufacturing Association lead the state's first STEMersion project. STEMersion was developed collaboratively to enhance West Virginia's workforce readiness for the ever-increasing



STEM-related careers in the state. Teachers visited behind the scenes and interacted with executives at Appalachian Power, Braskem, DOW, Toyota and Walker Machinery to see science, math, and engineering skills at work. Participating teachers can take this real-world experience back to their classrooms to impact their instruction and encourage their students to follow STEM career pathways.





Participating STEMersion teacher exploring STEM jobs at Walker Machinery.



POWERING Systems With Advocacy



Education Summit

On October 20th, 2014 more than 250 business, community and education leaders gathered in Charleston to share strategies to improve the quality of education for all West Virginia children. The Education Alliance and Governor Earl Ray Tomblin co-hosted the 2nd Annual “Excellence in Education: It’s Everyone’s Business” at the Embassy Suites Hotel.

The morning session started with a powerful Business Roundtable with executives from energy, health care, manufacturing, oil & gas, and technology. The discussion centered around the workforce needs of WV businesses and implications for the state’s education system. The keynote address was delivered by Tom Vander Ark, author of “Getting Smart: How Digital Learning is Changing the World”. Vander Ark discussed how digital learning is transforming education across the world and what students, parents, teachers, leaders, and investors should do to take advantage of this revolution.

Dr. Michael Martirano, Superintendent of Schools, West Virginia Department of Education, delivered the afternoon session’s keynote address. He shared his vision for galvanizing the state around student achievement and having one voice, one mission, and one focus to improve academic achievement for all students. During the Teacher, Student, Parent Town Hall Meeting teachers, students, and parents presented their perspective.



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 Education Alliance will host another summit fall 2015. For more information or to register, visit EducationAlliance.org/Summit.

91% of participants rated the summit business round table informative or highly informative

93% rated the keynote speakers informative or highly informative

Our Voice

The Education Alliance is connecting community members with up-to-date important education news and policy changes as part of ongoing efforts to support systemic improvement in West Virginia’s public schools through the Our Voice campaign. We believe that knowledge and information provided give education officials, business leaders and community members the power to create a better tomorrow for students across West Virginia.

This year The Education Alliance provided real-time and in-depth coverage of the 2015 Legislative Session, monthly State Board of Education meetings and other education-related news. We reached more West Virginians than ever before through our social media efforts.

Social Media Stats



Website visitors:
107,461



Monthly e-Newsletter:
90,640



Twitter followers:
1,364



Facebook likes:
619



Instagram likes:
300



Social media impressions:
750,000+

EDTalks



During 2014-2015, The Education Alliance hosted two additional EDTalks events. EDTalks connect schools, community members, and state education leaders. An EDTalks was held in Wheeling on May 21, 2015, and featured Carnegie-Mellon professor, Dr. Illah Nourbakhsh, 2015 West Virginia Teacher of the Year, Gail Adams, and Wheeling Park High School senior, Alison Irvin. Dr. Nourbakhsh addressed how technology gives children a voice that matters. Ms. Irvin spoke about how schools can encourage students and inspire dreams. Gail Adams addressed how teachers can prepare students to fill the needs of business and industry.

A second EDTalks was held in Huntington on June 18, 2015. At this event, Gary White, Marshall University's Interim President, shared his views on how a business perspective can be useful to help college and university efforts to prepare their students for future workforce needs. Dr. Michael Martirano, WV State Superintendent of Schools, spoke about galvanizing the state around student achievement and having one voice, one mission, and one focus to improve academic achievement for all students.

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. More of these community events are being planned for 2015-2016. For more information on the EDTalks speaker series or view a video of featured speakers, visit EducationAlliance.org/EDTalks.



West Virginia Teacher of the Year Gail Adams from Wheeling Park High School shares an EDTalk in Wheeling.

Donor Honor Roll

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(\$100,000 and above)

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Dominion Foundation
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Monroe County Board of Education
Pleasants County Board of Education

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.

Cum Laude

(\$500 – \$999)

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WV eMentoring students from Preston County High School visit Pierpont Community and Technical College.

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