

Senate Bill No. 257

(By Senators Plymale, Stollings and Kirkendoll)

[Introduced January 20, 2015; referred to the Committee on Education; and then to the
Committee on the Judiciary.]

10 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section,
11 designated §18-2E-11, relating to improving middle grades education; requiring the West
12 Virginia Board of Education promulgate rules applicable to grades six through eight;
13 requiring electronic school strategic improvement plans to reflect a clear mission focused on
14 preparing students for success in rigorous high school courses and, ultimately, for most
15 students to graduate and proceed to college or technical training; requiring state board to
16 adopt college- and career-ready standards; requiring literacy skills to be embedded in all
17 subjects; requiring accelerated mathematics instruction; requiring all teachers teaching
18 seventh and eighth grade math be certified to teach high school math by July 1, 2019;
19 requiring students to be engaged in a sequence of coherent science, technology, engineering
20 and math experiences that provide more opportunities for students to discover their interests
21 and aptitudes; requiring that all students have a career plan and an academic plan that

1 includes at least one year of education beyond high school; requiring data and proven
2 leadership techniques to be used to guide school change and focus professional development;
3 requiring students who are not likely to finish high school to be identified by grade six;
4 redesigning professional development, preparation and teacher certification; requiring state
5 board to adopt indicators for determining whether districts and schools are meeting middle
6 grades mission; requiring indicators to be included as a part of the accreditation process; and
7 requiring the West Virginia Department of Education to employ or designate an existing
8 employee for certain responsibilities.

9 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

10 That the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended by adding thereto a new
11 section, designated §18-2E-11, to read as follows:

12 **ARTICLE 2E. HIGH QUALITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS.**

13 **§18-2E-11. Improving middle grades education.**

14 (a) By December 1, 2015, the state board shall promulgate rules pursuant to article three-b,
15 chapter twenty-nine-a of this code, applicable to grades six through eight, to implement the
16 following:

17 (1) For all schools that include any of grades six through eight, the electronic school strategic
18 improvement plans required by section five of this article shall reflect a clear mission for those
19 grades that is focused on preparing students for success in rigorous high school courses, and
20 ultimately, for most students to graduate and proceed to college or technical training;

21 (2) The state board shall adopt college and career ready standards, such as the existing Next

1 Generation Content Standards;

2 (3) Literacy skills shall be embedded in all subjects in order to build students' ability to read
3 and understand increasingly complex texts. All students should be able to read at grade level by the
4 end of the eighth grade. Every teacher must learn how to deepen subject matter skills while
5 advancing literacy. Therefore, embedding literacy into other subject areas shall be included as part
6 of the Master Plan for Professional Development required by section three, article two-I of this
7 chapter;

8 (4) Mathematics instruction shall be accelerated through the use of instructional strategies
9 that focus on reasoning, understanding and application. All students should complete Algebra I or
10 demonstrate readiness for Algebra I in the eighth grade. The state board shall establish a benchmark
11 for the percentage of students who complete Algebra I or demonstrate readiness for Algebra I by the
12 end of the eighth grade. Each school failing to meet the benchmark shall include a plan for meeting
13 the benchmark in its electronic school strategic improvement plan required by section five of this
14 article. Additionally, by July 1, 2019, all teachers teaching seventh and eighth grade math shall be
15 certified to teach high school math;

16 (5) Students shall be engaged in a sequence of coherent science, technology, engineering and
17 math (STEM) experiences that provide more opportunities for students to discover their interests and
18 aptitudes by using math, science and technology as tools for solving problems. The state board shall
19 make it a top priority to provide quality science instruction that results in students having a range of
20 hands-on labs requiring grade-level math and literacy skills to complete;

21 (6) Schools shall provide a range of career exploratory experiences, help students and their

1 parents to understand future career and education options, and guide them to develop individual
2 academic and graduation plans. By the end of the eighth grade, all students shall have a career plan
3 and an academic plan that includes at least one year of education beyond high school. This education
4 can include military service, apprenticeship programs, technical training, community college, college
5 or other experiences as set forth by the state board. Students may change the plan multiple times
6 after the original plan is developed;

7 (7) Data and proven leadership techniques shall be used to guide school change, and focus
8 professional development for teachers, counselors and school leaders to continuously improve
9 teaching and learning;

10 (8) Students who are not likely to finish high school shall be identified by grade six.
11 Consider using chronic absenteeism, poor behavior and poor grades as predictors of the likelihood
12 of sixth grade students dropping out of high school. Establish an intervention program for students
13 at risk of dropping out to support these students in meeting grade level standards and to get below
14 grade level students on track to graduate. This intervention program may include extended learning
15 time for those students identified as at-risk of dropping out of school;

16 (9) Professional development, preparation and teacher certification for middle grades
17 educators shall be redesigned in the following ways:

18 (A) Change the overall practice of professional development from an event to a continuous
19 learning process, and ensure this change is reflected in the Master Plan for Professional Development
20 required by section three, article two-I of this chapter. Each professional development experience
21 should be tied to the next. Instead of large-scale, consultant-led, one-day-at-a-time professional

1 development, resources should be invested more in school-focused , team-based and staff-led efforts
2 with the support of experts on issues teachers face continually;

3 (B) Provide middle grades schools with the flexibility to create scheduling structures
4 affording blocks of time for teams of teachers to learn proven instructional practices from each other
5 and to plan together assignments that engage students in grade-level work.

6 (C) Require professional development for implementing rigorous standards particularly in
7 literacy to be included in the master plan for professional development required by section three,
8 article two-I of this chapter;

9 (D) Ensure teacher and school leader preparation programs prepare educators for the new
10 middle grades mission; and

11 (E) Use educator certification and renewal requirements to the extent feasible to ensure
12 teachers are prepared to achieve the middle grades mission; and

13 (10) The state board shall adopt indicators for determining whether districts and schools are
14 meeting the middle grades mission, and include these indicators as a part of the school accreditation
15 process set forth in section five of this article. At a minimum, the state board shall adopt indicators
16 reflecting the percentage of students who:

17 (A) Enter ninth grade ready to succeed in challenging high school courses;

18 (B) Earn enough credit as first-time high school freshmen to be classified as sophomores the
19 next year;

20 (C) Enter ninth grade having completed Algebra I to a validated performance level or having
21 demonstrated readiness for Algebra I; and

1 (D) Enter ninth grade with the demonstrated ability to read, analyze and comprehend a range
2 of text and materials.

3 (b) The West Virginia Department of Education shall employ or designate an existing
4 employee to be responsible for:

5 (1) Coordinating policy issues relating to middle grades for the state;

6 (2) Directing state evaluation and data analysis to identify and share best practices that result
7 in greater gains in student achievement; and

8 (3) Maintaining relationships with school districts implementing improvements.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to improve middle grades education; require the West Virginia Board of Education promulgate rules applicable to grades six through eight; require electronic school strategic improvement plans to reflect a clear mission focused on preparing students for success in rigorous high school courses, and ultimately, for most students to graduate and proceed to college or technical training; require the state board to adopt college and career ready standards; require literacy skills to be embedded in all subjects; require accelerated Mathematics instruction; require all teachers teaching seventh and eighth grade math be certified to teach high school math by July 1, 2019; require students to be engaged in a sequence of coherent science, technology, engineering and math experiences that provide more opportunities for students to discover their interests and aptitudes; require that all students have a career plan and an academic plan that includes at least one year of education beyond high school; require data and proven leadership techniques to be used to guide school change and focus professional development; require students who are not likely to finish high school to be identified by grade six; redesign professional development, preparation and teacher certification; require the state board to adopt indicators for determining whether districts and schools are meeting the middle grades mission; require the indicators to be included as a part of the accreditation process; and require the West Virginia Department of Education to employ or designate an existing employee to coordinated policy issues relating to middle grades and for certain other responsibilities.

§18-2E-11 is new; therefore strike-throughs and underscoring have been omitted.