

Rebuilding Nicholas County Schools Mediation Process

Public Update: March 30, 2018

The mediation team – representatives of the West Virginia Department of Education and the Nicholas County Department of Education – met in Charleston, WV on March 27 and 28 to discuss the elements of a mutually agreeable and workable plan for the rebuilding of Nicholas County schools. The representatives aligned on a set of core principles to serve as criteria for success and explored potential elements, locations, and configurations of schools. The following are components of a potential agreement that the parties are considering.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the mediation team at ncschoolsmediation@cbi.org.

Guiding Principles

The mediation team offered the following priorities as desirable outcomes of the mediation process (presented here in no particular order):

- Construction begins expeditiously to provide for permanent schools for all students
- Nicholas County School District is fiscally healthy and financially sustainable
- The unique cultures and characters of the schools and communities in Nicholas County are honored and sustained
- Students and families have options to meet their educational needs and can participate in their educational process
- Students are being prepared for career and college:
 - Increased availability and participation in career and technical education, with more students graduating with certifications and readiness for work
 - School facilities and programs foster learning, educational success, and social and emotional well-being
 - Improved test scores and high school graduation rates
 - Increased academic opportunities and success (e.g. AP, IB, STEM)
- Communities support their schools and trust their school boards

School Locations and Configurations

The mediation team agreed that the plan for rebuilding Nicholas County's schools should attempt to include both of the following:

- A community school(s) serving pre-kindergarten – 12th grades in Richwood, located within a 3-mile radius of the former Richwood High School. The school(s) should include distinct spaces for an elementary, middle, and high school – even if co-located on a shared campus – and should preserve the current school names, team names, mascots, and school cultures of schools located in Richwood. The facilities should include an auditorium, a band room, a gymnasium, cafeteria, and continued use of existing athletic fields.

- A middle school and comprehensive high school located near the geographic center of Nicholas County, with an integrated career-technical education program and facility. The school should include distinct spaces for a middle and high school – even if co-located on a shared campus – and should preserve current school names, team names, mascots, and school cultures, and include a full suite of academic, athletic, career and technical education, and arts facilities.

Families and students would be empowered to select the middle and high school that best meet their educational needs. To the extent possible, schools would be sized to allow flexibility for family choices, and would be designed to be scalable to meet future demographic and enrollment changes.

Specific locations for these schools would be determined through a deliberate site evaluation process, utilizing criteria drawn from federal, state, and local requirements, to meet FEMA's needs for due diligence.

Next Steps

The mediation team requests the input of the residents of Nicholas County on this proposed approach. **The mediation team is hosting a Public Workshop on April 12 from 6-8 pm at Nicholas County High School** in order to provide more information about the options under consideration and to elicit input about those options from community members.

Transportation from Richwood will be available. All are invited to attend. Please visit <https://bit.ly/2GGajwZ> to pre-register.