

# Martinsburg North Middle School

## Targeted School Environment Assessment



Martinsburg North Middle School, located in Berkeley County, was one of 21 schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) in the 2022-23 school year. Identified schools represent the lowest-performing schools based on the identification categories outlined in West Virginia's Consolidated State Plan for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. As a CSI school, Martinsburg North Middle School receives ongoing technical assistance from the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), including an assigned school improvement coordinator to assist with creating and implementing a strategic improvement plan.

On Wednesday, April 17, 2024, a team of staff from the WVDE Offices of District/School Improvement and Leadership Development visited Martinsburg North Middle School to conduct a Targeted School Environment Assessment. The Office of District/School Improvement requested the assessment to identify the next steps necessary to address the learning environment and the levels of student achievement based on the following concerns:

- » The WV School Learning Environment Survey taken in October 2023 revealed 53% of students at Martinsburg North reported feeling safe at school, compared to the statewide result of 80%.
- » As of April 2024, 23 Title IX violations and 160 physical fights had been documented in WVEIS for the 2023-24 school year.
- » Based on 2023 WV General Summative Assessment data, 24.12% of students were proficient in English language arts and 5.69% of students demonstrated proficiency in mathematics. Both these numbers represent a decrease from 2022 achievement levels and are significantly below the statewide proficiency average for middle schools of 54.1% in English language arts and 47.4% in mathematics.
- » The initial CSI Diagnostic Report, conducted upon the school's identification, included recommendations to support the WV Standards for Effective Schools, such as a comprehensive behavior plan and administrative protocols to address student behavior that had not been significantly addressed.

During the course of the visit, the team witnessed concerning conditions and violations of W. Va. Code and/or West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) policies at the school, impacting the provision of an appropriate educational program. In consultation with the WVDE Office of Accountability, the team concluded that extraordinary circumstances, as described in Policy 2322, exist at Martinsburg North Middle School, as described below.

### ***Unhealthy or Unsafe Conditions for Students or Employees***

- » Students and staff disclosed feeling unsafe at the school and described the administrative approach to discipline as unfair and inconsistent.
- » Team members observed threatening and hostile behaviors exhibited by students, such as the use of profanity and inappropriate language. These behaviors were ineffectively addressed by teachers and other staff members or not addressed at all.
- » Team members observed students ignore redirection from teachers without consequence.
- » Multiple platforms are used to collect behavior data and track interventions, leading to confusion and a lack of transparency. The development of an effective schoolwide behavior plan is impeded by the lack of a comprehensive, coordinated approach to data collection and behavioral intervention.

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## ***School's Failure to Provide High Quality and Equal Educational Opportunities for Students, as Demonstrated by Persistently Low Academic Performance***

- » Effective classroom management strategies were not evident during observations.
- » Team members described a chaotic, destructive, and occasionally hostile learning environment.
- » Rigorous, standards-based instruction was not observed to be pervasive at the school.
- » Learning activities provided to students were frequently below grade level standards and not relevant and engaging to students.

## ***Deficiencies in Instructional Leadership and Support for School Improvement Processes***

- » Many staff members described a lack of instructional leadership on the part of the administrative team. Some teachers indicated no administrator had been in their classroom this school year.
- » During the visit, administrative presence was noted in the hallways in the morning but had decreased significantly by the afternoon.
- » Members of the administrative team did not consistently articulate clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations during interviews.

Based on the data collected during this visit, the team determined the above areas require immediate action in order to ensure the thorough and efficient operation of the school.

Multiple violations of the following policies were noticed and require immediate correction.

1. Policy 4373: Expected Behavior in Safe and Supportive Schools;
2. Policy 2322: West Virginia System of Support and Accountability;
3. Policy 2510: Assuring the Quality of Education: Regulations for Education Programs; and
4. Policy 5800: Standards of Professional Practice for West Virginia Superintendents, Principals, and Teacher Leaders.

The team asserts delaying action would not be in the best interest of students and staff, and that immediate action by the WVBE is necessary to address the deficiencies observed.

The team believes that extraordinary circumstances, as described in Policy 2322, Section 5.5, Chart 4, exist at Martinsburg North Middle School and recommend the WVBE declare a state of emergency exists in Berkeley County Schools, specific to the operation of Martinsburg North Middle School.

