

Reconnecting McDOWELL

www.ReconnectingMcDowell.org

Stay Connected with McDowell

McDowell County is an American story that deserves a new chapter—one filled with promise, with goodwill, with the type of shared commitment that offers solid reasons to believe in a brighter future. Be a part of this historic partnership and show your support for McDowell children and the greater community by joining the effort at www.reconnectingmcdowell.org.

Reconnecting McDowell Legislation Moving Quickly

Delegate Moore causes a stir in House Education Committee

Reconnecting McDowell projects are moving forward rapidly not only here in the county, but also in Charleston on the floor of the Legislature. The McDowell County Innovation Zone Pilot Project, Senate Bill 371, has passed the West Virginia Senate and is now being debated in the House of Delegates.

Once signed by the governor, the bill will establish McDowell County as the first countywide innovation zone. McDowell schools will have the flexibility and authority to use cutting-edge strategies and solutions to raise academic achievement—such as collaborative, community-based decision-making on programs and budgets to best fit the needs of students; alternative teacher certification; integrated health, wellness and fitness programs; and flexible school calendars.

"This type of education reform can-

not be top-down," says state Sen. Robert Plymale (D-Wayne). "It has to be grass-roots up, and the teachers and staff have to have control of what's going on in their schools. They have to have the power to be able to do the things they need to do."

When speaking to the House Education Committee about the innovation zone legislation, Delegate Clif Moore (D-McDowell) highlighted the extreme need for the legislation to raise student success in school as well as the excitement the bill has engendered.

"I'm enlightened, I'm energized, I'm excited, but I think the common denominator of all those feelings is I'm committed. I don't want sorrow from this committee. I don't want pity from this committee. I want your connectivity. I want your commitment that you're going to pass legislation that's going to allow us to resurrect and revitalize and affect lives in my county," Moore said.

Teacher-in-residence bill

Another bill that will have a positive effect on the long-standing teacher shortage in McDowell is House Bill 4101, which sets up a teacher-in-residence program in partnership with Concord University. The program is an intensively supervised and mentored residency program for prospective teachers in their senior year. As an innovation zone, McDowell schools will be able to participate in this program to fill open teaching positions.

This bill affords an opportunity to give teacher education candidates in-classroom experience and provide quality instruction to McDowell students, says Judy Hale, president of AFT-West Virginia and an AFT vice president. "This partnership with Concord University is yet another way to attract local, well-prepared teachers to McDowell County schools."

U.S. Secretary of Education Applauds Reconnecting McDowell Efforts



U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recognized the promise and impact that the Reconnecting McDowell project can have not only on the McDowell community but on communities nationwide:

"I applaud the groundbreaking educational public-private partnership in McDowell County, West Virginia that the American Federation of Teachers has helped launch. This public-private partnership is helping to show communities across the nation—especially poor, rural communities—the way forward. It is helping to show all of America what we need to do to provide a world-class education for students in the 21st century." — (Dec. 22, 2011, press statement)

Reconnecting McDowell Featured in Digital Learning Day Town Hall

The Alliance for Excellent Education, a Reconnecting McDowell partner, hosted the first ever Digital Learning Day and National Town Hall on Feb. 1, which featured a panel on Reconnecting McDowell.

AFT President Randi Weingarten, West Virginia Board of Education Vice President Gayle Manchin and McDowell County Superintendent Jim Brown answered questions about the partnership and how digital learning and technology are part of the county's multifaceted education reform strategy.

"Having the technology is the first step, but for us the next step is to recruit and retain highly qualified

teachers—it is critical," said Jim Brown, superintendent of the McDowell County Public Schools.

The Digital Learning Day included live interaction with school sites around the country, profiled great teachers who effectively use technology to deliver instruction, and focused on successful education innovation projects that demonstrate how technology can be used in the classroom to improve student outcomes. To watch the McDowell panel, go to: www.digitallearningday.org/DLD2012.

Pictured from left: Leon Harris, Randi Weingarten, Gayle Manchin and Jim Brown.

