



*A Union of Professionals*

## **Reconnecting McDowell Accomplishments**

Reconnecting McDowell was launched by the American Federation of Teachers and then-West Virginia Board of Education President Gayle Manchin in December 2012 with a dozen or so partners. Today, it has 125 public and private partners (including national, state and local nonprofit organizations and government agencies; corporations; labor unions; lawmakers; and community members) working to reverse decades of economic decline through improved educational and other school supports; wraparound services in schools to provide access to much-needed social services, healthcare, recreational outlets and modern technology; and economic development opportunities,

### **Academic:**

The state had taken control of McDowell County schools in 2001 because of chronically low student performance. In 2013, the state Board of Education returned control to the county because of improvements. In the first full-scale audit of the county schools since the 2013 return, a 2016 McDowell County Office of Education Performance Audit showed steady progress.

- All McDowell public schools were rated as either “emerging” or “accomplished” in a list of criteria, and every school was rated “fully compliant” on measures of academic progress.
- The dropout rate fell from 4.5 percent in the 2010-11 school year to 2 percent in the 2014-15 school year.
- The high school graduation rate significantly increased, from 74 percent in 2010-11 to 88 percent in 2015-16.
- Nearly half, or 44.5 percent, of seniors took Advanced Placement tests in 2014-15.
- McDowell’s 2015 ACT composite score of 18.3 was not far from the national composite score of 21.

### **Other academic-related accomplishments:**

- There are more resources in schools and in the county, including high-speed internet in every school and most communities, and additional professional development for teachers.

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The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.6 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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- Seven literacy centers opened with tens of thousands of books, with the inventory replenished in 2016.
- A high school mentoring program was established, and virtually every participant has gone to college.
- Reconnecting McDowell helped convert one county public school to a community school and is working to open two more in the next year.
- Reconnecting McDowell helped open the county's Juvenile Drug Court program, which diverts nonviolent young offenders from the traditional juvenile court process to intensive, individualized treatment programs that get the youths back to school quicker.

### **Health and social services:**

- All students in the county now receive dental exams, either at an in-school clinic or mobile van.
- There are site-based health clinics at both high schools and a planned one for Southside K-8.
- There are school nurses and social workers at every school.
- Mental health counseling services are offered at both high schools, one elementary school and one middle school.
- Southside K-8 has become a community school. Available wraparound services include healthcare, mental and dental services; after-school programs such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) instruction, literacy skills, tutoring, homework help, entrepreneurship, the arts and music, mentoring, drug and violence prevention, counseling and youth leadership; guidance on helping students become ready for college and career, improving self-esteem and making positive choices; and transportation home from after-school programs.

### **Economic development:**

- Reconnecting McDowell will be constructing an apartment building in Welch, W.Va., intended to recruit and retain teachers. There is a chronic teacher vacancy problem, primarily because the county has virtually no available housing or flat land on which to build homes. Reconnecting McDowell purchased and demolished two long-abandoned properties and is finishing the financing before construction can begin.

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