



# VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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## Excellence is in the AIR

Manuel P. Arvon II, Superintendent  
Berkeley County Schools

Manuel P. Arvon II is entering his 20th year as superintendent of Berkeley County Schools. His 43-year career in education began as a teacher in Boone County in 1973. He relocated to Berkeley County in 1974. During his time in Berkeley County Schools, he advanced from a teacher to assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent and, currently, superintendent. Arvon was named West Virginia "Superintendent of the Year" in 2004 and received the Distinguished West Virginian Award in 2005.

He received his bachelor's degree in education from Shepherd University in 1973 and his master's degree in education administration from West Virginia University in 1979.

Arvon has earned both national and regional credentials and has been appointed to numerous local, state and national boards. He served on the Shepherd University Board of Governors as both a member and as secretary. He was named Shepherd University Outstanding Alumni in 2005. He currently sits on the board of directors for the University Healthcare Foundation and United Bank Martinsburg.

In the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, excellence is in the AIR at Berkeley County Schools. As I begin my 20th year as superintendent and 43rd year serving our students, I reflect on the core values of our school district – Accountability, Integrity and Respect – or "AIR," as we call them. Districtwide, everyone understands that we are **accountable** for the learning and achievement of every student; we achieve with **integrity**; and, that **respect** for self and others creates a safe environment for learning. Our adherence to these core values has had big results for our students, our schools and our community.

**Our students are our community.  
My goal is to prepare them  
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### Our Students

I am always so proud of our students. Whether they realize it or not, they exemplify AIR through their hard work, dedication and behavior. The 18,900 students enrolled in Berkeley County Schools comprise the most diverse student population in the state, representing 23 different native languages. More than 90 percent of our students graduate and 76 percent of those graduates go to college. Our test scores continue to improve, enrollment in high school Advanced Placement classes has increased and we have emphasized Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs in all of our schools. Instruction in Berkeley County Schools is based on West Virginia College and Career Ready Standards, which focus on skills essential for college or success in the workplace.



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### Our Community

As a native of Boone County, West Virginia, where my father served as superintendent for many years, I am well aware of the economic advantages we are currently experiencing here in Berkeley County. Our geographic location attracts companies like Procter & Gamble, Macy's and Quad Graphics, but all assess the quality of our public schools before making the decision to locate here. Excellent schools are crucial to economic development – our schools must attract a company's existing employees for their own children, but must also produce graduates who are prepared for college or ready to enter the workforce. Along with our partners at James Rumsey Technical Institute, Blue Ridge Community and Technical College and Shepherd University, we are meeting this challenge and the wide-ranging needs of the businesses and industries in our area.

### Our Schools

Our rapid economic growth in Berkeley County poses certain challenges to our schools.

Increasing student enrollment results in the need for more space and more teachers. When I started my career in 1973, our enrollment was 6,800 students (we should exceed 20,000 by 2020). Since 1997, we have added 7,000 students – more than the total enrollment of 43 West Virginia school districts. The state’s school aid formula is unable to keep up with our growth, so we rely upon our citizens to provide financial support to our schools through levies and bond calls. This support is crucial to the success of our school district.

The levy allows us to increase salaries and benefits to our 2,500 employees. Given our proximity to states with higher teacher salaries, we are always working to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. In so doing, we rely on AIR and the quality of professional life we can provide here in Berkeley County. I believe that this works – our teachers are an intelligent and enthusiastic group averaging 13 years of experience, most holding

advanced degrees and 80 holding National Board Certification.

These teachers and their students must have a safe and appropriate place to teach and to learn. Our rapidly growing enrollment posed some challenges for us through the years. Our teachers have shared classrooms and taught on converted stages, in field houses, in former coat rooms and in one of our 120 portable classrooms. With community support and our partnership with the West Virginia School Building Authority, we have invested more than \$250 million in school construction and renovation projects, including 11 new schools and 26 renovation/addition projects. Currently, we have 16 elementary schools, six intermediate schools, six middle schools and four AAA high schools. Because of our sustained student growth, we work hard to maintain our older schools so that we can continue to use them for years to come. Many students attend beautiful schools

built in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s – for some, the same school attended by their great-great-grandparents.

### West Virginians

Throughout my 43 years in public education and as the child of a county superintendent, I understand the impact education has on our students, our communities and our state. While the AIR in Berkeley County is many miles away from my southern West Virginia roots, I believe all West Virginians share these values. By doing what is right for our students, we will ensure a bright future for them and for West Virginia. ♪

*A sample of recruitment materials developed by Berkeley County Schools to attract high-quality teachers to the area.*

**Say Yes to BCS!**

- ✓ Annual additions to our professional staff
- ✓ 55% of our teachers have Masters or higher degrees
- ✓ Our teachers average 17 years experience

Donald Brown  
Hagerstown, MD

Chloe Raines  
Inwood, WV

Andrew Omerzo  
Berkeley Springs, WV