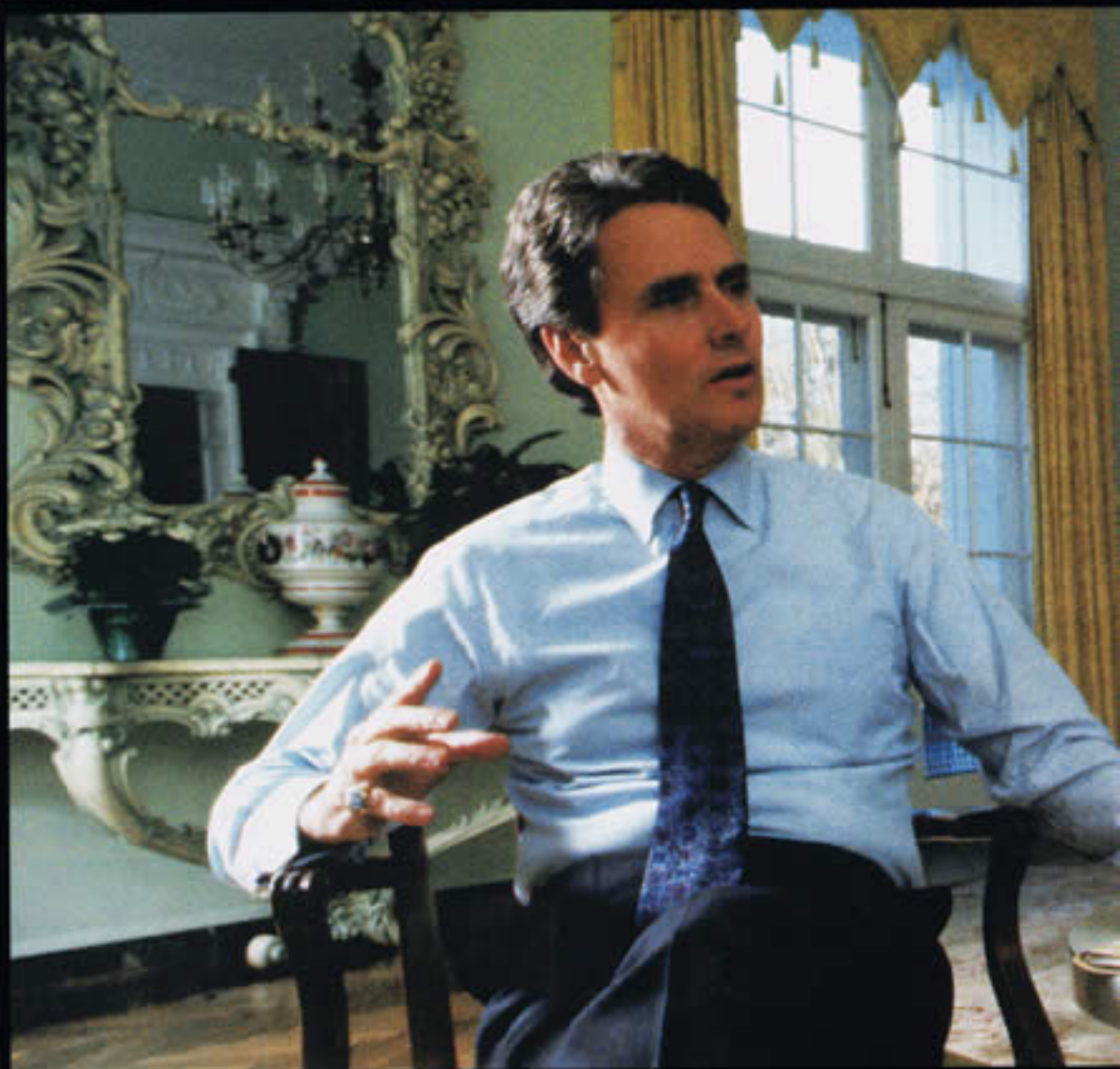


AMERICA'S SCHOOLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Agenda

Winter 1992

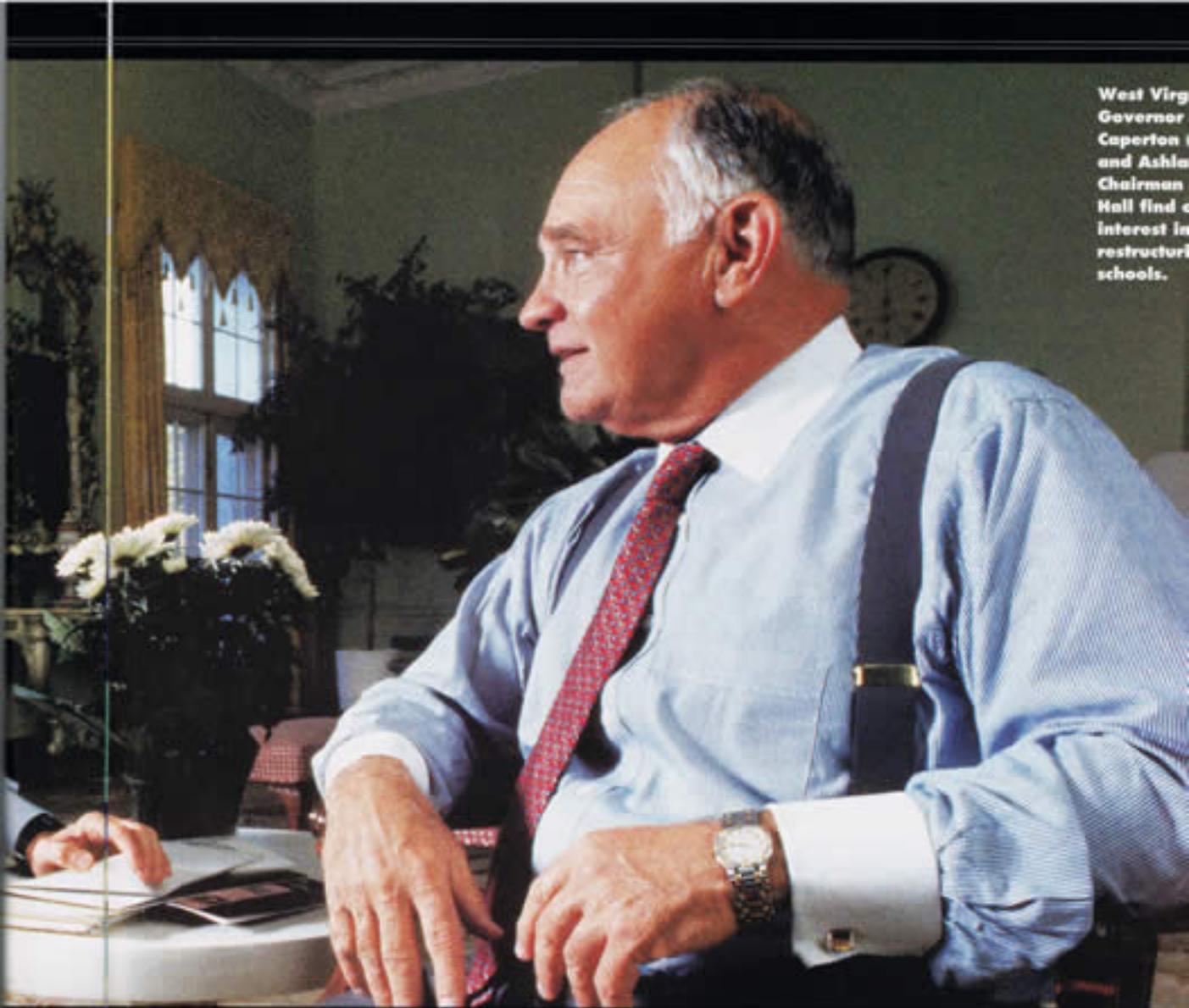




THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Human

West Virginia teachers and administrators, who juggle
school management duties, get some



West Virginia
Governor
Caperton
and Ashland
Chairman
Hall find
interest in
restructuring
schools.

Retooling

facing the challenge of classroom computers and new
ans and a big hand from the local business community

t was in Martinsburg, at the General Motors Service Parts Operations plant, that West Virginia Governor Gaston Caperton got the idea.

The plant had just put in place a state-of-the-art parts distribution system. Plant manager Bill Sanders was showing off the new laser-guided conveyers, electronic tracking scanners and other high-tech equipment, but what got the Democratic governor thinking was Sanders' recollection that the plant's 1,000 or so employees had been "scared to death" of the new technology.

At the time, almost two years ago, the state was drawing the blueprint for a major restructuring of its public education system. At the heart of the plan was a system of school-based management responsible for hiring, curriculum and budgeting.

When Sanders described the three-week training program GM had used to help employees adapt to their new workplace, Caperton realized that the same kind of "human retooling" was what the state needed to help teachers deal more confidently with the new school structures.

Training became a key part of West Virginia's strategy to improve its schools. Today, the involvement of companies such as GM, C&P Telephone (a Bell Atlantic company), Ashland Oil and IBM has created in West Virginia what some observers regard as the best example of corporate investment in retraining teachers and administrators.

THE WEST VIRGINIA PLAN

The reform plan was adopted in August 1990 in a special legislative session that came on the heels of a bitter teachers' strike. Caperton called an education summit and nine regional "town meetings" that resulted in a comprehensive reform bill with a panoply of innovations.

The bill set up Faculty Senates at each school and gave them authority over teacher hiring and curriculum. School Improvement Councils—made up of faculty, service personnel, parents, citizens and business representatives—were

Diana L. Pabst has written about education issues for The Washington Post and several education magazines.

charged with promoting parental and community involvement and given authority to request waivers from state rules to try alternative teaching approaches.

The bill also created the Center for Professional Development, which sets



performance standards, evaluates teacher skills and provides training in the use of technology.

Other initiatives of the reform package include a mentoring program for new teachers, alternative teacher certification and creation of a new "paraprofessional" category of instruction assistants. New

major advantages business brings is the ability to help us understand ways to provide development and training," he says.

One businessman who was quick to sign on was John Hall, chairman and CEO of Ashland Oil. Hall approached the governor and asked: "What can we do to help?" Caperton's answer: Get the business community to support the school improvement councils.

To do that, Ashland and other Business Roundtable companies operating in West Virginia—American Electric Power, Union Carbide, DuPont and Columbia Gas—formed the West Virginia Business and Education Alliance. The alliance, whose members also include industry associations and other businesses throughout the state, is working to sell parents and company employees on the importance of the school councils.

"West Virginia's site-based decision-making model and the School Improvement Councils require more of teachers than ever before," says Hall. "Our teachers will have a significant impact on the operation of their schools, in partnership with others from the community and from the school. The business representative on each council, I hope, will help us help teachers develop the additional skills they'll need."

Last fall, Ashland hired a full-time director to manage the alliance's activities and recruit business-based volunteers in every county. The volunteers will coordinate requests from the School Improvement Councils for resources that may not otherwise be available to the schools.

"One of the major advantages business brings is the ability to help us understand ways to provide development and training."

—Gaston Caperton

school accreditation procedures are based on student proficiencies, dropout and graduation rates, class size, parental involvement and the percentage of graduates who go on to higher education.

Caperton, an insurance executive until his election as governor in 1988, believes strongly that the business community must be a hands-on partner in efforts to improve public education. "One of the

"Teachers need all the resources they can muster from both inside and outside normal education channels," Hall says. "The West Virginia Business and Education Alliance will provide special resources in time and talent from the business community. We think the state has excellent teachers and administrators and our business interest is in helping them make the learning process even better."

KNOWING WHAT WORKS

The corporate role has been critical in creating the Center for Professional Development. Dave Berry, West Virginia C&P's president and CEO, chairs the center's board. Other members include Sanders of GM and John York, general manager of employee development, evaluation and training for Weirton Steel Corp.

"Because of their involvement as board members, and from their perspective as future employers, we got a very focused sense initially of what direction we should be moving in," says Gail Looney, the center's director. "Business has been through what we're going through now in education, and they have a clear idea about what works and what doesn't work with employees."

Sanders, for one, sees a logical connection between training teachers and training managers for business. "A school classroom is run much like a business," he says. "Teachers look at attendance, they have a product to produce and customers to satisfy. They handle money and supplies and the installation of technology. Everything is similar, even though teachers don't see it that way initially."

The Professional Development Center targeted its first statewide training program last summer to kindergarten and first-grade teachers because they were grappling not only with a shift in management style, but also new technology. At six, week-long teacher institutes, four GM trainers presented three GM training programs: "Introduction and the Basic Principles," "Dealing with Change" and "Being a Team Player."

"Lots of people are used to just taking directions," says Ned Pitzer, the training coordinator. "This program is trying to instill the idea that you need to deal with change and you have to take a little risk sometimes to do it."

West Virginia began installing computers in first- and second-grade classrooms in 1989, when Caperton launched the 10-year, \$70 million "Computer Basic Skills Program" to ultimately have an IBM personal computer in every K-12 classroom. The plan is part of a long-term strategy to build a technologically skilled work force that will enable the state to diversify its economy away from dependence on the coal, steel, chemical and glass industries.

"Jobs no longer have to be located at the

point of origin," Caperton says, adding that if West Virginians are "effective and efficient in using computers," the state can attract more high-tech industries.

"The thing that really impressed the teachers was that big business and education came together as a team," says GM's



Pitzer. "For prosperity to come to West Virginia, that has to happen."

Not surprisingly, IBM is playing a major role in West Virginia's "retooling" of educators. Last year the company presented its in-house "transformational leadership" training program to all of the state's 1,075 school principals, school

course for school districts in other states, but the project in West Virginia is the first instance of the course being given to administrators across an entire state, according to Steve Bistriz of IBM Educational Systems.

Bistriz says West Virginia was selected as a test site in part because of the state's relatively small number of school administrators. In addition, "we wanted to participate in a state where we could make a difference."

State officials believe the combined result of all these retraining efforts will be a corps of teachers and school administrators with the confidence and management skills to make broad, lasting change in the quality of education in West Virginia.

A participant in one of the summer institutes agrees. "I came away with the confidence to come back to my school and tell other teachers and administrators about using different programs," says Rose Mary Irwin, a first-grade teacher in Hinton, West Virginia. "Now I'm talking with our curriculum committee, our principal and even the superintendent about possible teaching projects. The institute enhanced skills I had, but didn't have time to sharpen."

The use of corporate resources has kept state spending manageable. "It's not very costly," says Henry Marockie, state superintendent of education. "It involves mainly manpower, not funds—using people already on the payroll to do these things."

Meaningful reform in education will not occur, Marockie adds, until power

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superintendents and regional education coordinators.

The three-day course is basically the same one IBM uses with all its employees to develop personal leadership and participatory management. The course includes sessions on team-building, innovative thinking and learning new ways to communicate.

IBM has conducted the management

relationships in the school system are changed from a top-down, hierarchical structure to a horizontal, team-based organization. "We're doing it by training people in new leadership styles," he says. "All of these programs have been designed so that teachers can feel that just as business has redesigned its workplace, it can help teachers redesign their workplace." ■