

Realizing the Vision

2013



Connecting to World-Class Schools

**VISION
2015** | **IMAGINE...**
*the best schools in the
world for every student
in Delaware.*

Chairman's Message



Ernie Dianastasis
*Vision 2015 Chair
Managing Director, CAI*

One thing that makes people proud to work in Delaware is that we come together to tackle tough problems — and stay together to see the solutions through.

In 2005, 28 public, private, and civic leaders from throughout the state came together to develop the bold Vision 2015 plan to provide a world-class education to all public school students by 2015.

As we approach the 2015 benchmark, we are thrilled to have the continued leadership and passion needed to see this project through. **Few states can claim the level of public-private collaboration that Delaware can — it's exceptional and essential.**

With input from hundreds of educators and community leaders, the state has made tangible gains toward reaching the big ideas set forth in Vision 2015. The recommendations put forward in the plan laid the groundwork for Delaware's first place finish in the national Race to the Top competition.

We have raised standards for both our children and the adults that educate them. We've built a comprehensive strategy to support our earliest learners statewide. And through efforts like the Vision Network of Delaware, we have begun to do something we have struggled to do for years: share what works. Collectively, this has meant that our schools are getting stronger, with 10,000 more students proficient in English and math in 2012 than the previous year, and those gains sustained in 2013.

Yet there is more hard work ahead.

While we are proud of our successes, we realize that our world has changed substantially in the last decade. As Managing Director of CAI, Inc., a Delaware-based information technology firm, I have a front row seat on some of those changes. Closer to home, my kids are a daily reminder that the way young people interact with the world has changed — it's global and instantaneous.

Implementation Team: Voices from the Community

The Vision 2015 Implementation Team includes leadership from a broad range of public, private, and civic groups. The Team meets regularly to align efforts, evaluate progress, and sustain momentum.

H. Raye Jones Avery



Executive Director
**Christina Cultural
Arts Center**

Dr. Susan Bunting



Superintendent
**Indian River
School District**

Dr. Paul A. Herdman



President and CEO
**Rodel Foundation
of Delaware**

Dr. Mark Holodick



Superintendent
**Brandywine
School District**

These and many other changes were not squarely in our sights back in 2005, so as we look to 2015 and beyond, we know we need to do a better job of listening to members of the community, educators, and young people so that our “vision” remains fresh and responsive.

As a founding member of Vision 2015, and now its chair, I am excited to focus on how we can help expand innovation throughout our state and to redouble our efforts to build stronger bridges between our schools, communities, and businesses.

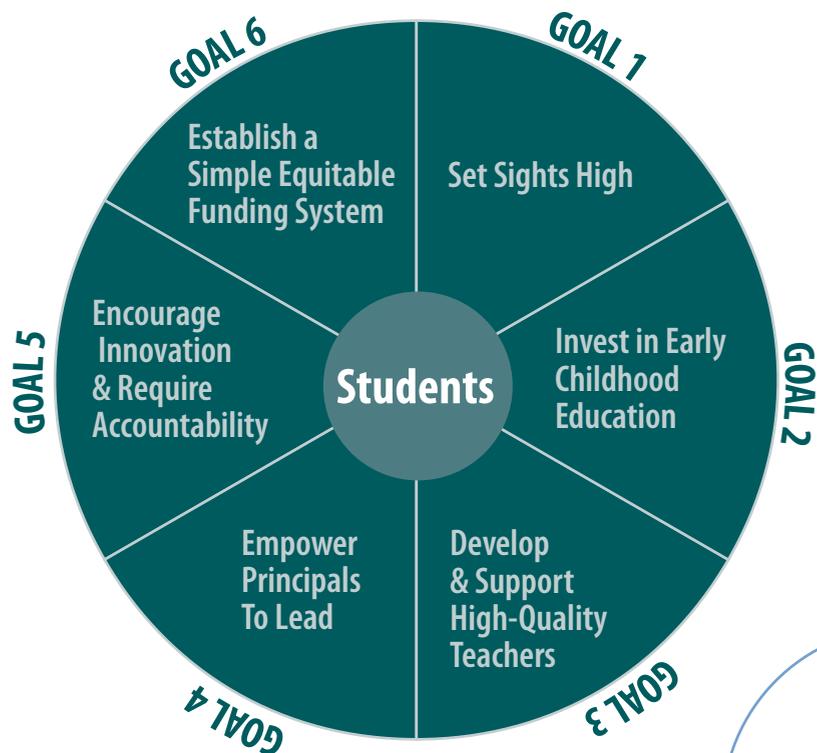
On the following pages, you will see how the big ideas of Vision 2015 are being implemented and becoming a reality. Vision 2015 has played an important role in Delaware’s success, and we look forward to more opportunities and challenges in the years that follow.

Sincerely,



Ernie Dianastasis, Vision 2015 Chairman

Vision 2015 focuses on six student-centered key goals.



Frederika Jenner



President
Delaware State Education Association

Mark Murphy



Secretary
Delaware Department of Education

Dr. Daniel Rich



Chair
Delaware Early Childhood Council

John H. Taylor, Jr.



Executive Director
Delaware Public Policy Institute

Goal 1: Set Sights High

Implement assessments, curriculum, and standards to align them with the world's best, while preparing students for college and careers.

Progress to Date

In 2006, consistency of curriculum was a challenge not just around the state, but sometimes even within districts. Delaware students now compete with the rest of the world, so we need to raise the bar on what we expect of them. To do that we need to strengthen the quality of the curriculum used to prepare our students and build new measures to assess what they are learning. Across the board, we're providing students with access to more rigorous content. **Every child from grades K through 12 will be engaged in learning through the**

Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which are internationally benchmarked and move us away from rote memorization to more applied and practical learning. In addition, almost 1,000 students are benefiting from new language immersion programs from Mandarin to Arabic, and we've increased the percentage of students taking Advanced Placement courses by nearly 16% since 2002.

What's Next

We've made significant progress, but the implementation of the CCSS will take considerable work to create a Common Core culture in the classroom in preparation for the first assessment of the Standards during the 2014-15 academic year. Once implemented, the

Standards will provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, and give teachers and parents a roadmap for what they need to do to help them be college and career ready.

Additionally, our students will truly be on equal footing with their peers around the world with the implementation of the new Smarter Balanced Assessment exam aligned with CCSS, and dual enrollment opportunities allowing for students to get a head start on their college education.

Get Involved

Learn more about CCSS and how they will help our kids reach the next level by visiting bit.ly/HSGCCSS.

IT'S HAPPENING

Embracing the Highest Standards

At William Penn High School, math teacher Jennifer Bonham didn't wait for the official rollout of the Common Core State Standards to start using them.

Two years ago, as she was preparing the student learning map for her Advanced Placement statistics course, she realized that Delaware's standards didn't cover what she would be teaching her seniors.

"The student learning map had to be based on standards," she recalls. "The state standards really stopped at 11th grade, and they didn't cover AP statistics. I started using the Common Core Standards to write out my instructional planning, because the Common Core goes through 12th grade and has a whole strand on statistics."

The Common Core Standards, which will be implemented statewide for the 2014-2015 school year, are a crucial component of the Vision 2015 goal to get Delaware teachers and schools to implement standards, curriculum, and assessments that align with the world's best.

Bonham loves the rigor of the Standards, but is also keenly interested in developing state-of-the-art assessments that will measure student achievement once the Standards are in place — especially through greater use of technology.

In both her classroom and her Ed.D. program at the



Jennifer Bonham,
Teacher,
William Penn
High School

University of Delaware, Bonham is exploring ways to use technology to assess achievement and student growth. She is part of the Colonial School District's "Bring Your Own Device" pilot exploring new ways to use technology in the classroom, and her Ed.D. thesis focuses on employing technology for formative assessments that take place throughout the school year.

"There are apps on which you can put out questions and poll kids on cell phones, and **I'll know right that minute did most of them get it or not get it and we can have a conversation right then and there,**" she explains. **"With technology, you can also differentiate the learning.** I can post different videos, TED talks or things I create and they can get out their cell phones and their head phones and watch the video they need. I can hold office hours at home through Twitter or Edmodo. Students can take pictures of my Smart Board and we can post them on our website."

"Technology is the world our kids live in," she says, "so we might as well use it for good rather than evil in the classroom."

Goal 2: Invest in Early Learning

Ensure every child enters kindergarten ready to learn.

Progress to Date

In 2006, when the first Vision 2015 report was released, 70% of early learning providers were poor to mediocre and they did not receive sufficient support. In 2011, the state invested \$22 million — a 35% increase — in early learning improvement and then won \$49 million in the Early Learning Challenge. **As a result, there is a new state Office of Early Learning (OEL) that coordinates services across major state agencies, and since 2007, the Stars program provides a statewide structure for evaluating quality and state subsidies, which increase as the quality of service increases.**

What's Next

The Delaware Early Learner Survey has been piloted across the state and will be fully implemented by the fall of 2015. This survey will give Delaware baseline data for kindergarten readiness for the first time and enable elementary schools to tailor instruction and support services appropriately for their youngest students. The data will also provide educators and policymakers with a valuable tool in assessing the early childhood system and allow for thoughtful decision-making.

In addition, the OEL, in cooperation with its managing partner, the Delaware Early Childhood Center, created Delaware Readiness Teams (DEL Teams). These teams are bringing together partnerships of families, early learning and K-12 educators, health care, human services, and civic leaders to make school readiness and the needs of young children a high priority.

Get Involved

Learn more about how to support young children at www.greatstartsdelaware.com.

IT'S HAPPENING

Starting Early Learning *Really* Early

In the Lake Forest School District, early learning begins at birth. Especially for the families who sign up for the district's innovative Spartan Sprouts program.

Launched with Race to the Top funds, the program seeks to build connections between families and the school district at the earliest opportunity, and to provide support for raising healthy, kindergarten-ready students.

"We think it is important for a child to get off to a good start and we are interested in them as soon as they arrive," says Dr. Dan Curry, who implemented the program named for the district mascot.

In the program, trained home visitors visit families four times a year to help parents discover their child's interests, build structured activities around them, and explore everyday learning opportunities.

The home visitors also provide resources to help parents recognize developmental milestones from two months to five years, share health and nutrition information, screen for special needs, and provide referrals if necessary.

Families also receive a support package that includes such items as backpacks, medicine droppers, sippy cups, thermometers, a Sprout baby outfit, and a book.

In addition, the program shares information about a sister program run in partnership with the Harrington Library Foundation called Imagination Library in which parents of children from birth to four years old can sign up their child to get a free book each month in the mail.

In its first year, the program served 34 families in the Felton-area district, which averages 310 students each year in kindergarten.

"I have learned so many things through the Spartan Sprouts," says parent Sheena Rosko, whose son was identified with a speech delay through the program. "Without this program I would not have known just how delayed his speech is or how to go about getting him the help he needs. I am very grateful for everything this program has to offer!"



**Dr. Dan Curry, Superintendent,
Lake Forest School District**

Goal 3: Develop and Support High-Quality Teachers

Develop and support high quality teachers in every Delaware school and provide the professional support they need to succeed.

Progress to Date

As parents have long known, teachers are the most important in-school factor in supporting a child's learning. Yet as recently as 2006, there was little understanding of the quality of teachers coming out of schools of education, there were no strategies for recruiting, retaining, or supporting teachers and leaders in high-need schools, and teachers didn't always have meaningful feedback on improving teaching practices.

With the impetus of Vision 2015, Delaware has made comprehensive changes that make it a national leader in raising the quality of teaching professionals. In the last year, passage of the key education bill SB51 sets high entry requirements for

teacher training programs, requires at least 10 weeks of a high-quality student teaching experience, and establishes rigorous exit exams. Additionally, teacher training programs will be required to track and report data on the effectiveness of graduates during and after the program.

The state has also invested in building targeted efforts to bring great teachers and leaders into our highest-need schools. One example of this is the Teach For America program, which is thriving, and has expanded to Kent and Sussex counties, with 60 teachers serving high-need students in difficult-to-hire subject areas. Another initiative, the Vision Network of Delaware, is working with teachers and leaders in 29 schools across the state to build and sustain achievement through improved leadership and classroom instruction.

Delaware is also one of the few

states in the country in which every teacher in every subject and grade is evaluated in a system that looks holistically at performance — one of the strategies being improved each year based on teacher feedback through the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning Survey (TELL Delaware). In addition, the state is working to build the capacity of our teaching force through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that provide teachers with common planning time so they can collaborate on data analysis, lesson planning, and instructional strategies.

What's Next

The state's new teacher training legislation is an important foundation for training teachers who can deliver a world-class education. So are programs that improve career and compensation opportunities for teachers. Goals for the near future include creating new teacher career paths. Rewarding teachers through more competitive regional pay would also help attract teachers in high-need subjects and schools. Best practices can also provide incentives to expand successful teacher training programs.

We want Delaware to not only be a desired destination for the best teachers, we want to support already established teachers and provide them with the tools they need to be successful in the classroom. The launching of a recruitment portal to streamline and strengthen hiring processes across the state — and improving the salary structure and career ladder system for teachers — will serve to retain and attract highly-effective teachers.

Get Involved

Individuals and groups can support Delaware's teachers. Consider supporting a local teacher through DonorsChoose.org, or participating in the TFA sponsor a teacher program. Learn more at bit.ly/TEADelaware.



IT'S HAPPENING

Charting A New Course For Teacher Development

In a successful school, one of the most important skills for teachers is the ability to tailor instruction to the individual abilities of each student.

Not surprisingly, the training required to develop those teachers requires instruction tailored to individual abilities — of each teacher.

Most important, notes Dr. Lamont W. Browne, Head of School and Principal of East Side Charter School, that training needs to be ongoing and systematic, not the “one-shot, one-stop” system of evaluation and professional development often used in the past.

Browne’s school is one of four charters in Wilmington that have banded together to develop a new — and collaborative — approach to evaluating and developing top teachers.

Approved by the State Department of Education, the approach is rolling out this year at East Side, Thomas Edison Charter School, Kuumba Academy Charter School, and Prestige Academy Charter School, all located within a mile and a half of each other.

“All four schools are supporting each other,” Dr. Browne says of the groundbreaking collaborative effort. “They are coaching each other and learning from each other. Hopefully, this can be a model for the state for how schools can work together to improve student achievement.”

Co-authored by the four schools, the approach makes evaluation and training continuous throughout the school year, rather than a process built around a limited number of classroom observations or professional development sessions.

It still includes schoolwide professional development on key trends and topics, but its foundation is a coaching system in which instructional leaders work with individual teachers, collaboratively develop goals for improvement and improve instruction skills in incremental “action steps,” rather than acting on a “laundry list” of changes all at once.

Most significantly, Dr. Browne says, the approach includes a “dual accountability” process that evaluates the effectiveness of the evaluators.

“In the past there may not have been any accountability that the instructional leader was good at giving feedback,” he says. “Our model requires that a coach give specific feedback, not just what a teacher did poorly, but how they can get better at it.”

At Dr. Browne’s school, each of four coaches works with approximately 10 teachers, starting right after a two-week



Dr. Lamont W. Browne,
Head of School and Principal, East Side Charter School

period of schoolwide professional development in August. Teachers are asked to develop 4-5 professional development goals for themselves for the year, and work with the coach to pick three top goals for work. Teachers and coaches meet weekly or biweekly to assess progress, based on 10-20 classroom observations and videotaped lessons in which teachers can see themselves in action.

By focusing on a limited number of action steps at a time, the coaching allows teachers to “build capacity” over the year. It also provides flexibility to address individual issues that arise, or to identify issues affecting more than one teacher.

“Teachers say they love seeing us weekly because it makes the classes [that we observe] so much more natural,” Dr. Browne says. “They also love that there are just one or two action steps at a time. Fewer things to focus on allows them to really put their energy into those things.”

“There is immediate accountability,” he adds. “A teacher knows that their coach is going to come back next week and give feedback, so it is very important they are working on this and trying to get better.”

Goal 4: Empower Principals

Empower school leaders to be great leaders with the knowledge, authority, and flexibility to get results.

Progress to Date

Next to teachers, principals are the most important adults in any school. **Delaware has taken significant steps to empower principals to build strong school cultures and support great teaching.** To accomplish this, the state has employed strategies, including: (1) deploying coaches and support programs to help principals throughout the state; (2) creating targeted new strategies to train principals to work in our highest need schools; and (3) developing statewide incentive systems to provide monetary awards to those schools that are demonstrating excellence.

Increased use of School Administration Manager (SAM) programs in schools has helped principals better manage their time and concentrate more on instructional leadership, building effective teams, and improving student achievement. The Delaware Leadership Project (DLP) has been created to help the state recruit, train, and retain more effective principals in high-needs schools. In its third year, this 15-month alternative certification program provides intensive, hands-on training for aspiring principals in school settings.

Lastly, Innovative Schools, a non-profit resource center for Delaware public schools, is working directly with local schools and districts across the state to help implement best practice programs effectively within their building.

What's Next

Progress has been made toward empowering principals to be great leaders; however, there are steps that can be taken to continue to improve the knowledge, authority, and flexibility necessary to gain results. Improving financial flexibility, such as hiring and budgeting freedom would allow principals to put funding toward areas that they deem most necessary.

Encouraging broader utilization of the Education Insight System will enable data-driven decision making throughout the education system.

Get Involved

Support the Delaware Leadership Project. Learn more at www.innovativeschools.org/delaware-leadership-project.

IT'S HAPPENING

Getting Results With 'Ownership'

At W.T. Chipman Middle School, leadership is all about ownership. Given the authority and flexibility to make key instructional decisions at the school level, Principal Douglas W. Brown has built a culture of "our" among his staff.

"Our teachers take ownership of their results, ownership of the school perception, ownership of the students, and, most importantly, they take ownership of their responsibilities," he explains.

"We work hard on shared decision-making ... to build a strong instructional leadership team comprised of administrators, teachers, and specialists."

As a result, "our school has drastically changed for the better from a morale and results standpoint," Brown says.

Part of the Lake Forest School District, and a member of the Vision Network of Delaware, Chipman has created a culture in which the WHY of instructional and policy decisions is openly shared and explained.

"Most of us want to know WHY am I doing this and how this will help," Brown says. "A good leader has the ability to convey the WHY to those that he or she leads."

Brown, who has been principal at Chipman for five years, also is a mentor in the Delaware Leadership Project, the innovative statewide program training new principals for



**Douglas W. Brown, Principal,
W. T. Chipman Middle School**

high-needs schools. As a mentor, he is "shadowed" by a trainee during the school year, offering hands-on instruction in his school's culture and instructional practices.

"Gone are the days where school leaders are simply managers of the school building," Brown says. "The expectation is for all of us to be instructional leaders as administrators."

The Delaware Leadership Project has drawn praise as an alternative route to certification that emphasizes on-site learning. "I came through the traditional way to administration," Brown says, "but I would have loved to have had the opportunity to do the work and the on the job training that these prospective leaders get."

Goal 5: Encourage Innovation and Parent Involvement, and Require Accountability

Encourage education innovation and require accountability from all stakeholders.

Progress to Date

The world is changing rapidly and everyone knows that resources are tight. To keep pace, the state needs to continuously evaluate what's working and do more of it. Back in 2006, there was sparse information on the performance of individual schools, no vehicle for supporting innovative practices, limited funds to invest in high-performing schools, no feedback system for educators to improve the system, and very limited opportunities — outside the vocational schools — for young people to get their feet wet in an actual workplace. **Today, the state is working to make information easily accessible and has built a new online portal for educators to support the unique needs of every one of their children.** A parent portal is also in the works to provide updates on students.

Innovation is emerging from both public and private sector strategies. Just recently the state invested more than \$1 million in a range of new ideas, the most prominent being a four-district partnership looking to pilot new teaching methods, such as blended and project based learning. In addition a new, \$2 million performance fund was created to prioritize the creation or expansion of high-performing charter schools serving high need communities. The private sector has supported nine new innovative school models through the Innovative Schools-led Alliance of Model Schools.

What's Next

Vision 2015 envisions a public education system that demands innovation and accountability both in and out of the classroom.

The continued efforts to support and grow a student-centered learning experience through innovative practices will allow children to master skills at their own pace, allowing teachers

to meet the needs of each individual learner. Personalized learning environments are already happening in classrooms around Delaware to provide students across the spectrum the opportunity to access individualized, rigorous, and rich learning experiences. This approach allows teachers to incorporate multiple styles of instruc-

tion seamlessly.

Get Involved

Become a mentor, join community-based partnerships, and demand data and public information on our schools to help inform decision making. Visit www.vision2015delaware.org/get-involved.

IT'S HAPPENING

Using Technology to Innovate

In the classroom of Paul Ramirez at Wilmington's Howard High School of Technology, innovation is the norm, not the exception. It's evident in his use of technology to challenge students, in the way he uses software to individualize learning for each student, in the way he uses multi-media "texts" to assess students' analytical abilities in 21st century formats.

It's also evident in the way he grounds high-tech instruction with character education traits like "grit" and "self-control" through an initiative he launched that uses principles of social/emotional learning to develop the personal traits students need to succeed.

"In my classroom, I've developed lots of ways to use technology," he says. "My students do everything from producing videos to using software and applications that allow them to learn at their own pace. **Personalized learning systems and the opportunities of digital education have the possibility for hugely changing the face of education.** But I think there's still a gap in K-12, both in terms of what is available and whether schools are using things that are already there."

Ramirez and his colleagues have seen dramatic results from their innovative teaching. He, along with the support from his fellow Howard English teachers, have helped students in his classroom achieve the highest growth in reading scores in his grade level every year for the last three years – and last year, their state assessment scores were 55% higher than the state average for students in the same subject and grade.

Named chair of the English department, he is rewriting the curriculum to raise the level of rigor across the district. He also is developing new data systems to help teachers use digital tools to assess and analyze student data.

"Technology," he says, "has the possibility of changing what we think of as education. I'd love to play a part in doing this."



**Paul Ramirez, Teacher,
Howard High School of Technology**

Goal 6: Establish a Simple and Equitable Funding System

More effectively spend taxpayers' education dollars.

Progress to Date

Of the six goals set forth in Vision 2015, this is the one on which the state has made the least headway. Delaware's funding system is largely inflexible and unresponsive to the needs of the individual students within it. Its inflexibility is a problem because it all but prevents local educators from developing innovative ideas or reallocating staff resources to meet the needs of their school communities.

Yes, there has been some additional flexibility in the way we support special needs students in recent years, but by and large the current funding system does not reflect the individual needs of each student. This is potentially very problematic in our urban and rural areas, where the needs of the students are generally higher.

Vision 2015 also calls for finding more flexible, productive, and efficient ways to spend currently budgeted dollars, before adding new money. In January 2008, the Leadership for Education Achievement in Delaware (LEAD) Committee released a landmark report that identified up to \$158 million in Delaware's education budget that could be spent smarter, with funds redirected to priorities that would yield powerful, long-term benefits. To date, only modest savings have been captured, and further action is needed to ensure students get as much benefit as possible at the classroom level.

What's Next

Establishing a simple and equitable funding system is a goal that still needs to be addressed in order to provide appropriate funding for students for the long term. The state has made significant changes to public education as a result of Race to the Top funding, but a modern school

finance system is needed to create sustainable change. Moving forward, Delaware must create a funding model in which funds are allocated based on student needs, as recommended by the LEAD Committee. In addition, compensation reform and salary supplements can be implemented to better support teachers and leaders.

A compensation reform proposal will allow new teachers to be more regionally competitive, helping Delaware to recruit high-quality

teachers. Salary supplements will help schools recruit and retain teachers and leaders in high need schools, high need subjects, and master teacher roles. Addressing funding will require difficult choices; however, making these choices are crucial to helping every student succeed.

Get Involved

Speak with your elected officials about fair funding, and participate in local school board meetings.

"Without a more effective system, we will always be limiting educational opportunities for our children based upon their ZIP Code."

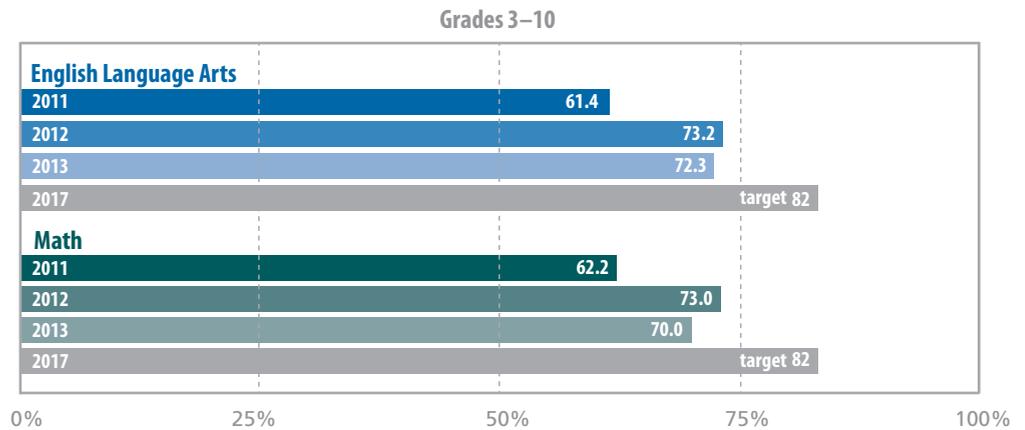
— Dr. Shawn Joseph, Superintendent, Seaford School District



Promising Gains in Recent Years, Yet Challenges Persist

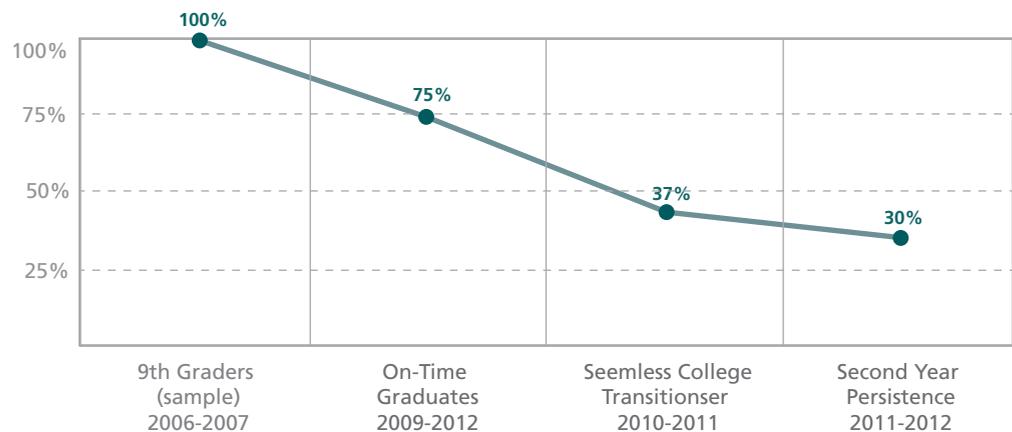
State Progress Maintained

An additional 10,000 students were proficient or advanced in 2012 and 2013 as compared to the 2011 DCAS exam.



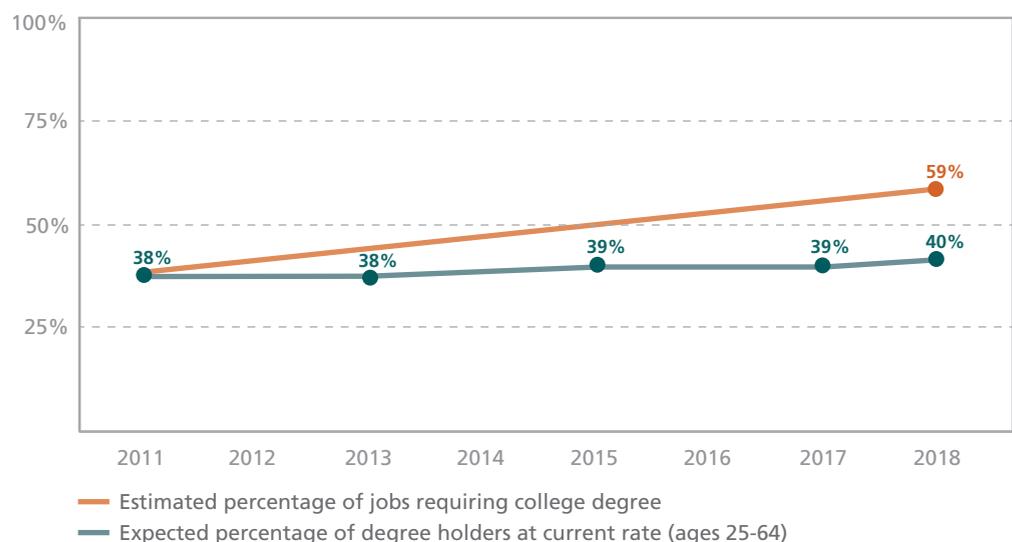
However, More Attention is Needed to Prepare Students for College

Of the students entering ninth grade in 2006, 75 percent of those students graduated on time four years later, and just 37 percent of that group entered college in the fall of 2010. Only 30 percent of those 2006 ninth grade students then returned for their second year of college.



...And More Jobs Will Require 2 or 4 Year College Degrees

The state's economic future depends on producing more college graduates, and we need to continue to better prepare students for success in earning a college degree.



Significant challenges remain, and our aspirations are higher than ever.

The world outside our schools is changing and there is an opportunity to support our schools in meeting 21st century demands. Too many of our graduating students are unprepared to be successful after they leave our school system. We need to drastically improve our college-going and completion rates; rethink what it means to be educated in this rapidly changing, hyper-connected world; and bridge the gap between our schools and the workplace such that our schools are in tune with where the world is going.

In 2014, Vision 2015 is committed to working with partners across the state to build on the foundation that has already been established, while focusing on the future. We invite you to join us.



Looking Ahead... with Secretary Murphy

State Setting the Bar High

If education were sports, the United States is the team that had a big lead, but let it slip away.

"In short, our country is behind now," says Secretary of Education Mark Murphy. "Schools in the United States and Delaware have improved over the last few decades, but at



Mark Murphy, Secretary of Education

the same time many other countries have improved at a faster rate."

Since its debut in 2006, Vision 2015 has made great strides helping Delaware schools regain the competitiveness that students will need to succeed in a 21st century world economy. But much remains to be done.

"One of the greatest transitions under way right now is the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and mathematics and the Next Generation Science Standards," he notes. "The Standards establish consistent expectations across Delaware and the nation about the progression of skills in each grade, while leaving important decisions about lesson delivery to the local teacher and school."

Most significantly, the Common Core Standards "have added rigor to make American students more competitive in the global marketplace" — a key component of the Vision 2015 plan.

To do that, the Standards not only "build on the best and highest state standards in the country," Murphy says, but examine "the expectations of other high performing countries and study the research and literature available on what students need to know and be able to do to be successful in college or careers."

Join us! Please visit our website,
www.vision2015delaware.org,
and sign up for our email newsletter.

Imagine ... the best schools in the world for every student in Delaware.