Vision Coalition Leadership Team Statement
Advancing the Recommendations in the Independent Funding Assessment
February 2024

In December 2023, American Institutes for Research (AIR) released the Assessment of Delaware Public School Funding. This independent assessment is the final component of the Delaware Education Funding Lawsuit settlement and was completed through a contract with the Delaware Department of Education.

The recommendations in this Assessment are closely aligned with the recommendations of Vision Coalition's 10-year plan, *Student Success 2025*.

We, the Vision Coalition Leadership Team, call on policymakers to act on the recommendations in the Independent Funding Assessment. The recommendations provide a unique opportunity for Delaware to act on longstanding issues of equity. We agree with the recommendations in the Independent Assessment, and we recommend that policymakers take action to:

1. Increase Investment in Delaware's Public Education
2. Distribute More Resources According to Student Need
3. Implement a Weighted Student Funding (or Foundation) State Funding Formula
4. Allow for More Flexibility in How Districts Use Resources
5. Account for Local Capacity and Address Tax Inequity
6. Improve Funding Transparency
7. Regularly Reassess Property Values
8. Simplify the Calculation of the Local Share Provided to Charter Schools
9. Expand voluntary, full-day, high-quality prekindergarten

Greater detail follows this statement on page 4.

As policymakers consider these recommendations, we ask that they act with the following key principles in mind:

- **Engage key stakeholders**—especially districts and charter schools, educators, researchers/policy experts, and organizations that work with students and families
- **Approach the issues systemically** so the underlying inequities and inflexibilities can be addressed—avoid incremental changes, which could contribute to greater inequity and inflexibility
- **Make changes with increased investments** so no district or charter loses funding
    - The research is clear: More money matters, especially when invested to support specific student groups
- **Maintain the educator salary schedule** to ensure minimum compensation is guaranteed statewide

- **Sustain strengths of Delaware's system, especially the predictability and stability** of education funding
- **Prioritize equity** for students based on need and among school districts and charters based on local property wealth and taxation capacity

What's next? We encourage Delawareans to learn more and join the conversation. Ask policymakers what they plan to do to advance the recommendations, and be a part of a systemic and thoughtful solution that will meet Delaware students' needs.

About the Vision Coalition: The Vision Coalition, a public private partnership dedicated to strengthening public education in Delaware, develops 10 year plans for public education— including the current plan, *Student Success 2025*. The Leadership Team is a group of education, policy, business, community, and foundation leaders—and we are focused on advancing the priorities set in this plan by over 4,000 Delawareans, including creating a more student-centered funding system.

Vision Coalition Leadership Team

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Student Success 2025 Recommendations	**Assessment of Delaware Public School Funding Recommendations**	
Allocate funding to respond to individual student needs	1. Increase Investment in Delaware's Public Education 2. Distribute More Resources According to Student Need	*"**Student performance in Delaware is lagging** behind its peer and competitor states ...Delaware's education system **does not currently have the resources necessary to be regionally competitive** in the education it provides to its students."* *"Delaware has greater student needs in terms of economic disadvantage and English Learners than comparison states and lower average student outcomes. Having greater student needs means that **Delaware will likely need to invest greater resources than comparison states to achieve similar outcomes**."* *"Funding for low-income students should be approximately **10 times the amount** that will be provided through Opportunity Funding when fully implemented."*
Update our system so funds follow students	3. Implement a Weighted Student Funding (or Foundation) State Funding Formula	

Increase equity and flexibility	4. Allow for More Flexibility in How Districts Use Resources 5. Account for Local Capacity and Address Tax Inequity	*"District leaders noted that the patchwork of different appropriations for specific types of staff, programming, and/or student groups leads to* **inflexibility** *in how districts and schools can use their funds….Administrators also noted that the lack of flexibility created administrative burden in terms of needing to know the rules for how various funds can be spent and monitoring and documenting how different funds have been spent."* *"Delaware's* **unit system is atypical** *of how most states structure their systems for funding education. Many states, such as New Jersey and Maryland, use systems that allocate dollars to districts through student weights, accounting for both state and local revenue. A* **local share is then determined, varying across districts** *according to the capacity to raise revenue locally….State revenue should be distributed in such a way that districts with lower property wealth should not have to tax themselves at higher rates to achieve similar levels of overall funding."*

Build more transparent and efficient systems	6. Improve Funding Transparency 7. Regularly Reassess Property Values 8. Simplify the Calculation of the Local Share Provided to Charter Schools	*"The use of many different formulas governing the allocation of various types of staff and other funding allocations, as well as the unclear relationship between staff allocations and funding levels, **limits transparency** under the current system."* *"If **property values were regularly reassessed….**local revenue would naturally increase at the rate of the increase in property values."* *"If **charter school funding were driven by a target based on student needs** and was inclusive of both state and local revenue, it would not matter how much local revenue charter schools received from any given district or from year-to-year, because the state revenue would fill in the difference to achieve the funding target."*
Expand voluntary, full-day, high-quality prekindergarten	*" …four of the six [expert educator] panels indicated that **universal pre-K education was a necessary component for supporting grades K–12 student achievement**."*	
[Report Key Takeaways, including data and infographics](#) and [Resources from our 2023 Equity in Education Series](#)		