



Vision Coalition of Delaware **Student-Centered Funding Priorities** Spring 2026

The Vision Coalition Leadership Team has advocated for student-centered school funding for more than two decades. The Coalition’s current plan, [Student Equity and Excellence 2035](#), calls for a funding system that directs resources based on student needs and builds on Delaware’s progress toward greater equity and opportunity. These recommendations align closely with the principles and recommendations developed through the [Public Education Funding Commission](#) process.

We, the Vision Coalition Leadership Team, are encouraged by the progress Delaware has made toward implementing a student-centered school funding system. The legislation currently advancing represents a historic opportunity to translate years of analysis, stakeholder engagement, and bipartisan commitment into meaningful action for students. While this work will continue beyond the passage of any single bill, these proposals mark an important step toward a funding system that more equitably distributes resources based on student needs.

The Coalition developed this crosswalk as a resource for policymakers, educators, advocates, and community members to understand how the proposed legislation aligns with the principles and recommendations that have guided this work. As implementation moves forward, we encourage Delaware leaders to remain focused on the shared goal of creating a funding system that is equitable, transparent, student-centered, and designed to support success for every learner.

As policymakers consider these recommendations, we ask that they act with the [following principles in mind](#):



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- 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 while avoiding incremental changes, which could contribute to greater inequity and inflexibility
- Ensure that changes are accompanied by increased investments, ensuring that no district or charter loses funding
 - The research is clear: More money matters, especially when invested to support specific student groups, such as students from low-income backgrounds, multilingual learners, and students with special needs



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<p>Adequately fund schools to pay educators and school staff competitively, in order to attract and retain high-performing educators and meet educational goals.</p>	<p>Hybrid formula would include additional investments to hold districts harmless so that none would receive less than current allocations, for a certain duration of time</p> <p>FY 27 budget includes an initial \$100M set aside for future implementation of the hybrid formula</p> <p>Public Educator Compensation Committee (PECC) which was charged with reviewing educator and support staff salaries put forth recommendations in 2024. These recommendations continue to be implemented, raising the state share of base educator salaries to \$60,000 in the next two years.</p>	<p>Delaware currently ranks 14th in the nation in spending, however research shows that no state is actually spending what is calculated to be an “adequate” amount on education.</p>



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<p>Distribute more state resources based on the numbers of students with particular needs—increase funding for low-income, multilingual learner students (MLLs), and those with special needs—and ensure funding follows each student to district, charter school, or vocational technical district.</p>	<p>The proposed hybrid formula includes two weighted student funding pots:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity Funding for students from low-income backgrounds and MLL students - would include a per student increase of between 400% - 500% for targeted student groups - Operational funding that is targeted at students from low-income backgrounds, MLLs, students with special education needs and vocational enrollment <p>Additional research will be done on tiering MLL funding to address specific needs, as well as potentially including concentrated poverty, gifted and talented, and other potential weights.</p>	<p>Delaware’s base formula only provides additional funding for students with disabilities in the form of lower student-teacher ratios.</p> <p>Opportunity Funding is an additional targeted amount for students from low-income backgrounds and multilingual learners. However, this only amounts to roughly \$1,000 per student or an additional 5-6%.</p>



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<p>Establish a funding formula that is centered on student needs, and where funding follows the student.</p>	<p>The hybrid formula combines aspects of the unit formula with the traditional weighted student funding model. This formula is more centered around student needs than the prior formula due to the Operational and Opportunity Funding components.</p>	<p>Delaware is one of only seven states that still currently uses a unit (or resource) based system. However, there are lower ratios for students with special needs, and the formula is somewhat different for vocational funding.</p>
<p>Allow for more flexibility in how funding is spent so that schools and districts can meet their students' unique needs and make programmatic and personnel decisions, providing more decision-making at the school level by those closest to students.</p> <p>Remove burdensome restrictions, waiver processes, and reporting requirements.</p>	<p>The proposed hybrid formula includes additional flexibility by collapsing 30+ funding streams into three main buckets while also significantly reducing the number of prescribed required positions from 32 to 18. As a result, the overall amount of flexible funds increases from 3% to roughly 30%.</p> <p>This will in turn reduce restrictions and burdensome reporting requirements by allowing districts more flexibility to select the positions that they deem necessary for their students</p>	<p>Funds in Delaware are distributed in a highly prescriptive manner, with student attendance counts determining how many adult staff positions a school can hire, often with over 40 distinct line items prescribing where funds can be spent. Of state funds generated by a school, 98% must be spent in that school.</p> <p>Most of the flexible funding is distributed through Opportunity Funding, which is only an additional 5-</p>



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		<p>6%. There is also additional flexibility with 2% of funding that districts can withhold to redistribute, as well as in line items such as Related Services and Academic Excellence units.</p>
<p>Provide state funding to account for local wealth inequities across districts, and require districts to pay a local share based on local wealth levels.</p> <p>Reform the referendum process so local communities are fairly taxed and all districts can keep up with operating costs, up to a limit, without going to voters.</p>	<p>The equalization formula is included as a requirement for PEFC to address in phase two of the work (per SB 303).</p> <p>SB 322 addresses the referendum process by removing the 10% local revenue increase post reassessment and instead allowing districts to raise up to 2% of the total local revenue yearly (with certain restrictions) without needing to go to referendum.</p>	<p>In Delaware, local funding exists largely independently of state funding, with the state contributing its portion regardless of the district’s ability to raise its local portion. Additionally, any local property tax increase to support operating funds must be approved by voters through a referendum, and Delaware is the only state that requires this. Boards have the ability to raise match taxes and tuition tax without going to referendum. Vo-tech districts can raise local taxes</p>



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		<p>up to a limit set by the General Assembly.</p> <p>Delaware is also the only state where state funds and local funds both go to schools with higher wealth, while in most states state funds are expended to offset the higher local wealth of school districts. Delaware’s state funding is mostly allocated in units, which are based on the education and experience of educators.</p>
<p>Provide transparency so that taxpayers, policymakers and families can understand how the state allocates funds and the nature of the shared responsibility between the state and local districts in adequately funding schools.</p>	<p>This formula will provide additional clarity by simplifying the 32 line items. Some work is still needed on defining accountability measures for the new formula.</p>	<p>“Delaware’s system consists of many separate formulas, each distributing a different type of staffing position or funding allocation primarily through a unit system.</p> <p>An additional barrier is that units are not readily converted into dollars of funding. The price of individual units, in terms of</p>



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<p>Ensure administrators can easily calculate, anticipate and rely on the amount of funding they will receive year to year.</p>		<p>state funding, depends on the experience and education of individual staff members. Delaware’s unit system is atypical of how most states structure their systems for funding education.”</p> <p>AIR</p>
<p>Simplify how charter schools are funded: establish a target amount inclusive of state and local funding, and provide more predictability year to year.</p>	<p>Not yet addressed. Charters will benefit from the additional funds and additional streamlining that all schools and districts will be receiving.</p>	<p>The Delaware Department of Education calculates the local cost per pupil expended by each school district for each type of student in the previous year.</p> <p>Charters receive funds that can be spent flexibly.</p> <p>Charter schools receive a share of local funding from their students’ district(s) of residence based on these rates.</p>