

# VISION 2015

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



## We're getting it done.

From Wilmington to Dagsboro, from Newark to Felton, from executive suites to Legislative Hall, Delawareans are working to realize the promise of a world-class education:

- **Setting high academic goals for students and schools** and providing the support to achieve them.
- **Making school funding more fair and efficient** so that all children have what they need to succeed.
- **Building the momentum to get the job done** by informing our citizens, involving parents, and working with public and private partners to secure the resources needed.

Success will come when Delaware's schools reach the goals set by Vision 2015 — such as **raising our high school graduation rate to at least 90 percent** and **closing achievement gaps** so that *all* students are prepared to meet the challenges of today and the future.

**In the meantime, there's plenty more to do.** You can be part of this important and rewarding work. Learn more about what's happening now — and some of the critical next steps.

# VISION 2015 A PLAN THAT'S WORKING

Vision 2015 is Delaware's nationally acclaimed plan to achieve the best schools in the world for every student in our state ... no exceptions ... no excuses.

Six building blocks set the foundation for lasting change throughout our school system.

## Vision 2015 Recommendations

**Set Sights High.** Challenging expectations inspire the best in every educator, parent, and student.

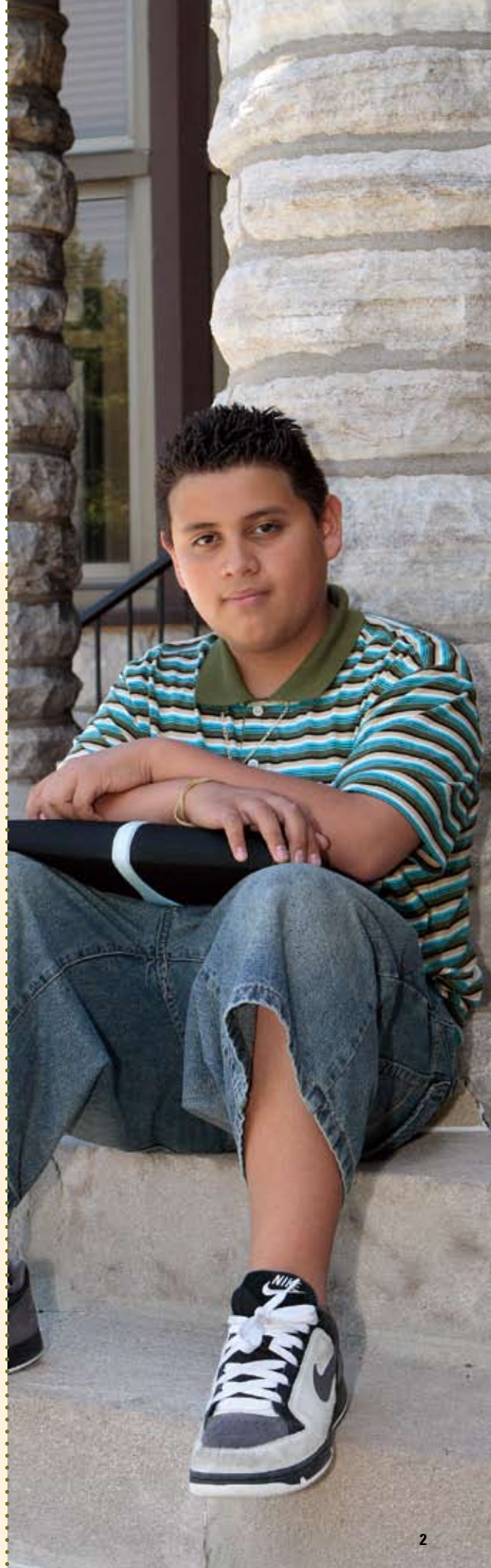
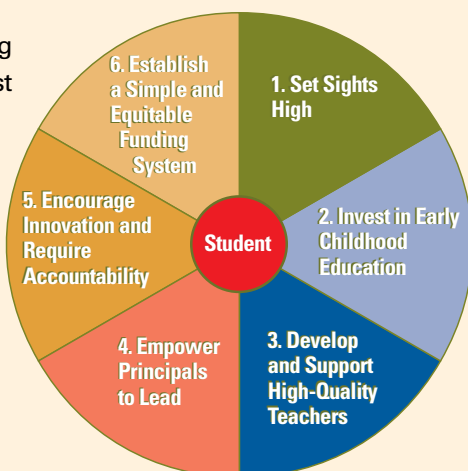
**Invest in Early Childhood Education.** What children learn in their early years sets the stage for success in school and in life.

**Develop and Support High-Quality Teachers.** Excellent teaching is the key to successful learning.

**Empower Principals to Lead.** Principals must have the knowledge, authority, and flexibility to get results.

**Encourage Innovation and Require Accountability.** A diversity of schools and instructional programs helps meet every child's learning needs. And each of us must be accountable for student success.

**Establish a Simple and Equitable Funding System.** Taxpayers' dollars must be used wisely so that every child has an equitable chance to learn.





# What We've Accomplished: Year 2

## Moving Together Toward a Shared Vision

Our world is changing rapidly — and to prepare our students for successful lives and careers, Delaware's schools need to evolve, too. We must be willing to challenge traditional definitions of schooling and transform the culture of education, not just in individual schools or districts but throughout our public education system.

Change on this scale requires widespread and sustained action by committed partners. This is why Vision 2015 has always been a **collaborative effort**, bringing together educators, business and community leaders, parents, and government officials.

Since its launch in October 2006, Vision 2015 has become the inspiration, guide, and focus for initiatives across our state that share our commitment to provide **every** Delaware student with an education that can compete with the world's best.

"As we move forward, education is the single most important investment in the future successes of individuals and our nation. It is an exciting time to be a teacher."

— Courtney Fox, Delaware's 2008 Teacher of the Year



"The state's business leaders have become key players in the education reform movement because we want our businesses to stay competitive. . . . [We're] not just competing with Maryland or Pennsylvania or New Jersey. We have to be able to compete worldwide."

— James A. Wolfe, President and CEO of the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce

# Higher Expectations and Stronger Support for Students and Schools

Vision 2015 challenges all students, educators, and families to commit to high expectations and to provide the supports that will help *all* students achieve their full potential.



## Putting the Plan into Practice

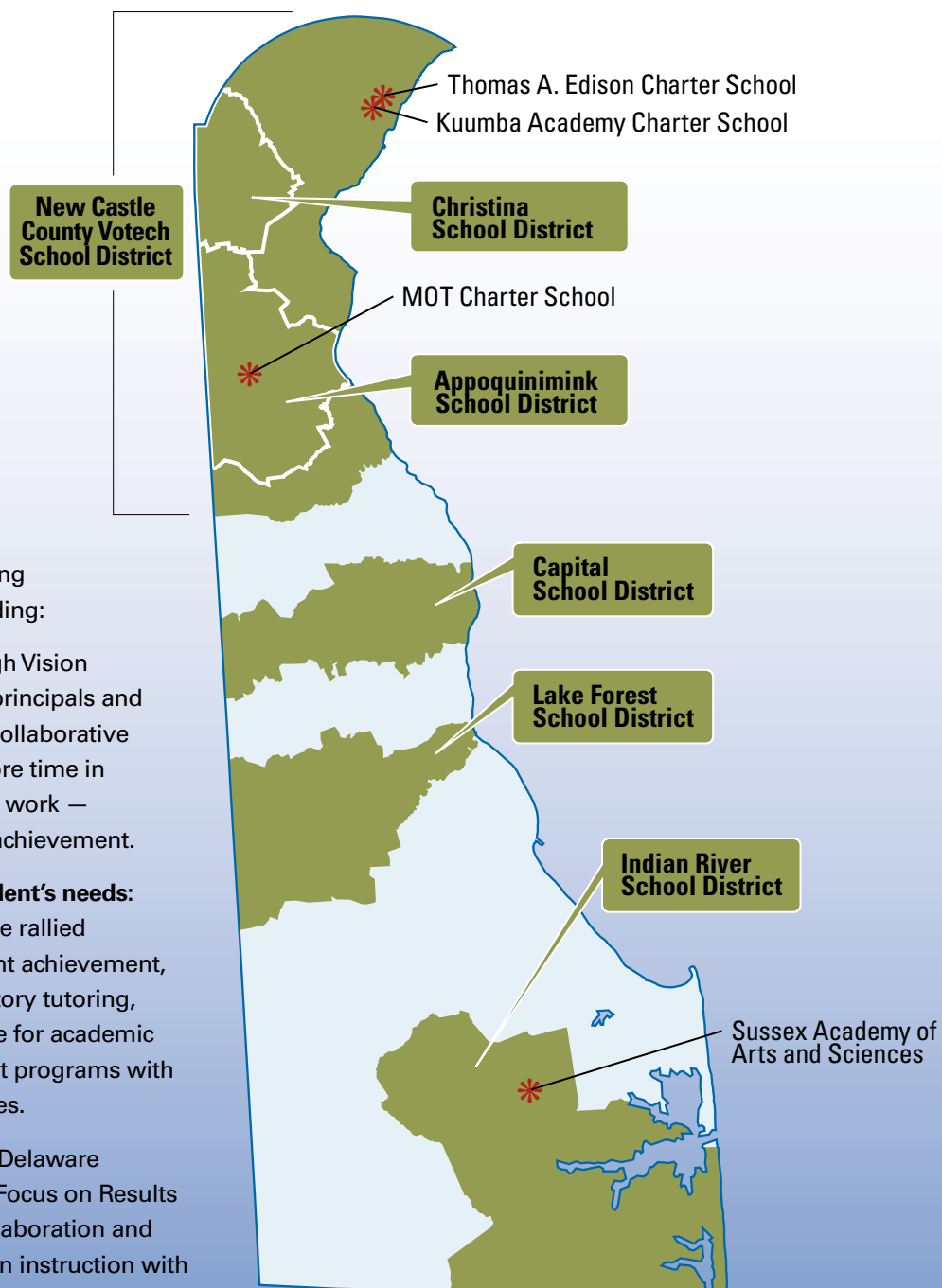
In Delaware's **Vision Network** of districts and schools, many of our best and brightest educators, parent-leaders, and community representatives are pioneering the approaches to teaching and learning that will drive our 21st-century classrooms. In 2008, 11 additional schools joined the Vision Network.

**The Network now includes six school districts and 21 schools, including four public charter schools, serving 14,000 students** (see map).

Backed by a strong partnership of public and private support, Vision Network schools are implementing recommendations of Vision 2015, including:

- **More effective school leaders:** Through Vision Network professional development, principals and other leaders are learning to build a collaborative school culture and focus on using more time in instruction and instructionally related work — practices shown to advance student achievement.
- **Learning options that meet each student's needs:** Vision Network leadership teams have rallied around "big ideas" to advance student achievement, embracing programs such as mandatory tutoring, math and reading labs, extended time for academic and enrichment activities, and Twilight programs with accelerated and remedial opportunities.
- **High-quality teachers and principals:** Delaware Academy for School Leadership and Focus on Results help build skills in leadership and collaboration and help teachers use student data to align instruction with each child's needs.

## Vision Network Map



Parents and caregivers of Delaware's public school students also are receiving training to become effective advocates for their children's education, as recommended in Vision 2015, thanks to a \$2 million **Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC)** grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The \$2 million PIRC grant also will support Delaware Parent Leadership Institute (DPLI) programs in training **240 more parent-leaders** who will drive positive outcomes in Delaware schools.

### Fostering Focus and Accountability

Launched in October 2007, the **Delaware Recommended Curriculum** links course content with revised state standards and assessments, offers classroom-ready learning resources, and features a parent-friendly website. Also launched this year across the system, the **Balanced Scorecard** process helps Delaware's schools align their strategic plans with school improvement goals and develop measurable actions to meet targets. Redesigned school profiles, or "**dashboards**," give parents and others clear, easy-to-use summaries of the individual characteristics and performance of every school in the state, as recommended by Vision 2015. These dashboards were designed by the Department of Education with guidance from the Leadership for Educational Achievement in Delaware (LEAD) Committee.

### Increasing Rigor and Commitment to Student Success

More than 230 students from 27 public high schools took part in the **Delaware Virtual School Pilot Program**. Launched as a statewide pilot in January 2008 and supported by Vision 2015 and private partners, this new learning option offers 24/7 online access to high-quality courses such as Algebra I, Pre-Calculus, Spanish I and II, Physical Fitness, and American Government. Also in 2008, the **Delaware Growth Assessment Pilot** made national news for its work to improve Delaware's annual state assessment so it more accurately reflects individual student progress over time.

"[The Vision Network] has refined our thinking about making positive changes for our students. ... We're not just looking at our language arts and math classes, but looking at how we get problem-solving strategies in physical education or visual arts classes. ..."

— Principal Darren Guido, Capital School District's Central Middle School

### Advocating for the Youngest Delawareans

Through the **Delaware Stars for Early Success** quality rating and improvement system, early childcare and education providers receive hands-on technical assistance and financial support to improve the qualifications of their staffs and the quality of their facilities and programs. The state and local business communities have provided leadership for this effort, which is led by the United Way of Delaware and supported by Vision 2015. Delaware's Stars for Early Success program now includes more than 75 early childhood education programs and serves more than 5,000 Delaware children.



"We must ask ourselves whether each dollar we spend today is the best investment we can make in our future. If we are to provide a world-class education to every student, we must invest the state's limited resources in those efforts that will deliver the greatest results for our students."

— LEAD Committee Chair Marvin N. "Skip" Schoenhals, Chairman of WSFS Bank, and Vice Chair Valerie A. Woodruff, Secretary of Education



# Smart Spending

Faced with an historic budget crisis and across-the-board spending cuts, Delaware must use every education dollar carefully.

## Identifying Efficiencies, Setting Priorities

Vision 2015 calls on our legislators to allow school leaders enough spending authority to ensure that decisions about how learning resources are used in each building will be made by the people who work most closely with the students and who are most familiar with their needs.








In January 2008, a landmark report from the LEAD Committee, appointed by Governor Minner in 2007 to help implement Vision 2015, identified **up to \$158 million in our state's education budget that could be spent smarter**

**to advance student achievement** (see chart below for more detail). These funds could be redirected to several priorities that would yield powerful, long-term benefits: strengthening early childhood education, expanding the Vision Network of district and charter schools, recruiting great teachers for high-needs schools and subject areas such as math and science, and strengthening our current teaching corps through top-notch professional development. Vision 2015 leaders realize that acting on these recommendations will require some tough choices, but given our challenging fiscal climate, meaningful action needs to be taken to benefit students at the classroom level.

Although funding shortfalls forced policymakers to redirect the first round of education savings to help offset the state's deficit, the LEAD recommendations helped them make necessary budget decisions without significant effects on classroom instruction or educators' jobs.



## Saving up to \$158 Million a Year by Spending Education Dollars Smarter

In the area of	Delaware could save	by implementing such strategies as
 TRANSPORTATION	<b>\$9–12 million</b>	Improving bus purchasing contracts Raising the minimum bus retirement age
 PURCHASING	<b>\$15–25 million</b>	Coordinating education-related purchases statewide
 ENERGY	<b>\$4–7 million</b>	Setting common energy-management standards Pooling natural gas purchases statewide
 BENEFITS	<b>Up to \$29 million</b>	Offering a more flexible benefits package Pooling purchases of employee benefits among districts
 CONSTRUCTION	<b>\$31–48 million</b>	Establishing statewide standards on design and materials Coordinating purchases of common goods and services
 ADMINISTRATION	<b>\$25–34 million</b>	Providing incentives to districts for improving efficiency Encouraging districts to share and consolidate services
 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	<b>\$2–3 million</b>	Improving efficiency of purchasing and service contracts Easing time-consuming state and federal rules that divert attention from educational goals

Source: LEAD Committee Cost Efficiency Study, January 2008. For the full report, visit [www.doe.state.de.us/info/reports/lead.shtml](http://www.doe.state.de.us/info/reports/lead.shtml).

# Public Support and Political Will

Just as Vision 2015 is bringing Delawareans together to make systemwide changes that will accelerate student achievement, the plan also has been the catalyst for an unprecedented public-private-civic partnership for Delaware schools.

## Encouraging Investment

Over the past year, **substantial contributions from the Delaware Business Roundtable** have supported the establishment and expansion of the Vision Network, the LEAD Cost Efficiency Study, Delaware Stars for Early Success, and other vital programs. Other public and private supporters also have shown a strong commitment; contributors from October 2007–08 are listed in this report. The federal government has supported Vision 2015 priorities with grants to the Vision Network and to parent engagement and leadership training.

## Informing and Empowering the Public

Delaware parents, students, elected officials, educators, and others have joined national experts and policy leaders in statewide forums on critical issues of school change:

- Leading educators, policy experts, and union representatives came together in November 2007 for an **unprecedented two-day conference on teacher career path and compensation issues**. The conference was a Vision 2015 collaboration with the Delaware State Education Association, Delaware Public Policy Institute, and the Rodel Foundation.
- In January 2008, the Vision 2015 **Expert Panel on Family and Community Engagement** featured Dr. Karen Mapp, Harvard lecturer and author, who focuses her research on the critical role that parents play in student achievement.
- In March 2008, Delaware's candidates for governor kicked off the campaign season with a **public debate on education**, focusing on many Vision 2015 priorities.
- In April 2008, **Delaware high school students shared their visions for education** while networking and gaining empowerment skills at the *Your Vision, Your Voice* conference. The event featured awards for student videos and essays.

**Vision 2015 Steering Committee, a broad-based, 28-person group that led the development of Vision 2015 in 2005–06.**

*(Titles reflect 2006 affiliation.)*

### Jean W. Allen

President, Delaware State Board of Education

### H. Raye Jones Avery\*

Executive Director, Christina Cultural Arts Center

### Peter Basile

Executive Director, Delaware Association of School Administrators

### Lisa Blunt-Bradley

President, Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League

### Kevin E. Carson\*

Superintendent, Woodbridge School District

### Ann C. Case

Policy Analyst, Delaware State Board of Education

### Jennifer W. Davis

Director, Delaware Office of Management and Budget

### Ernest J. Dianastasis

Managing Director, CAI

### Cynthia L. DiPinto\*

Wood, Byrd & Associates

### Nancy A. Doorey

Education Chair, Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League

### Susan Francis

Executive Director, Delaware School Boards Association

### Barbara Grogg

President, Delaware State Education Association

### Kevin Hall (ex officio)

Chief Operating Officer, The Broad Foundation

### Paul A. Herdman\*

President and CEO, Rodel Foundation of Delaware

### Dorothy R. Jacobson

Vice President, Rodel Foundation of Delaware

### Dennis L. Loftus

Director, Delaware Academy for School Leadership

### Tony J. Marchio

Superintendent, Appoquinimink School District

### Robert W. Rescigno

Vision Network Liaison  
Former Director, MBNA Foundation Scholars Program

### Daniel Rich\*

Provost, University of Delaware

### Jaime "Gus" Rivera

Director, Delaware Division of Public Health

### Marvin N. "Skip" Schoenhals\*

Chairman, WSFS Bank

### Dianne G. Sole

Superintendent, Polytech School District

### Robert G. Sutton

Senior Vice President, Bank of America

### John H. Taylor, Jr.\*

Executive Director, Delaware Public Policy Institute

### William M. Topkis

Delaware Small Business Alliance

### Howard Weinberg\*

Executive Director, Delaware State Education Association

### James A. Wolfe

President and CEO, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce

### Valerie A. Woodruff\*

Secretary, Delaware Department of Education

*\*Indicates member of the Vision 2015 Implementation Team*

## Generous supporters of Vision 2015 include:

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CAI  
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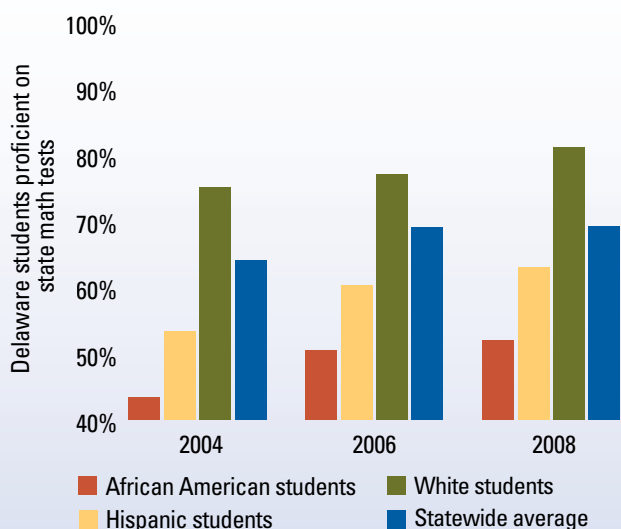
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WSFS Foundation

# VISION 2015 WHAT'S NEXT?

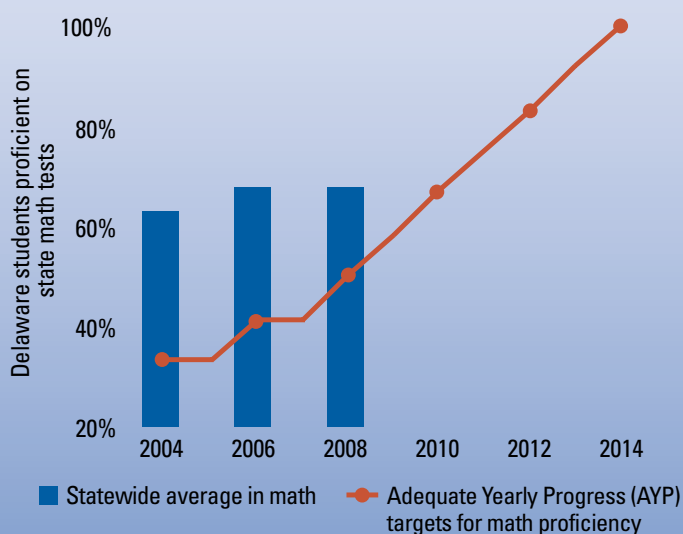
In the two years since Vision 2015 was launched, our state has made visible progress toward the goal of the best schools in the world for every Delaware student. Yet while we celebrate our progress, we must acknowledge that we have much more work to do. Our high school graduation rate remains unacceptably low. And we must close the achievement — and opportunity — gaps that threaten the futures of so many youth and compromise the ability of Delaware businesses and communities to thrive.

## More Work Ahead

**Achievement gaps leave too many students behind**



**We need to improve faster to meet higher targets**



Source: Based on Delaware Department of Education Data.

**In the coming year, our highest priorities are to work with policymakers and legislators to:**

- **Spend our education dollars smarter.** We need to put our limited resources where they are needed most. We will continue to work for the implementation of the LEAD Committee's Cost Efficiency Study, which identified up to \$158 million that can be put to better use each year to support student achievement. And we will work to improve how Delaware raises and allocates its education dollars to districts and schools, so that all students have the resources they need to meet the same high standards.
- **Focus on three essential areas** where smarter investments today will lay the foundation for continued improvements throughout the system:
  - ✓ **Expand the Vision Network of World-Class Schools:** We will work to deepen and expand intensive leadership training in the Vision Network of district and charter schools, focusing on increased innovation and flexibility in return for high student achievement.
  - ✓ **Eliminate the Preparation Gap:** We will work to increase the quality, resources, and training of early education providers and expand access to these programs to ensure that every child enters kindergarten well prepared to succeed in school.
  - ✓ **Recruit and Support High-Quality Teachers:** We will work to attract the best and brightest educators to the schools and subjects — such as math and science — where they are needed most, and we will work to strengthen and support our teachers with the highest-quality professional development throughout their careers.
- **Set high expectations for all students and hold ourselves accountable for results.** Ultimately all that matters is student success. We will work to ensure that each and every Delaware student graduates from high school ready for college and the workforce, and through the state's redesigned school profiles we will hold ourselves — and all our education partners — accountable for clearly established targets that improve every year.

We are at a critical point in our state's history. Like so much around us, our schools must evolve; our changing society demands it, our students deserve it. Now is the time for our political leaders, citizen advocates, and public and private sector champions to rally together on behalf of our children, our economy, and the health of Delaware's communities. ***Together we can make Vision 2015 a reality for every Delaware student.***