



IMAGINE...
the best schools
in the world
for every Delaware student
... no exceptions ...
no excuses ...
that's **VISION 2015**

October 2006

Vision 2015 demonstrates an unprecedented commitment by Delaware to address the most urgent issue of our time: securing a high-quality education for every child in the state. Led by a 28-person Steering Committee of Delaware’s education, business, government and community leaders, this is truly a collaborative effort.

We received extensive input from hundreds of teachers, principals, parents, students and members of the public from all across the state — including the nearly 80 members of our Work Groups, who helped to identify opportunities and clarify options for action. And our explorations took us around the globe, as we learned from many of the world’s finest school systems. This plan reflects the best thinking and best practices from inside and outside the state.

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The Steering Committee partnered with The Boston Consulting Group in the development of Vision 2015.



Contents

Reality Check	1
Our Commitment	2
School Days: Our Vision	6
Imagine Putting Students at the Center	8
1. Set Sights High	10
2. Invest in Early Childhood Education	12
3. Develop and Support High-Quality Teachers	14
4. Empower Principals To Lead	16
5. Encourage Innovation and Require Accountability	18
6. Establish a Simple and Equitable Funding System	20
Imagine How Far Delaware Can Go	22
Imagine All the Benefits from Our Investments	24
Turning Vision 2015 into a Reality for Delaware Students	25
What You Can Do	27
Endnotes	28
Acknowledgments	30

“ Do not confine your children to your own learning, for they were born in another time. ”

— *Proverb*



REALITY CHECK

As you read this report, remember these facts.

Students at all levels are **making gains** on the state's reading and mathematics tests, and over the past few years Delaware has had one of the nation's **highest rates of improvement** in elementary reading.

Despite these gains, Delaware's public education system remains in the **middle of the pack**. Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, we rank **8th** in spending,¹ but only **27th** in performance.²

As a country, the United States is improving, but **other nations are improving faster**. The United States ranks **in the top five** in education spending among industrialized countries,³ but only **26th** in mathematics achievement and **17th** in reading.⁴

Only about **one-third** of Delaware's high school graduates are really **prepared for college**, and only **2 in 10** whites and **1 in 10** African Americans and Hispanics will earn a two- or four-year college degree by their mid-20s.⁵

Only **1 in 4** Delaware students who are behind in mathematics in 3rd grade will catch up by 10th grade, meaning that **we lose many students forever** at a very young age.⁶

Over a lifetime, a high school graduate earns **\$600,000** more than a dropout. A college graduate earns **\$1.4 million** more.⁷

If we can raise the high school graduation rate from just over 60 percent to 90 percent for all students, and maintain college graduation rates, the **2,900** additional high school graduates from a single class year could earn over their lifetimes an additional **\$2.6 billion** that could be invested in Delaware's economy.⁸ And just as important, we can ensure that our students develop the skills, talents and interests that will serve them well as productive members of society.

BOTTOM LINE: Our schools have improved, but they are not yet good enough for the challenges of today and the future.

But we can change that. We must. And we will.

OUR COMMITMENT

We are a diverse group of leaders from education, business, government and community organizations who, after extensive discussion with hundreds of Delawareans, are united by a shared vision:

We must create the best public education system in the world for all Delaware students — one that respects the uniqueness of every child and enables all students to succeed.

What we learned from around the world

As part of our extensive research effort, we looked at several of the world's highest-performing school systems. Key lessons include:

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Principals control more than 90 percent of their operating budgets, placing decisions closest to the student, and the district offers a wide array of school choices to serve the diverse needs of students.

England: A three-phase improvement strategy — stronger standards and curriculum; major investments in improving teacher recruitment, training and pay; and expanded public-private partnerships — is yielding results.

Japan: The school year is 40 days longer, plus more than half the students at all levels spend more than two hours studying each night.

Victoria, Australia: The professional development of school teams is focused on delivering continuous improvements in student performance. A performance-based culture is emerging.¹⁰

THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGE OF OUR TIME ...

Although we approach this challenge from many different perspectives, we agree that providing an excellent education to each and every student is the economic and moral challenge of our time. Education has long been the gateway to opportunity, making possible the kind of wages that have allowed families to live the American Dream, with each generation more prosperous than the preceding one. For most of the past century, that dream has come true for many Delawareans.

America remains the world's strongest economy, but many other countries are gaining on us — and quickly. In the next five years, Asia will produce 90 percent of the world's new scientists,⁹ an increase that is stunning despite the region's vast population. We know that Delaware companies and employees already are competing head-to-head with their counterparts in Europe, Asia and the rest of the world and that this competition will only intensify.

Not surprisingly, these countries are focusing on their education systems to drive their success. Their standards are more rigorous. They respect their teachers and principals more highly. Their students work harder and go to school longer. Their systems are better organized. Their structures and rules are focused on performance. They have been willing to be bold and innovative to benefit their students and society. (See sidebar, "What we learned from around the world.")

Meanwhile, as this report describes, our students trail their international counterparts — and not just those from Germany and South Korea, but from Finland, Latvia, Poland and many other countries as well. Unless we accelerate progress, we risk dooming our children and our society to

a bleak future, stuck with a growing share of low-wage, low-opportunity jobs.

... AND THE MORAL CHALLENGE

The economic stakes could not be higher, but equally important are the moral stakes. For too long, too many of our citizens — notably low-income and minority families — have been denied the fruits of the American Dream. The fact that only 1 in 10 African American and Hispanic students earns a postsecondary degree is unconscionable. Too many families already have paid the price for our neglect, and the costs will only escalate unless we act decisively.

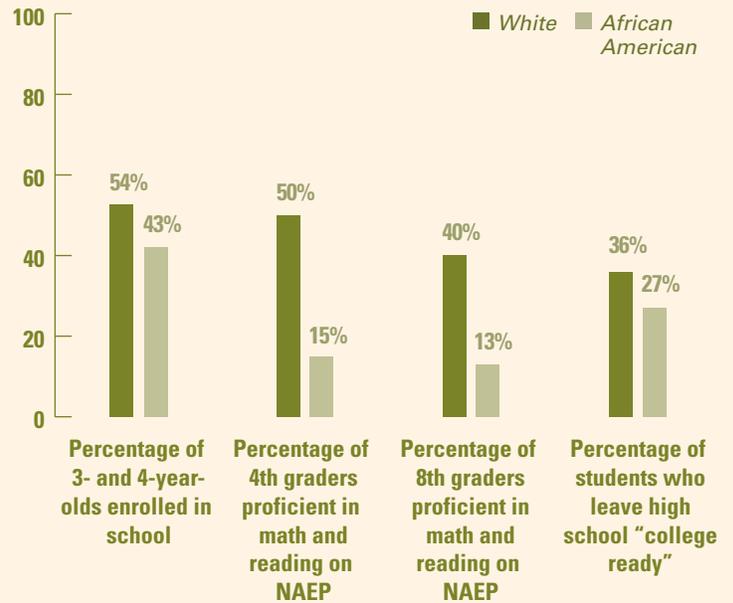
Who are we — as mothers and fathers, as grandparents, as citizens — if we let these gaps persist? Who are we as leaders if we do not stand up for excellence and equity — not just for our own children but for *all of Delaware's children*?

Many of us are members of the baby boom generation, which has been blessed with unparalleled prosperity. It is time for us to lay the foundation for similar prosperity for future generations.

Since 1776, through the Revolutionary and Civil wars, the Great Depression, two world wars, and the civil rights movement, every American generation has made it possible for its children to have better lives — with greater opportunity to pursue the American Dream. Will we be the first generation to violate this commitment?

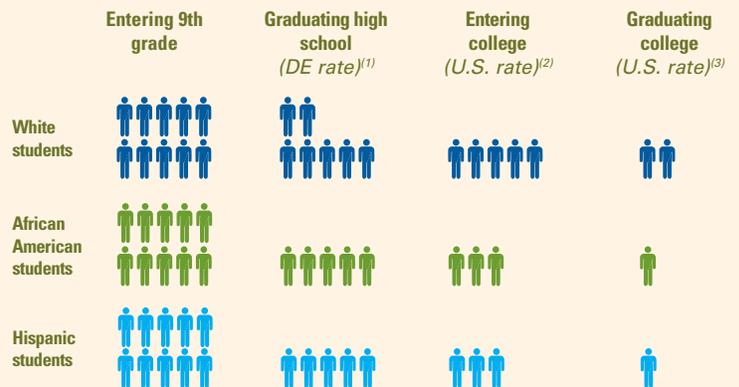
The work ahead will be hard. It will challenge many sacred cows. Some changes will be expensive, and we are calling for dramatic shifts in how we currently spend resources. But the costs are minimal compared with the cost of inaction.

Low Performance and Large Achievement Gaps in Delaware Start Early and Continue into College



Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2005 (small sample size); NIEER; NCES online National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Data Explorer; The College Board; Center for Civic Innovation, "Public High School Graduation and College-Readiness Rates: 1991-2002," 2005.

This Is *the* Economic and Civil Rights Issue of Our Generation



Only 1 in 10 minority students earns a postsecondary degree

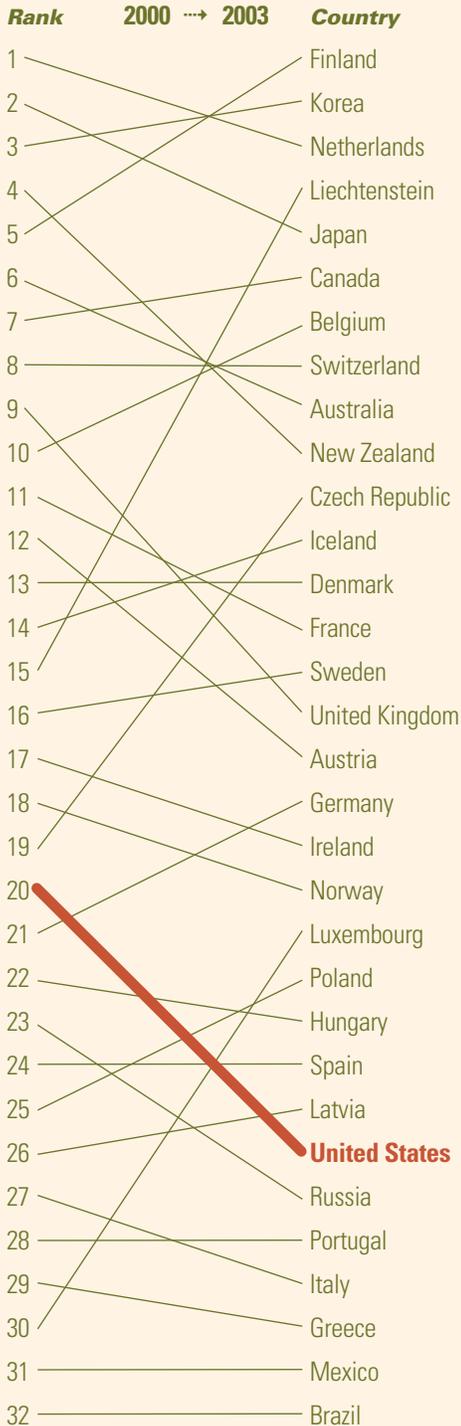
(1) Based on Delaware's 2002 calculated high school graduation rates (using the Cumulative Promotion Index).
 (2) Based on national college entrance rates.
 (3) Based on national college graduation rates, which allow six years for a four-year degree and three years for a two-year degree, and incorporating the following national two- and four-year program splits: attendance (white = 42%/58%, African American = 48%/52%, Hispanic = 59%/41%) and graduation rate (white = 34%/58%, African American = 27%/40%, Hispanic = 33%/46%).

Source: Editorial Projects in Education online Education Counts database, Postsecondary Education Opportunity research letter #132, "College Entrance Rates by Race/Ethnicity for Recent High School Graduates 1960-2002," 2003; NCES, "Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2004; Graduation Rates, 1998 & 2001 Cohorts; and Financial Statistics, Fiscal Year 2004," 2006.

The United States Is Performing Poorly Internationally

Low and declining U.S. performance in math — with similar declines in reading and science — on the PISA test, which is given to students in the United States and more than three dozen other countries

Mathematics



Source: NCES Digest of Educational Statistics, 2005; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), 2003.

WE MUST BE BOLD

Abraham Lincoln said it best 140 years ago: “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present.” Consider how fundamentally the world has changed. Compared to a decade ago, billions more people in other countries are now participating in the world economy, with fast-changing innovation driving global economic competition. Students are spending up to 10 percent of their waking hours online and will have three or four different careers during their lifetimes.¹¹ Students at America’s largest private university take most of their courses online. Google, not the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, has become the reference tool of choice for a new generation.

But educationally we are largely stuck in a time warp, “doing school” the way our parents and grandparents did. We use a nine-month calendar that originally was intended to free up students to work in the summer. And schools and learning schedules are based on a factory model that assumed most graduates were headed to life on the assembly line. Teacher pay is based on seniority, degrees and years of experience rather than levels of teaching effectiveness and success. Unnecessary rules and policies inhibit teachers, principals and families from providing students with the education they require. Too many of our buildings, labs, libraries and other facilities are aging and out of date. The structure of our system means that too many decisions are made too far from the individual student. Too many students have been neglected.

It is not that teachers, principals and others inside and outside the system are not working hard. They are. And we have made progress. The main problem is that our current system and structure were built for another time; we are still using the equivalent of vinyl records in an age of iPods.

WE CAN TRANSFORM EDUCATION

Delaware is fortunate. Compared to many other states, our challenges are manageable, our small size is an asset and our recent progress hints at what is possible. As the work of the Vision 2015 Steering Committee demonstrates, we can put aside our special, narrow interests in favor of the common good — the long-term success of all our children and our communities.

We have done our homework. The plan you are about to read is not a compilation of our collective musings and daydreams. It is the product of months of research, expert interviews, disciplined study, rigorous analysis, probing questions and consensus-building. We are confident

that the end result reflects the very best education practices in the world today.

We have addressed what we believe are the issues that will have the biggest impact on student achievement, while leaving others — such as whether we should consolidate our 19 school districts — for future consideration.

The Vision 2015 plan has come a long way in the past 11 months. But the real work lies ahead. The students of Delaware will benefit only if we use our collective ability to turn these recommendations into reality, year by year, school by school, classroom by classroom and student by student.

This agenda is the *smart* thing to do. And it is the *right* thing to do.

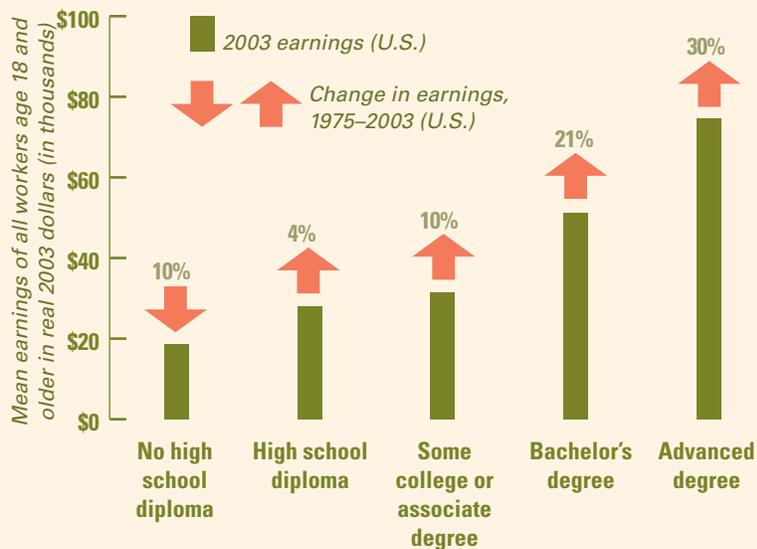
This plan is bold — pushing Delaware to the cutting edge of teacher professionalism, academic standards, equitable funding and high-quality schools. This plan has broad consensus, with the support of education, business and community leaders. This plan is holistic and coherent, not a grab bag of initiatives, but a carefully designed multipart agenda for real and lasting change.

Ambitious? Yes. Doable? Absolutely. But it will take courage, dedication, resolve and money from all who care about public education in Delaware. To envision what is possible in the next decade, think back 10 years ago: no Google, no eBay, no iPods, only a small fraction of the 45 trillion e-mails sent last year or the 195 million cell phone subscribers.

It is time to trade in our outdated, “one-size-fits-all” system for a much more creative approach that capitalizes on the opportunities of today’s world. We must build on recent progress, but where current approaches are not working, we must work boldly with educators and the community to create new ones. Our children deserve it. Our future demands it.

Please join us.

A High School Diploma Is No Longer Enough



Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics.

We listened

We used an inclusive process to develop the findings and recommendations at the core of this report. For one, the 28 members of the Steering Committee lead organizations that represent a broad cross-section of Delaware: education, business, government, community and civic interests. We supplemented our expertise with nearly 80 additional educators and community leaders who served on Work Groups during the research phase. Moreover, during winter and spring 2006, through one-on-one interviews, focus groups and town meetings, we talked face-to-face with more than 500 citizens around the state: current students, alumni, high school dropouts, teachers, principals, parents, school board members and legislators. Their views helped inform our recommendations.

We learned

With the financial support of the Rodel and Broad foundations, we hired The Boston Consulting Group (BCG), an international consulting firm with extensive experience in large-scale transformation efforts, including several ongoing efforts in public education in the United States and abroad. The BCG team worked with Delaware experts to assemble a comprehensive set of facts about the recent performance and current state of public education in Delaware. Additionally, they researched successful public school systems around the globe and interviewed education leaders from many of these systems. We also retained the international consulting group Cambridge Leadership Associates to facilitate meetings of the Steering Committee and Work Groups to maintain the needed focus on broad, systemic change, rather than incremental, technical “fixes.”

School Days: Our Vision

Sam is a high school student whose senior research project is an internship at a local environmental company. He spends several hours a week outside of class collecting and analyzing water samples from the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal as part of a team of researchers measuring the impact of runoff on the state's rivers and bays. He hopes to qualify for one of the company's college scholarships this year. The firm has made a major, long-term commitment to support young people in the community with financial aid, and it now sponsors parenting classes to help its parent employees become effective advocates for their children.

Sam considered attending two other high schools — one specializing in the arts, the other in science and technology. He chose this one because of its emphasis on project-based learning. He sometimes gets bored sitting at a desk for six hours a day.

After finishing his work in the lab, Sam will head back to school; he has an appointment at the school's medical clinic for a physical exam he needs for his summer job. From there, he'll need to spend an hour or so with his writing tutor, a part-time librarian who is volunteering as part of the community's expanded after-school writing program.

Sam probably will be at school until 7 or 8 that night. But that's okay. Some mornings his first class doesn't start until 11 because he's in the field, working on his research project. Sam's school has been trying much harder to treat older students like adults — to hold them to high standards, but give them plenty of encouragement, support and multiple pathways to reach the state's challenging new academic standards. Sam, once a struggling student, is looking forward to college but will miss high school. His younger sister, Alexandra, will have it even better when she starts 9th grade next year. Her school has added numerous online courses to connect Delaware students with teachers and students from around the world. Alexandra says she's going to take a class in which Chinese students help American students learn Chinese ... and vice versa.

her staff. Based largely on student and parent input, help from her mentor principal, and the last three years of test results, she has chosen to reorganize her teacher teams so that all newer teachers are paired with successful experienced teachers for their

What Sam doesn't know is how much happened and is continuing to happen behind the scenes to make his learning experience so challenging and engaging. For one, his principal, Ms. Hernandez, has the power to hire and organize

first two years. This helps cut down on teacher burnout and turnover. The experienced teachers also get a chance to expand their career horizons; about 15 percent of the teachers in Sam's school now serve as master teachers or

mentor teachers and receive significant annual bonuses for taking on these added responsibilities.

Ms. Hernandez also used her new flexibility to rethink an assistant principal position, and instead she hired two part-time specialists: a retired business executive, who manages the administrative paperwork and other back-office responsibilities that used to swamp Ms. Hernandez, and an internship coordinator, who identifies and oversees the community learning opportunities that a growing number of students, such as Sam, now choose to do during the school year.

Teachers like working under Ms. Hernandez' leadership. For one, she used to be a master teacher herself and moved up after attending a special new leadership academy, based on best practices. Her teaching background allows her to provide strong instructional support and comprehensive and fair evaluations. She has a lot more time to spend in classrooms with teachers now that someone else is handling all the paperwork, bus schedules and the like.

She has helped create the new regional training programs that allow teachers from multiple schools and districts to work

on shared challenges. Last year's priority for Sam's school was to ensure that all teachers know how to use the state's new assessment data bank — which gives them instant access to their students' test scores throughout the year so they can adjust their teaching. That way, each student gets extra help in areas of weakness and can move faster in areas of strength.

Sam also doesn't know that his school gets extra money because it serves a high proportion of students from high-poverty families, like his. Under a transparent and responsive state funding plan, money follows the individual student so that students with higher needs benefit from extra resources.

Finally, Sam does not know that his school is part of a system of schools that was transformed from middle of the pack to one of the best in the world, starting back in 2006. That's when his parents and other Delaware citizens rallied around an ambitious plan to provide a world-class education to each and every child. That plan was called Vision 2015.

And although specific programs have been adjusted since then in response to the changing needs of students, Vision 2015 continues to guide improvement efforts from Brandywine to Delmar.

IMAGINE PUTTING STUDENTS AT THE CENTER

One of the unique features of our plan is that it is coherent and comprehensive — with each set of solutions reinforcing the others.

Our new system starts with the individual student at the center. All policies and actions answer the central question: *How can we best tailor learning so that each student succeeds?* With students at the center, the main changes must occur closest to the student — in schools and classrooms.

That means **setting our sights high**, with challenging expectations for every child, coupled with high-quality curriculum and additional instructional time to give students a good shot at meeting the higher standards.

It means **investing in early childhood education**, targeting more resources to high-need children. We know that such experiences translate directly into long-term success.

It means **developing and supporting great teachers** in every classroom who are able to customize instruction to each and every child. We know that great teachers are the most important influence in producing high-achieving students.

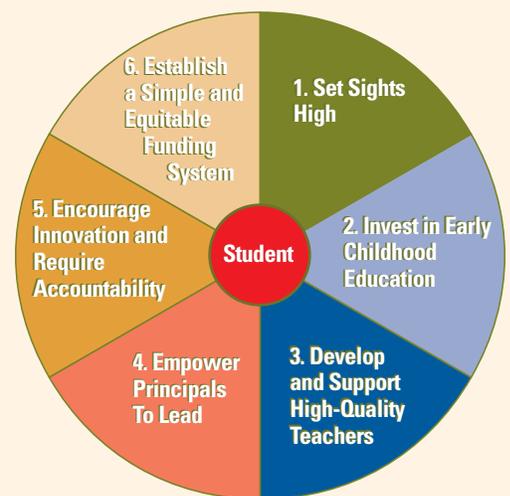
It means **empowering principals to be great school leaders** with enough knowledge, authority and flexibility to get results. We know that exceptional principals are needed to support effective teaching in every classroom.

It means **encouraging instructional innovation** because we know that one size does not fit all. It means **involving families** to support their children’s learning. And it means **requiring accountability**, so that all involved — teachers, principals, parents, administrators, business and community leaders, legislators, and students themselves — are clear about their own responsibility for improving achievement and are rewarded for doing so.

Finally, our student-centered approach means **establishing a simple and fair funding** system in which resources follow individual students and are allocated based on their needs. We know some students, whether struggling or accelerating, will need more resources than others.

These are the six building blocks on which our vision is based. Other systems have adopted one or more of these elements, but Delaware will be the first to address them in such a systemic and holistic way.

The Six Building Blocks on Which Vision 2015 Is Based



1. SET SIGHTS HIGH

The road to greatness must begin with high expectations for **all** of our students. Our graduates are not just competing with peers from other states. More and more, they are competing with graduates from countries like China, Germany, Russia and India who are motivated and well prepared.

WHY WE MUST ACT NOW

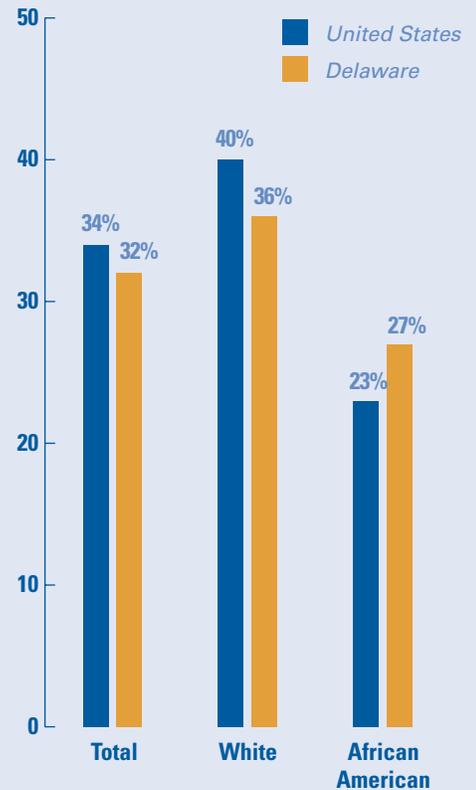
While Delaware's academic standards have improved, we have not yet benchmarked our standards against the best in the world. Moreover, our standards need to be updated to align with the real-world demands of college and work. Only five states have such standards. Only eight states have graduation requirements showing that students have taken rigorous courses such as Algebra II. Only six states have high school tests that are connected to college admission or placement requirements. And only four states hold high schools and colleges accountable for preparing their graduates for 21st-century success.¹² We can and must do better.

Until recently, Delaware had none of these policies. But the State Board of Education just approved new graduation requirements, and the state has joined the American Diploma Project, a 26-state network that is committed to improvements in all of these areas. More good news: We know students, parents and teachers rise to the challenge. States and districts that have raised their standards have seen strong and steady gains in achievement, even by once-struggling students.

We know students will need additional time to meet these higher goals. Compared to high-performing systems, Delaware students do not spend enough time focused on academics — partly because of increased noninstructional demands, partly because of an obsolete nine-month, 180-day school year. Students in many other countries spend more time in school on academic subjects. Here in the United States, we have similar examples, including the KIPP Academies,

Delaware Lags Nation in College Preparedness Ranks 32nd in "College Readiness"*

Percentage of students leaving high school "college ready," 2002



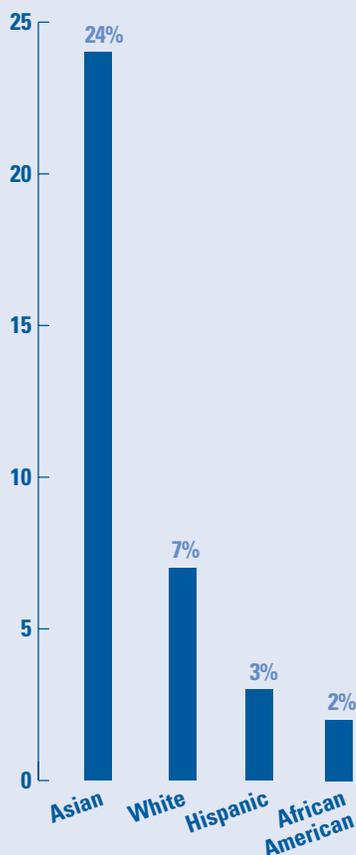
Source: Center for Civic Innovation, "Public High School Graduation and College-Readiness Rates: 1991–2002," 2005.

* Calculated using high school graduation rates, the strength of the high school curriculum and the level of student literacy.

1 The ranking Delaware citizens give solid curriculum standards and more time in school when asked to select the state's highest education priority¹³

Wide Variation in Delaware Advanced Placement Participation that Reflects and Reinforces Achievement Gaps

Percentage of Delaware high school students taking at least one Advanced Placement exam, which gives college credit to high-performing students, 2004



Source: The College Board.

588 The number of extra educational hours a year that South Korean students spend compared to American students¹⁶

82 The percentage of U.S. college students who say they would have worked harder if they had been challenged more in high school¹⁷

one of the nation's most successful school networks, which are open from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and Saturday mornings, with several weeks of mandatory summer school. This helps explain why achievement at KIPP schools has soared.¹⁴ We also can better leverage technology to enable more individualized instruction. In Florida, some 31,000 students now can access their coursework online around the clock; students and parents alike say the learning is better.¹⁵

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

- ✓ Make sure **our standards are as challenging** as those that the highest-performing countries expect their students to meet. Review the standards regularly for relevance and rigor.
- ✓ Establish and electronically distribute **research-based statewide curricula**.
- ✓ Ensure that **all schools use this curricula** and a variety of learning tools to enable their students to meet the standards. Some high-performing schools **may opt out** and use their own approaches.
- ✓ Align content-specific **teaching tools** (diagnostic assessments, model lessons, pacing guides, etc.) and **classroom-based professional coaching** so teachers get the support they need to deliver high-quality instruction to every student.
- ✓ Implement **assessments that measure individual student gains over time**, including fall-to-spring progress. Make sure tests are offered online as well as in traditional form and are tightly aligned with the state's academic standards.
- ✓ Require state funding for **140 additional school hours** a year (from 1,060 to 1,200 total hours). Guide districts and schools in how to use this additional academic time to meet the needs of their students.
- ✓ Implement the state's **stronger graduation requirements** that prepare all students for college or good jobs, the kind that can support a family.
- ✓ Expand **distance learning** to allow true 24/7 online learning opportunities.

WE ALL BENEFIT

With high standards, strong graduation requirements and extra academic time, our students will be able to compete more effectively for the opportunities of the future. Certainly, we also will have to take the steps outlined in the following chapters to ensure that our students can meet those standards, but having the right goals is the necessary first step. With the added instructional hours, some students will spend more time in traditional classrooms, others will learn on the job or through community service, and still others will take advantage of the Internet to learn online. Educators also will benefit by receiving the subject-specific tools and training to help them meet every student's needs.

2. INVEST IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

We must ensure a strong early start for all our students. It is not surprising that studies show that attending preschool helps more children enter kindergarten ready to learn and leads to long-term educational success, such as increased high school graduation rates and college attendance. The impact of this is particularly strong for children from low-income backgrounds.

WHY WE MUST ACT NOW

Participation in Delaware early childhood education programs is high compared to most states. In 2004, 50 percent of our 3- and 4-year-old children were enrolled in preschool — the ninth-highest participation rate in the nation.¹⁸ Delaware's subsidized prekindergarten programs serve about 95 percent of 4-year-olds in poverty.¹⁹ We also have an early intervention program for very young (birth to age 3) children with disabilities and local, district-operated programs for 3- and 4-year-old children with mild disabilities.

Yet most child care providers have not received high-quality preparation. Only about 27 percent of child care providers have earned a postsecondary degree, and just 12 percent have a degree in early childhood education or a related field.²⁰ We need to improve the quality and accountability of prekindergarten programs for all children through greater professionalization and accountability. And we need to extend targeted supports to children below the official poverty line and those struggling just above it.

5 The percentage of Delaware children under age 5 enrolled in nationally accredited preschool programs²¹

27 The percentage of Delaware child care providers with a college degree²²

12 The percentage of Delaware child care providers with a degree in early childhood education or a related field²³

\$9.28 The average hourly wage of an early childhood care provider in Delaware²⁴

Prekindergarten Provides Long-Term Advantages

Abecedarian Project academic results:
National Early Childhood Intervention
Project, 1972–1985

- Low-income students who attended prekindergarten
- Low-income students who did not attend prekindergarten

Needed special education



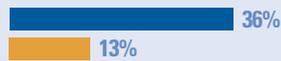
Repeated grades



Graduated from high school



Attended four-year college



Source: NIEER, "The Effects of State Prekindergarten Programs on Young Children's School Readiness in Five States," December 2005; NIEER, "Research and Benefits of Preschool Education: Securing High Returns from Preschool for All Children," January 2006; Abecedarian Project.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

- ✓ **Expand the scope of state support for early childhood education** by providing tuition subsidies for all 3- and 4-year-olds from low-income families (families within 200 percent of the poverty line).
- ✓ Require all providers to participate in the **Delaware Stars for Early Success Program**. Over time, provide state subsidies only for programs that achieve high ratings.
- ✓ Improve the quality of early childhood education by mandating **annual license renewals** for all early child care and education providers.
- ✓ Support the **professional development** of early education staff.
- ✓ Build data systems to enable prekindergarten and K–12 programs to **share information seamlessly** and track the educational progress of students.
- ✓ Encourage **greater coordination of services** across agencies for children from birth to age 3.

WE ALL BENEFIT

With these changes, younger students will have the benefit of quality preschool that will help prepare them socially and academically for kindergarten and beyond.

Many families believe the education "race" begins at age 5 or 6 when children enter kindergarten. The reality is that students who enter kindergarten unprepared are frequently two or three years behind their peers,²⁵ and many never catch up. If we want to dramatically increase the percentage of children ready to enter college or the workplace, we need to ensure that all children have a fair start.

3. DEVELOP AND SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS

The research is clear, compelling and not surprising: Students with good teachers do well in school. This is true for all students, regardless of race, income or other characteristics.

WHY WE MUST ACT NOW

We need to do more to attract and retain the best teachers by creating a more professional environment — including relevant professional development, constructive evaluations, an opportunity to work with colleagues and less red tape that distracts from quality instruction.

Many of our best teachers say their training often lacks continuity and follow-up support and is not customized to meet their individual needs. Evaluations seldom produce actionable recommendations. Our teachers have few opportunities to work with each other or to advance their careers, unless they want to leave the classroom and become administrators. Pay is based mainly on seniority, not on a teacher's ability to raise student achievement or mentor younger colleagues.

We also have challenges hiring and retaining great teachers. As a nation, fewer of our most talented young people are entering the teaching profession, and almost 50 percent of new teachers leave within the first five years.²⁶

Historically, Delaware districts have hired the majority of new teachers near or after the start of school and well after top prospects have accepted positions elsewhere. Even with significant improvement in recent years, in 2005, more than 40 percent of new teachers were hired in August or later. Teacher pay in Delaware is above the national average, but it remains low compared to other salaries in our state and nearby counties in other states.²⁷ And while more states now provide

2,300 The approximate number of new teachers Delaware will have to hire in the next 10 years to compensate for retirements²⁸

8 Delaware's national rank in average starting teacher salary (2003–04)²⁹

35 Delaware's national rank in average starting teacher salary as a percentage of the average salary in the state³⁰

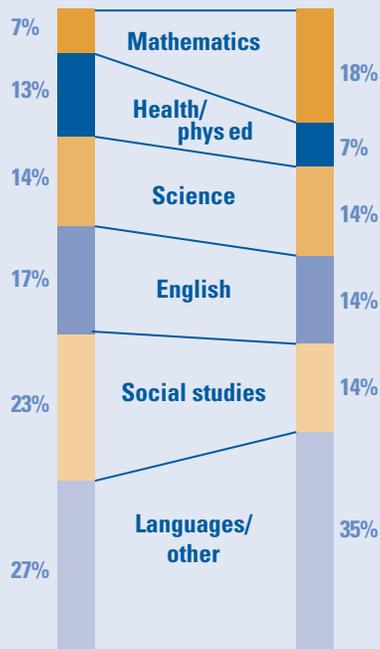
46 The percentage of new U.S. teachers who leave teaching within their first five years³¹

0 The amount Delaware pays as signing or retention bonuses for teachers who agree to teach in high-need subjects (math, science, etc.) or low-performing schools³²

11 The number of other states that tie part of a teacher's evaluation and compensation to student achievement or improvement³³

Current Mismatch between Subject Needs and Supply of New Teachers in Delaware, Particularly in Mathematics

Teachers' majors versus typical high school course distribution, 2005*



University of Delaware secondary/middle education graduates, 2005

"Typical" high school credit requirements

Source: Delaware Teacher Supply Survey Analysis, University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration, 2006; Caesar Rodney High School Web site.

*Totals do not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Successful Models

Encouragingly, school districts in cities such as **Chattanooga, TN**, and **Edmonton, Alberta, Canada**, and systems in countries such as **England, Japan** and **South Korea** have totally transformed their approach to training and career development. Not coincidentally, both student performance and teacher satisfaction are strong and rising in these places.

incentives for teaching certain subjects, such as mathematics and science, or teaching in high-need, low-performing schools, Delaware does not.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

- ✓ **Treat teachers as professionals with increased pay and a new career path**, whereby salary advancement and career opportunities are based on performance according to clear standards, rather than years of service and degrees. Performance measures should take into account gains in student achievement. Link both pay and advancement to progress along the career path, which includes positions such as mentor and master teacher.
- ✓ Move to a negotiated **statewide teacher salary structure** to reduce inequities across the state. Provide **incentives** to attract teachers to high-need subjects and high-need schools. Give **bonuses** for strong school performance.
- ✓ Clearly **define what it means to be an outstanding teacher**. **Revise the formal evaluation process** to measure teacher progress against this standard. Include measures of gains in student achievement, student and parent feedback, and skills as observed by trained in-class evaluators. Ensure that the evaluation process provides teachers with **specific and actionable feedback** on ways to improve.
- ✓ Significantly increase **in-classroom coaching and mentoring** to replace isolated professional development workshops. Closely align coaching with the state's curriculum and individual teachers' needs.
- ✓ Strengthen higher education's **teacher preparation and professional development programs** to help fulfill Vision 2015's commitment to having the highest-quality teachers and leaders in every school.
- ✓ Establish **professional development centers** to allow teachers and principals to share best practices.
- ✓ Use a **creative new statewide approach to hire teachers earlier and recruit and train** an expanded pool of teachers from multiple sources, strengthening district efforts and targeting high-need areas and subjects.
- ✓ Create incentives and supports for schools to **help new teachers succeed**: realistic course loads, class sizes and assignments.

WE ALL BENEFIT

With changes such as these, students will be the primary beneficiaries. All students, including those in schools that traditionally have been low performing, will receive engaging instruction from teachers who know their subjects well. Teachers will find professional development more relevant, and they can advance without having to leave the classroom and move into administration. In systems where these changes have taken root, teachers are among the strongest champions of reform.

4. EMPOWER PRINCIPALS TO LEAD

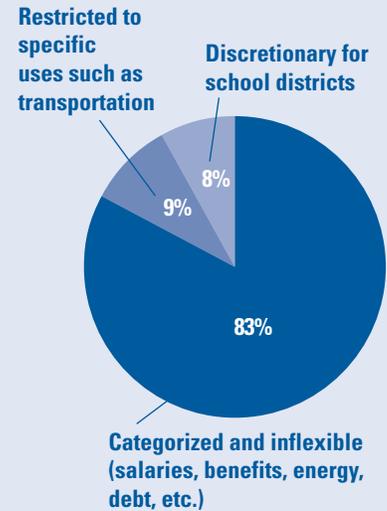
Principals must have the authority, resources and know-how to meet the individual learning needs of each child. Rules and regulations from central administration or the state do not produce the results we need. Fortunately, some of the highest-performing school systems in the world show what can happen when principals are empowered to give teachers the ongoing classroom support they need to teach their children well — and are held accountable for their results.

WHY WE MUST ACT NOW

Principals believe that their most important role is that of **instructional leader**, but most spend so much of their time managing a hodgepodge of other activities — such as day-to-day building operations — that their ability to provide valuable leadership and guidance is often compromised. Principals must be accountable for the performance of their school and given authority over the key elements of their school: **people, resources and time**. Greater flexibility will further enable principals to work collaboratively with their school teams to use resources so they best meet the highest educational standards.

Access to timely and more detailed information about student performance would help principals and their staffs target interventions more precisely. Delaware's testing system, although it has many strengths, is limited; for instance, it does not measure individual gains in student performance from fall to spring, and results come back too late in the

Most State Funds Are Restricted to Specific Uses in Delaware



Source: Delaware Department of Education, "Education Statistics," 2003–04.

Delaware Principals: A Hodgepodge of Responsibilities

"At the beginning of the day, I have a list of 10 things to do. At the end of the day, I've done a ton but still haven't gotten through number two."

— Delaware principal

"Sometimes I see my role as just running interference so all the rest of the staff can focus on instruction."

— Delaware principal

"I want to spend time on helping improve instruction, but in the end, I probably spend one-tenth of what I should."

— Delaware principal

Source: Principal focus groups, March 2006.

68 The percentage of Delaware principals likely to retire in the next 10 years³⁴

15 The percentage of principals in Delaware from an ethnic minority, compared to 43 percent of our students³⁵

Strong School Leaders for Delaware

Over the next decade, more than half of our schools will hire new principals, who will serve as instructional and administrative leaders. We are building the pipeline for these leaders today through the work of the **State Action for Education Leadership Project, the Delaware Academy for School Leadership and the Delaware Leadership Institute**. Together, these programs will ensure a dynamic leader for every school in Delaware.

year to help teachers modify their instruction. Just as troubling, principals are stifled by a federally mandated accountability system that is based largely on compliance, rather than one that is focused laserlike on student results.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

- ✓ **Give skilled principals broader control of decision-making related to people, resources and time**, and in return, hold them accountable for student achievement and the performance of their school.
- ✓ Allow school leaders to choose among **approved providers of educational services**.
- ✓ Establish a **statewide leadership academy** to serve as a one-stop center for world-class principal recruitment, retention, induction and professional development programs.
- ✓ Create a **statewide base salary schedule** for principals, with **significant performance bonuses** tied to the achievement of goals as measured on a standardized principal scorecard.
- ✓ **Provide the technology** that principals and their school teams need to improve instruction, strengthen management and raise student achievement. Create a single, user-friendly centralized data bank, which includes student performance, human resources and financial data from across the state.
- ✓ Make appropriate **information instantly accessible** to all users: principals, teachers, parents, students, state and district-level administrators, school boards, and the general public.

WE ALL BENEFIT

With changes such as these, principals will receive the high-quality training that will help them become more innovative and effective. This approach recognizes that, just as different students have different needs, different schools can have different strategies for improving student achievement. Under such a flexible system, principals will have the authority and responsibility to act. And they will have timely and in-depth student assessment data and other information that will allow them to act intelligently. Such a system will help Delaware attract and keep the most dynamic school leaders in the country.

5. ENCOURAGE INNOVATION AND REQUIRE ACCOUNTABILITY

Enabling parents, students and teachers to choose the best school for them will help all students reach the same high standards. All of us — including families, legislators, businesses and the public — share responsibility and must be accountable for academic success.

WHY WE MUST ACT NOW

Meeting the diverse interests and learning needs of Delaware's nearly 124,000 students requires creating multiple options; one size does not fit all. This is especially important at the high school level, where lack of engagement is a major contributor to the dropout crisis.

We can meet individual students' interests and needs in many dynamic, relevant and entrepreneurial ways, including through the creation of new district schools and the conversion of other schools to magnets and charters.

Instructional options must be paired with better information about these choices. We must empower families with the knowledge, skills and confidence to be full partners in their children's education. The business of learning cannot be the responsibility of educators alone. Schools and families must support one another. Businesses and local community groups must increase their involvement, for example, through internships and school-based programs.

A results-based system changes the focus and redefines roles for policymakers, school boards, superintendents, principals, teachers, families, community groups and businesses alike. Today, responsibilities are not always clear, and there are few rewards for success or

81 The percentage of U.S. students who say they want more opportunities for real-world learning³⁶

33 The percentage of Delaware students exercising choice (charter, 6 percent; interdistrict transfers, 13 percent; intradistrict transfers, 9 percent; vocational, 5 percent)³⁷

0 The number of Delaware schools in 2005–06 offering Mandarin, one of the world's fastest-growing languages³⁸

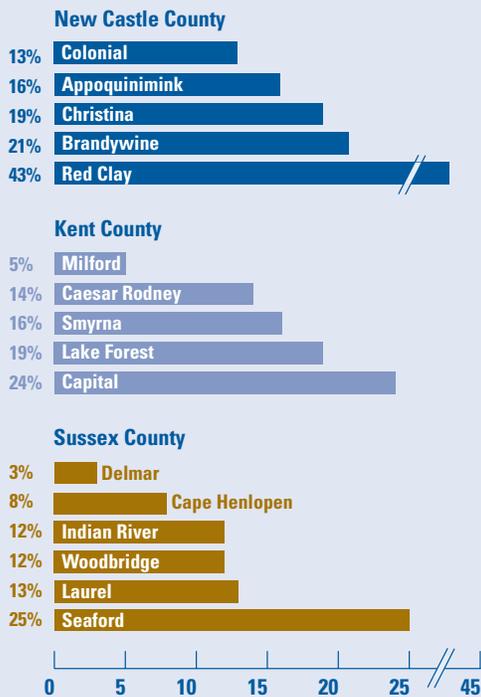
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, one of the best-performing districts in the world, allows parents and students to choose among many unique learning programs. For example, there are more than a dozen Chinese bilingual and French immersion schools among the district's 200 schools. Other schools offer flexible scheduling for high-level athletes.

All schools must ensure that their students reach the same academic standards, and they are held accountable for their results. Poor performers are shut down. In Edmonton, 41 percent of elementary school students, 48 percent of junior high school students and 58 percent of high school students attend a school other than their neighborhood school.

Best of all, the vast majority of these students aren't escaping a poor-performing local school; they and their families are choosing a school that suits their interests, talents and needs.

Limited Set of Options in Southern and Rural Delaware

Percentage of students attending schools of their choice,* by district, 2004–05.



Source: Delaware School Profiles, Delaware Department of Education.

*Policies regarding how choice is exercised vary by district. Figures include charter, interdistrict and intradistrict choice. Vocational schools, which are 100 percent choice, are not included.

Families as Partners

Parents, the public and educators agree that a top priority for improving schools — many say *the* top priority — is to encourage more family involvement. Research studies have documented benefits at every level. As part of our commitment to support stronger school-family ties, we envision multiple actions across the state, including:

- Annual performance pledges signed by the parent/guardian, teacher and student.
- A tool box for each family, with age-appropriate information to help families support student learning at home.
- Increased training for families and educators.
- Expansion of the FAST (Families and Schools Together) program to support parents of at-risk children.

Beyond these specific tools, our strategy will require changed mindsets — for educators to be more welcoming and for family members to be more willing to participate.

consequences for failure. And struggling schools do not always receive the expert assistance they need.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

Giving principals and teachers power over their own programs is an important first step. In addition, we should:

- ✓ Offer **leadership and advocacy training** to families and institute school-based family liaisons to strengthen school-family ties.
- ✓ Strengthen **online tools and outreach programs to inform parents** about their children’s progress and school’s academic standards and to help families reinforce classroom learning at home.
- ✓ Create a **statewide Office of Innovation** to disseminate best practices and new programs to schools and communities where these innovations can be most effective.
- ✓ Appoint an **“equity advocate,”** working within the Office of Innovation, to ensure that the special needs of students and communities are identified and matched with effective resources and programs.
- ✓ Create a pool of funds to strengthen **school-community and school-business partnerships** to provide students with the necessary supports.
- ✓ **Define what it means to be a world-class school.** Use a common scorecard measuring individual student achievement gains over time, student engagement and retention, family-school interactions, fiscal accountability, and “customer satisfaction” among students, parents and teachers.
- ✓ Establish a **stronger school accountability system, increasing focus on student achievement, not just compliance** with state and federal regulations.
- ✓ Use teams of experienced educators and parents to conduct regular **on-site reviews of all schools**, evaluating lower-performing schools more frequently. And create **“school improvement teams”** to help principals, teachers and parents rapidly improve low-performing schools.
- ✓ Identify and provide funding to **start and replicate best practice schools that work.**
- ✓ **Clearly define effective family and community engagement** and determine how it can be measured.

WE ALL BENEFIT

With changes like these, students can choose a program that is relevant and engaging, and families will have more ownership. Teachers and principals, too, will have greater flexibility to follow their academic passions. Schools, especially those that are struggling, can expect timely and focused assistance. Vibrant innovation, increased outreach to families and clear accountability for results will offer a potent recipe for success.

6. ESTABLISH A SIMPLE AND EQUITABLE FUNDING SYSTEM

Educating all students to high, world-class standards will require that we rethink how education funds are raised and spent. Some programs will require additional resources. Also, we must redirect millions of dollars in current spending into more productive uses.

WHY WE MUST ACT NOW

Delaware ranks eighth nationally in education spending per student, but only 25th in the percentage of money spent on instruction (books, teacher salaries and similar expenses).³⁹ Although the variation in funding across districts is relatively small compared to other states, Delaware's highest-funded district spends up to 45 percent more per pupil than its lowest-funded district.⁴⁰

Funding for schools is driven in large part by the number of students enrolled in a school, rather than the specific needs of that school's students. Additionally, because teachers' salaries increase with education and experience, resources for schools can vary widely based on where more experienced teachers serve. As a result, schools with high percentages of low-income or special education students do not always get the resources they need.

Virtually all state funds come with strings attached. District superintendents can choose how to spend only 8 percent of state funds, with the rest earmarked for specific efforts. School principals receive zero discretionary funds from the state.⁴¹ If we believe that the best decisions are made closest to the student, this current structure must change.

8 Delaware's national ranking in total spending per student (\$9,472 per student in 2003)⁴²

25 Delaware's national ranking in the percentage of total spending going to actual instruction (2000)⁴³

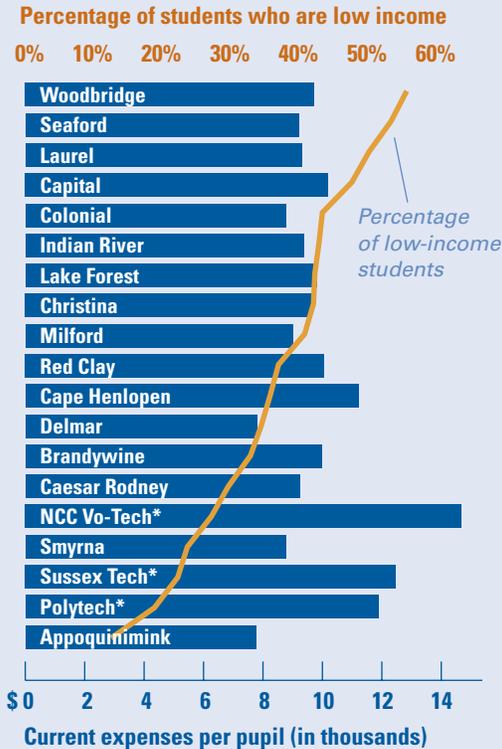
0 The amount of extra state funding for Delaware students in poverty⁴⁴

1 The amount in millions of dollars that Delaware has spent annually for English language learners (ELLs) from 2000 to 2005, despite a doubling of Delaware's ELL student population⁴⁵

45 The percentage difference in per-pupil spending between Delaware's highest-funded district and lowest-funded district⁴⁶

State Funds Are Not Necessarily Directed to Delaware Districts with the Highest Need

For example, Woodbridge, where nearly 60 percent of the students are low income, spends about the same per pupil as Christina, where about 40 percent of students are low income.



Source: Delaware Department of Education, "Education Statistics."

* Per-pupil revenues to vocational districts are higher than those of other districts due to facility and equipment needs.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

- ✓ Create a **weighted student funding formula** to provide different funding for students with different needs. Students who need more support to meet the standards (such as special education students, low-income students and English language learners) should receive additional funding. We also must recognize the special needs of the gifted and talented so that changes to our system benefit each and every child, compromising no one.
- ✓ Distribute these funds directly to districts and schools, giving **principals flexibility** in how these funds are spent, along with accountability for results.
- ✓ **Set the state share of education funding** high enough so that schools do not need to rely on local funding referenda to educate all students to Vision 2015 standards.
- ✓ Set **statewide salary bands**, linked to the new career path. This will provide flexibility at the school level and help ensure that all districts can attract and adequately compensate high-quality teachers and principals, thus increasing the quality of instruction statewide.
- ✓ Ensure that budget information is **transparent, understandable and readily available** to all interested parties, from principals to taxpayers.
- ✓ Engage in a **careful analysis** of how our current education dollars could be spent more effectively or allocated differently.
- ✓ Use a common scorecard to **hold schools and districts accountable** for the academic results of their spending choices.

WE ALL BENEFIT

These changes will help us become a system driven by results, not compliance, with a tighter focus on *how* money is spent, not just on *how much* money is spent. We know that some investments, such as early childhood education and quality support for teachers, have higher payoffs than others; Vision 2015 will allow us to target funding most effectively. These changes also will allow us to provide additional resources to those who need them most, including students with special needs, who do not speak English, who start school two or three years behind, or who have special talents. Giving principals additional spending flexibility will enable them to target resources where they can make the most difference. And giving everyone inside and outside the schools access to timely and understandable budget information will encourage a new level of openness and accountability.

IMAGINE HOW FAR DELAWARE CAN GO

Through Vision 2015, Delaware can leapfrog to the head of the class in providing an excellent education to every child. When we succeed, our system of schools will be the best in the United States and rival the best in the world. Our approach is transformational in several respects.



BOLD AND COMPREHENSIVE

If our plan is implemented as designed, Delaware will be at the forefront nationally and internationally.

- ✓ **Academic standards** — our standards will be among the first in the United States to be benchmarked against the world's best ... and we will provide extra time for students to meet these standards.
- ✓ **Early childhood education** — our system will be among the most comprehensive globally.
- ✓ **Family involvement and community partnerships** — we will join leading states to systematically empower parents to be advocates for their children's success and to build strong community and business partnerships.
- ✓ **Teacher professionalism** — we will be the first state to create a true teacher career path based on a teacher's skills and performance.
- ✓ **Empowerment of school leaders and teachers** — we will be one of the first systems in the world to let those closest to the student make the key decisions.
- ✓ **Simple and fair funding** — we will be the first state to adopt a funding system based on the needs of individual students, while protecting the opportunity for all children to succeed.
- ✓ **Assessments and accountability** — we will be one of the first states to use year-to-year gains in individual student performance as the cornerstone of our accountability system.
- ✓ **A system of high-performing schools** — we will be the first state to use a statewide approach to replicate high-performing schools.

BASED ON BROAD CONSENSUS

Other states have champions inside the system who are pushing for reform, or they have business and community leaders pushing from the outside. In Delaware, we have a coalition of those inside and outside the system galvanized around a common vision of world-class excellence. We have set our sights on the changes that will benefit students the most, putting them at the center of our plan.

COHERENT

This plan is not a collection of the latest education silver bullets. This is a comprehensive, integrated plan for creating a fundamentally new culture in education — a culture focused on results and centered around attracting and supporting the very best teachers and principals. It is the product of detailed analysis and extensive research both within and outside Delaware. It builds on our recent gains, but where necessary it calls for new approaches so that we can accelerate progress.

We have made a conscious effort to integrate our strategies into a coherent whole. For example, we cannot raise standards without also providing more instructional time and better early childhood education ... we cannot give principals and teachers more power over what happens in their schools and classrooms without first training them well ... and we cannot use student performance data to evaluate educators unless we design a fair student assessment system based largely on fall-to-spring and year-to-year improvement. All the various interventions reinforce each other.

Many of these changes will be hard, and most will challenge the status quo. But we know that we must be bold, comprehensive and coherent in our approach. If we seek dramatic improvements in the results for our children and state, we must be equally bold with our actions to enable these changes.

Our children deserve and demand no less.

Will you join us in this work?

IMAGINE ALL THE BENEFITS FROM OUR INVESTMENTS

Some of these initiatives will be costly, especially providing more and better preschool learning opportunities to more children, increasing instructional time, and paying teachers and principals differently. Just as important, we know that our system must change the incentives we offer, the accountability we require and the ways that we spend to be more efficient and effective.

If we do this, we know that there are extraordinary benefits for our students, families, communities and society — both social and economic.

On average, every additional student who graduates from high school ...

Generates an additional **\$600,000** in lifetime earnings and contributes **\$50,000** more in state and local taxes than a high school dropout.

And saves society **\$41,000** in Medicaid costs and **\$25,000** in prison costs.

On average, every additional student who graduates from high school *and* from college ...

Generates an additional **\$1.4 million** in lifetime earnings and contributes **\$120,000** more in state and local taxes than a high school dropout.

And saves society **\$71,000** in Medicaid costs and **\$34,000** in prison costs.⁴⁷

BOTTOM LINE: For every \$1 we invest in better education, the citizens of Delaware can expect an extraordinary return. Keeping all of our students engaged and excited about their education leads to healthy communities and productive citizens.

Can we afford *not* to make this investment?

TURNING VISION 2015 INTO A REALITY FOR DELAWARE STUDENTS

The recommendations in this report cannot be implemented at the flip of a switch. They will require significant changes in policies and practice — from the capitol to the classroom. We intend to implement our action plan in phases over the next several years. At this point, we envision the following:

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

In the coming weeks and months, we will talk directly to as many Delawareans as possible, to help them understand what Vision 2015 will mean to them, to their families and to our state — and to enlist their support going forward.

We will work closely with our public officials, in Dover and throughout the state, to make Vision 2015 a reality. We also will seek private investment in our initiatives from national and local foundations and businesses; we are greatly encouraged that many have been following our work closely, and we now hope to turn their interest into tangible support.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Because building the capacity of school leaders to transform their schools is so central to Vision 2015, much of our early work will focus on the training and recruiting of principals and teachers. Stronger standards, curricula, assessments and data systems are other important cornerstones of our plan and another early priority. Once this solid foundation is in place, we will be able to implement the many other key aspects of our plan all across the state.

In the meantime, we will be inviting interested school districts to join the Vision 2015 network and to adopt the complete set of Vision 2015 recommendations. We anticipate beginning the process of selecting and starting “Vision” districts and schools in 2007. These models will help pave the way for every other district and school in the state.

Finally, to advance the goals of Vision 2015 and support our Vision districts and schools, we will establish the Delaware Public Education Partnership. This coalition of education, government, business and community organizations will help mobilize broad public support for transforming our schools, will hold public and private leaders accountable for such a transformation, and will ensure that the Vision districts and schools receive the resources and support they need to succeed.

MEASURING OUTCOMES

We will know we are successful when more and more of our young people leave our schools ready for life. In the meantime, as we redesign the system over the next three to five years, we will track performance indicators at key times in the life of a child, from preschool to postsecondary education. Because we aspire for Delaware to have a *world-class* system, we will compare our performance not

only against our past, but also against the performance of other states and countries. In addition, although student success is our primary aspiration, because the public education system should be accountable to its owners — Delaware taxpayers — we will develop indicators to track how effectively money is being spent. For the same reason, we also will measure the satisfaction of the system’s employees and customers (parents and students).

We will combine these measures in a concise scorecard, which will be published annually to ensure that Delawareans can see both our successes and areas for improvement.

By making the changes and investments we’ve described in this document, imagine tangible outcomes such as the following ...

Today, just **4 out of 10** low-income 3- and 4-year-olds are enrolled in high-quality prekindergarten programs.

✓ By 2010, **6 out of 10** will be.

✓ By 2015, **10 out of 10** will be.

Today, in both mathematics and reading, only **30 percent** of Delaware 8th graders score “proficient” or “advanced” on NAEP, a test given to students across the United States. On both tests, Delaware ranks **27th** among U.S. states.

✓ By 2010, **35 percent** will be proficient or advanced, and we will rank in the **top 20**.

✓ By 2015, **60 percent** will be proficient or advanced, **100 percent** will be above “basic” and we will rank in the **top 5**.

Today, the achievement gap in mathematics proficiency between African American and white 8th graders as measured by NAEP is **27 percentage points**.

✓ By 2010, we will reduce the gap to **18 points**.

✓ By 2015, we will reduce the gap to **0 points**.

Today, just **63 percent** of students graduate high school in Delaware.

✓ By 2010, **70 percent** will.

✓ By 2015, more than **90 percent** will.

When we see outcomes such as these, we will know we are succeeding. In the meantime, it is our challenge and imperative to start the changes needed to get us there.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Vision 2015 is the result of a broad collaboration among educators, community leaders and business executives, and we benefited enormously from the perspectives and involvement of hundreds of citizens throughout Delaware. Because the plan is bold and will unfold over time, your ongoing support will be essential.

Here are some ways you can help make Vision 2015 a reality for Delaware students.

STAY INFORMED

- ✓ **www.Vision2015delaware.org.** Our Web site provides information about the Vision 2015 plan and current activities, along with links for you to share your ideas and sign up for electronic updates.
- ✓ **Public events.** We will be holding more public events in the future and hope you will attend.
- ✓ **Articles and announcements.** Please watch for articles and announcements in the media to be sure you are aware of all that is happening.

PARTICIPATE

- ✓ **Get involved.** Vision 2015 presents the promise of the future, but there are many ways that you can contribute *now* by getting involved in your child's school, a school in your community, or community groups and programs that support our public schools. Your time, talent and voice are needed to make Vision 2015 a reality.

VOICE YOUR SUPPORT

- ✓ **Calls and letters.** We will be speaking with Delaware's public leadership about the changes needed to make Vision 2015 a reality. Please let your legislators, local government leaders, school board members, superintendents and school leaders know of your support.

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39. Education Counts database.
40. DDOE, Delaware School Profiles. Forty-five percent figure does not include vocational districts, which have higher per-student spending.
41. DDOE, Delaware School Profiles.
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43. *Ibid.*
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45. *Ibid.*
46. DDOE, Delaware School Profiles. Forty-five percent figure does not include vocational districts, which have higher per-student spending.
47. Current Population Survey; Alliance for Excellent Education; Petit and Western, "Life Imprisonment and the Life Course," American Academy of Pediatrics.

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