



# STUDENT EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE 2035

MARCH 2025

MOVING THE VISION FOR EDUCATION IN DELAWARE FORWARD

VISION  
COALITION  
OF DELAWARE



# Welcome to the Vision Coalition 2035 Plan

The **Vision Coalition** of Delaware is a public-private partnership composed of a broad range of Delawareans who work together to improve Delaware public education.

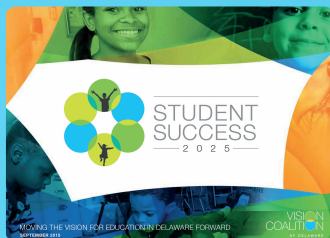
When we say, “work together,” we really mean it. This is Delaware’s plan. We heard from over 1,000 Delawareans through surveys, town hall events, webinars, and more. We heard from students, educators, parents, advocates, and neighbors. This plan is a result of your engagement, input, and revisions that came over the course of more than a year.

Moreover, this plan builds on the momentum of the **previous 10-year roadmaps** developed by this coalition and informed by thousands of Delawareans:

## Vision 2015



## Student Success 2025



*In the last decade, around*

**70% of the policy recommendations**

*in Student Success 2025 and Vision 2015*

**have been advanced.**

Why 10-year plans? These long-term policy plans ensure our goals remain intact throughout political cycles. To develop this plan, we asked Delaware to envision a future where young people have all the options, opportunities, and supports needed to live out the educational journey of their dreams. A future where equity and transparency are at the heart of the system, empowering families and students to navigate it with confidence.

The economic future of the state depends on aligning education with individual students' interests and the jobs of the future so our economy can thrive.

Our lens may be aspirational, but that doesn't mean we're ignoring the urgent challenges that face us today. We must continue to prioritize fixing the inequities of our time, and the root causes behind them.

We urge you to stay engaged. It will take all of us to turn the ideas in this plan into a reality.

Follow us at **[www.visioncoalitionde.org](http://www.visioncoalitionde.org)**  
and visit **[bit.ly/SEE2035Sources](https://bit.ly/SEE2035Sources)** for a list of sources.





# Engagement Process

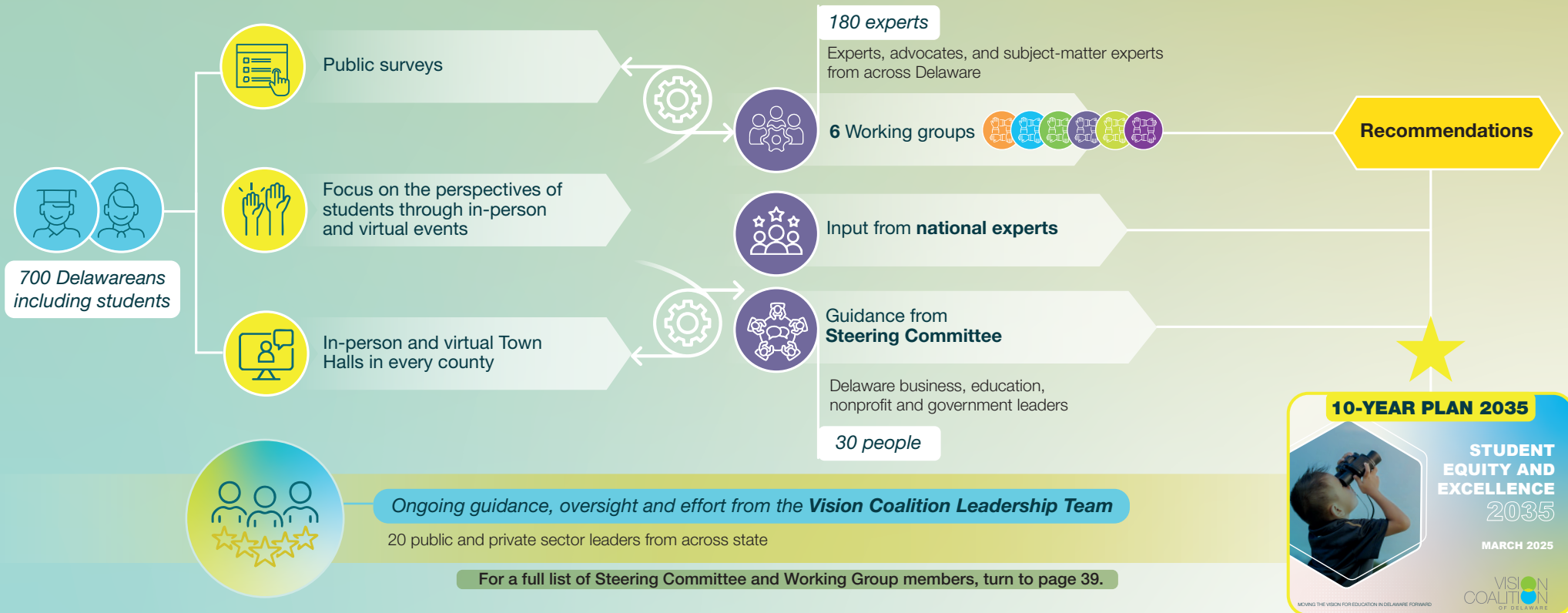


over 1,000 Delawareans collaborated

AUTUMN 2023

2024

SPRING 2025





# Vision Coalition Leadership Team



**Shelly Cecchett**  
*Executive Director, Kent Sussex  
Leadership Alliance*



**Jon Cooper**  
*Director of Health and Wellness,  
Colonial School District*



**Katrina Daniels**  
*Principal, Colonial Early  
Education Program*



**Carlos de los Ramos**  
*Chair, Delaware Hispanic  
Commission*



**Kevin Dickerson**  
*Superintendent, POLYTECH  
School District*



**Dorrell Green**  
*Superintendent, Red Clay  
Consolidated School  
District*



**Gary Henry**  
*Dean University of Delaware School of  
Education and the Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of  
Public Policy & Administration*



**Paul A. Herdman**  
*President and CEO, Rodel*



**Logan S. Herring**  
*CEO, The WRK Group*



**Stephanie Ingram**  
*President, Delaware State  
Education Association*



**Lisa Lawson**  
*Superintendent, Brandywine  
School District*



**Cindy Marten**  
*Delaware Secretary of  
Education*



**Kirsten Olson**  
*CEO, Children & Families First*



**Rob Rescigno**  
*Board Member, Southern  
Regional Education Board*



**Lindsay Rice**  
*Senior Director, Academic  
Partnerships, Wilmington University*



**Shelley Rouser**  
*Chairperson, Associate Professor for the  
Education Department, Delaware State University*



**Justina M. Thomas**  
*Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs  
Delaware Technical Community College*



**Bettina Tweardy Riveros (Chair)**  
*Chief Public Affairs Officer, Chief  
Health Equity Officer, ChristianaCare*



**Margie López Waite**  
*CEO, ASPIRA Delaware*



**Marcus Wright**  
*Member, Seaford School District  
Board of Education*

# Delaware's Educational Landscape



**19**  
districts



**903**  
licensed  
child care  
providers



**196**  
traditional  
public schools



**Children  
in Delaware**  
under 5: 54,398  
5 to 17: 157,527  
18 to 24: 211,925



**23**  
public charter schools



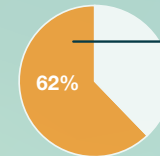
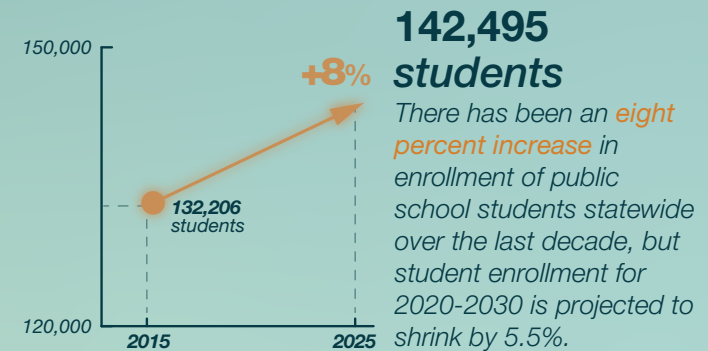
**8**  
institutions of  
higher education

*Note: Actual enrollment has outpaced growth projections in the last decade.*



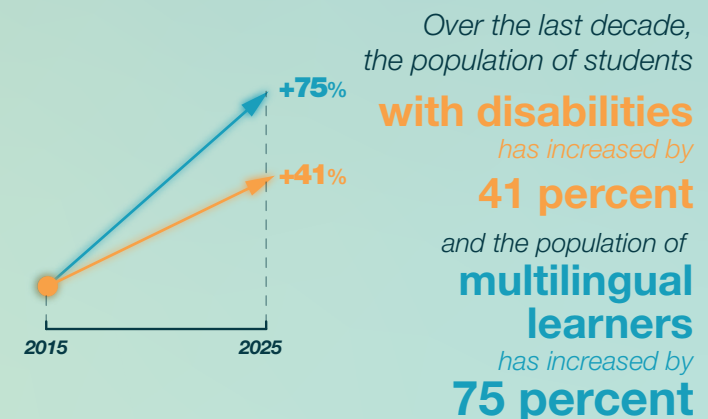
## public school enrollment

**9 out of 10** students in Delaware  
attend **public schools**



### students of color

comprise **over half** of the overall student population in Delaware



# Delaware's Educational Landscape

The COVID-19 pandemic altered the world and education. Disruptions in learning led to declines in academic performance. Many students became disengaged, frustrated, or mentally stressed. Educators reported burnout and poor mental health. In some cases, existing educator shortages became worse.

## Student Learning Loss

### 3rd Grade:

#### 3rd grade reading (ELA)

↓ **11%**  
**percentage point drop**  
*compared to pre-COVID-19 numbers*

2018-19 <i>last year before COVID-19</i>	<b>51%</b>
2023-24	<b>40%</b>

### 8th Grade:

#### 8th grade MATH

↓ **13%**  
**percentage point drop**  
*compared to pre-COVID-19 numbers*

2018-19 <i>last year before COVID-19</i>	<b>38%</b>
2023-24	<b>25%</b>

As our previous plan suggested, technology continued to reshape how students learn, educators teach, and schools communicate. In an increasingly polarized and politicized world, with growing concerns about safety, A.I., deepfakes and more, the school experience is increasingly turning its focus toward digital literacy, ethics, mental health and civic engagement.

## Educator Shortages

Delaware is seeing improvements in educator shortages thanks to targeted efforts and innovative practices to better recruit and retain school employees.

↓ **52%**  
**decrease in open district positions**  
*(instructional and non-instructional)*  
**compared to 2023.**

A U.S. Department of Education report in 2024 showed Delaware growing the educator workforce more than any other state in the country.



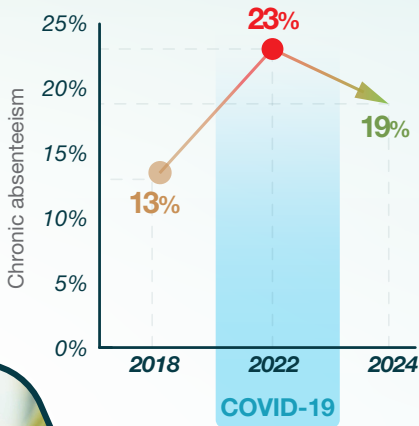


# Delaware's Educational Landscape

## Chronic Absenteeism rates increased, but are improving

In Delaware, **23%** of students statewide were **chronically absent** in the 2022-2023 school year. That same rate was **13%** for the last full school year **unaffected by COVID-19**

Chronic absenteeism is when students miss 10% or more of school days for any reason, whether excused or unexcused.



## School Climate and Safety

Students feel less safe in school today than in the past

Percentage of students responding they feel safe in school by grade



## Gun Violence

Impacts our students, families and educators

In Delaware, **21%** of 8th grade students and **26%** of 11th grade students report **knowing someone** who was the victim of **gun violence** which can be linked to post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety, and other mental health concerns among youth.



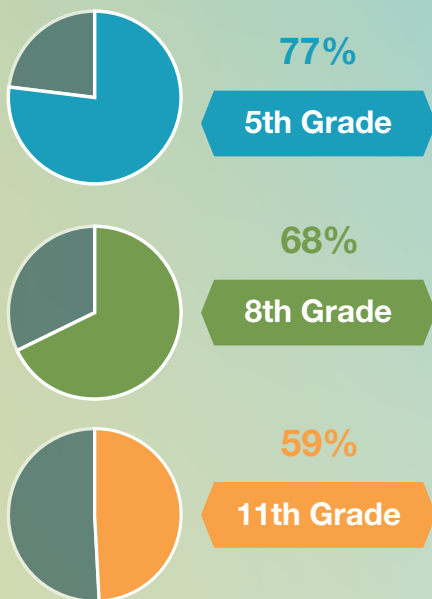
## Artificial Intelligence: What's Happening in Delaware with A.I.?

Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) has already begun to revolutionize many industries, and education is no exception. Delaware leaders are exploring how schools, educators, students, and families can navigate and utilize A.I. —while ensuring the current and next generation understand both the potential benefits and dangers of an A.I. world, as well as being able to adjust to changing economic factors and technological advances.

## Student Emotional Health

**Percentage of Delaware students who rated  
their emotional health as good or better.**

*Older students report worse mental health.*



# Progress to Date

While we can't downplay the urgency of the many needs facing Delaware's education system, **we have indeed made strides** in the last 10 years.

70% of the policy recommendations in Student Success 2025 and Vision 2015 have been advanced.

## Early Care and Education

In the last eight years, Delaware added funding for **subsidized child care tuition** and **state-funded pre-K** totaling more than **\$60 million and 2,600+ more children served.**

**A consistent, statewide subsidy rate that helps cover tuition for low-income families, evens the playing field for downstate child care providers.**

## Student-Centered Learning

Delaware adopted **social emotional learning** and **mental health literacy** competencies statewide.



Delaware schools have about doubled their adoption of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM). HQIM are vetted, knowledge-rich resources and materials for learning that guide instruction.

Students and families today utilize tools like Digital DE and Schoology to access lessons, communicate with educators and more.

Most of Delaware's districts and charter schools utilize the State Learning Management System for at least four or more grade levels.

## Student Supports

Delaware has seen an **increased focus on mental health** for students. The state expanded school-based health centers and passed bills to add more counselors to school staffs.



72%

High Schools



14%

Middle Schools



20%

Elementary Schools

have a school-based health center in Delaware


Community Schools programs, leveraging partnerships between schools and community-based organizations, serve more than 3,000 students in four districts with wraparound services and enrichment.





# Progress to Date

## Postsecondary Success

 **30,000+** or **65%** students of all high school students **are enrolled in a career pathway** *35% more than the national average*

**13 middle schools** are piloting a middle grades **career exploration program** allowing 7,500 students to begin charting their future **based on their interests.**

Delaware's three vocational-technical school districts are now offering **dual enrollment** and **apprenticeship credits** in **high-growth sectors** for **900+ students before high school graduation.**

Delaware expanded college scholarships and created the Elevate Delaware program to support workforce training.

## Educators

Delaware's concerted effort to grow and sustain a diverse teacher workforce centers around **"Grow Your Own"** efforts, like the:



**Teacher Academy pathway** for high schoolers  
**Teacher apprenticeships** and **residency programs** for teachers-in-training which provide immersive, year-round classroom experiences.

The efforts are already paying dividends—improving **teacher retention** and training hundreds of educators.

Delaware saw a **6% statewide increase** in the educator workforce, leading the nation in post-pandemic growth.

## Funding

A commission of stakeholders and experts are developing recommendations to update the school funding system.

Following a lawsuit, Delaware initiated **Opportunity Funding** in 2019, which today funnels **\$63 million** in **state funding** to support:



Low-income students  
Multilingual students

For the first time in decades, Delaware also began **reassessing property values** and committing to a regular five year update cycle, which will help improve equity across districts.

# North Star 2035 Aspirations for Students

What should a Delawarean know and be able to do in 2035 to be career and life ready?

The North Star represents the skills and attributes Delawareans shared when asked about aspirations for our students. In today's world, core academic knowledge needs to complement the durable, foundational skills that employers need most.



Foundational academic skills, including reading, science, social studies, and math—remain central to the educational experience.

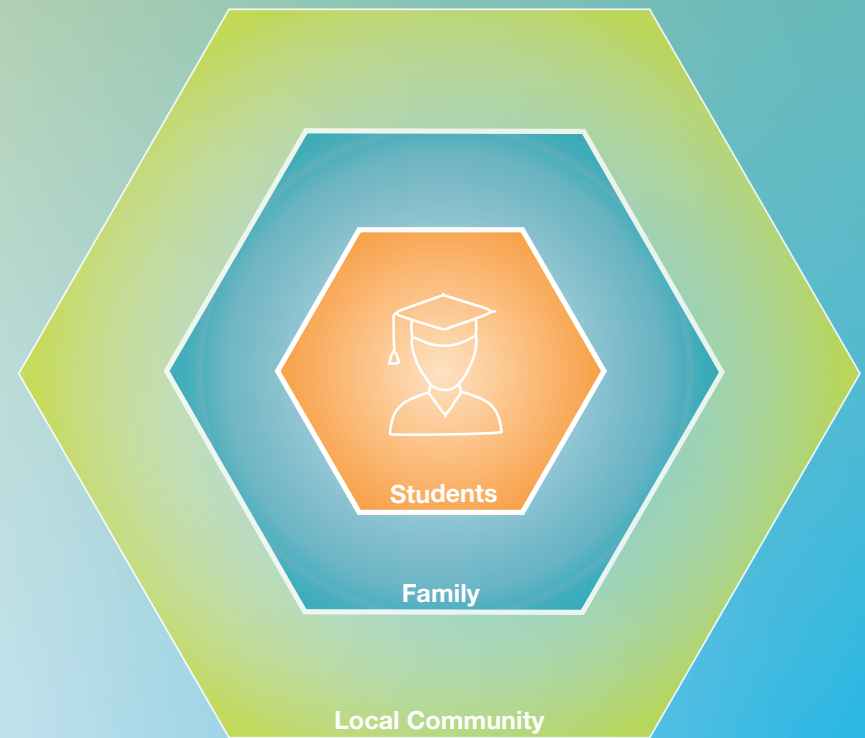
## Community and Family Support

Students live in families and communities, and they bring those cultural backgrounds, assets, and contexts with them to school. School is not independent from any trauma students experience outside of it, nor is it the only place students learn and grow.

By emphasizing collaboration and inclusivity, the framework aligns with the coalition's vision to create a sense of belonging and ensure accessible, equitable opportunities for all learners over the next decade.

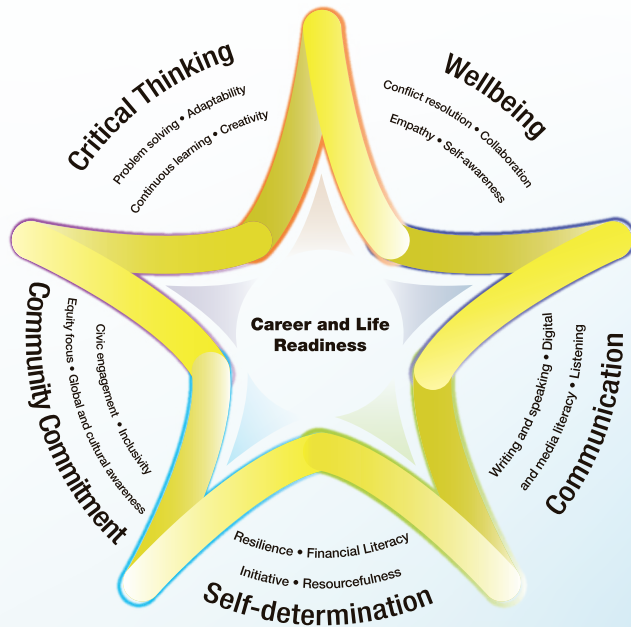
### Vision Coalition Statement on Equity

The Vision Coalition of Delaware centers diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in all its work, including the creation of this 10-year plan. Success and achievement looks different for each student. Beyond core academics, we urge Delaware education leaders to foster holistic development of students, creating a sense of belonging and accessibility for all students.

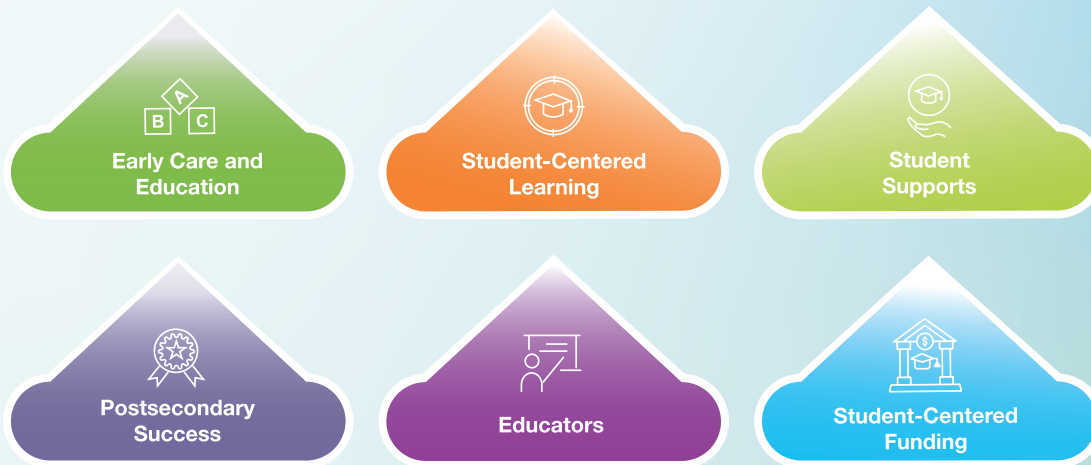




# Key Pillars



**To achieve the North Star vision, we must focus in six impactful areas.**



## The **Six Key Pillars** to Achieve Student Excellence and Equity

To truly be career and life ready, young people in Delaware will need quality, holistic supports beginning at birth.

After getting off to a great start in Early Care and Education, students should enter kindergarten school feeling ready and supported. Whole-student supports will help them navigate grade school, where they can utilize agency and community opportunities to reach their goals. Middle and high school are a time for students to begin exploring their options for after graduation, from careers to college and everything in-between.

The individuals and systems that support students—from prepared, well-compensated educators to fair and equitable funding—will create a foundation and the conditions for success.

The policy recommendations that follow were developed to create the conditions so students can be career and life ready with these North Star skills.

# Early Care and Education



## Vision Statement

Each child has a right to early care and education, which is provided to all families as a public good. Every Delaware child and family is engaged in a comprehensive and coordinated early care and education continuum, which provides high-quality services in inclusive environments that meet each child's and family's unique needs.

Despite gains, Delaware is falling short of the transformational, systemic changes required to attain “universal” care and education for children from birth to age five. Today only one in five children are enrolled in state-sponsored programming. Other states and countries approach child care as a public good—like K-12 education, as essential to society as roads and bridges.

But Delaware invests in the early years at one-third of the level of K-12 education. Most child care workers make minimum wage without benefits or access to professional development. Momentum and public will has been growing; Delaware needs to take the next step.



# Early Care and Education

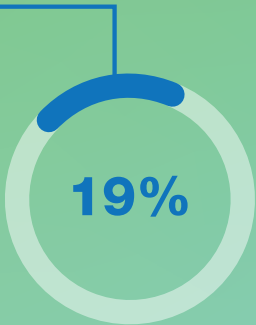
## Early learners in Delaware

In Delaware, there are

**11,241** children

**birth to age 5**  
enrolled in  
state-funded  
child care

representing about  
19% of the target  
population



## Return on early learning investments



Delaware reaps up to **13%** return on investment per dollar invested in early learning

## National pre-K ranking access

3-year-olds



4-year-olds



9 out of 10 quality benchmarks met



# Delaware Does Not Cover the True Cost of Child Care

For the 19% of children that are served, Delaware only pays a fraction of the cost.

Center Based Child Care ^—Annual Child Care Subsidy Reimbursement Rates Per Child (Purchase of Care)

Age of Child	State Reimbursement Rate (Purchase of Care)	Cost to Fund Quality Care
Infants (0-12 months)	\$13,625	\$34,044 150% more
Toddler (1-2 years)	\$12,250	\$27,045 121% more
Preschool (3-5 years)	\$11,375	\$22,187 95% more

Children with special needs are entitled to 5-8% more, however a Delaware Working Group of experts recommended the state invest 20-50% more per child.  
^ Family child care centers have similar costs, with reimbursements even lower in most cases.

## Home visiting only reaching 3% of families

Delaware is home to four evidence-based home-visiting programs, but unfortunately, most families will never learn about them or take the opportunity to use one. As a voluntary and free service for pregnant women and families with children up to the age of five years old. Home-visiting programs grant eligible Delawareans access to a nurse or support specialist that helps them find family-tailored services to meet their needs and create a safe environment for their children. These visits can take place weekly, every other week, or monthly depending on a family's needs.



# Priorities & Recommendations

## ◀ Treat and Compensate those in Early Learning like the Professionals They Are

- Fund early care and education so educators are compensated and provided benefits at least comparable to the level of K-12 educators.
- Recruit early learning professionals beginning in high school, provide scholarships and financial support, and develop alternative pathways to the profession with opportunities for career advancement.
- Provide coaching to strengthen cultural competence within programs to address bias and reduce suspensions and expulsions.
- Establish individual licensure for professionals, similar to other professions, with career advancement opportunities.
- Establish working conditions that support professionals, including substitutes, manageable ratios and group sizes, planning time, breaks, and paid time off.

## ◀ Engage Children in High-Quality Early Care and Education (ECE) Programs

- Provide high-quality, universal pre-K and ECE—to all children statewide from birth to 5—in mixed delivery settings, that focus on play, building on Head Start standards.
- Focus resources on infants and toddlers across the state to ensure equitable access to services regardless of location.
- Build processes for continuous program improvement and excellence.
- Incentivize flexible, non-traditional care availability—in the mornings, evenings and over weekends—to support working families; partner with employers to support working parents.
- Engage children in inclusive, culturally affirming settings that meet children's needs and offer multilingual options.
- Provide programs the capacity to meet the needs of children with disabilities, including additional staff to lower ratios, certified specialists, special services, physical accommodations, materials, and equipment.



# Priorities & Recommendations

## **Guide Families through Services and Supports and Empower Families with Self-Advocacy**

- Strengthen screening and early intervention services for children—build capacity to connect families with intervention services, shorten waiting lists, and integrate mental health services.
- Ensure parents are supported before and after their child is born, including prenatal care, home visiting, and mental health supports.
- Expand home visiting programs to every parent in Delaware, providing tiered levels of service depending on need.
- Engage partners to guide families to programs and services that meet their needs—and to be advocates for their children.

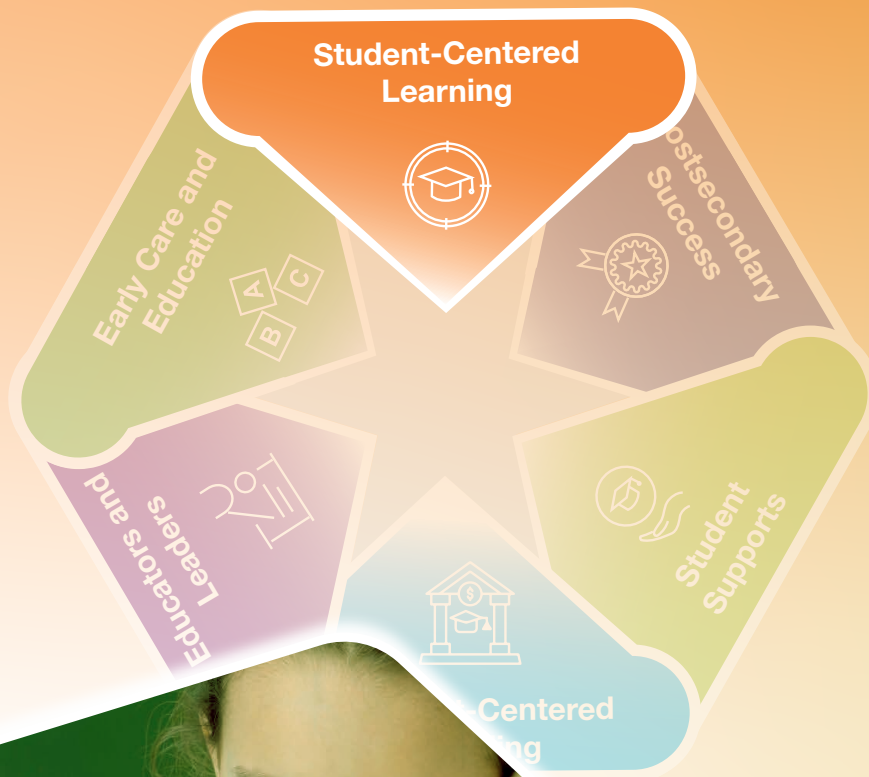
## **Streamline Governance and Strengthen Infrastructure**

- Make transformational investments to provide all families with high-quality early care and education (ECE), and remove barriers based on socioeconomic, geographic, cultural, and other factors.
- Incentivize culturally affirming services that meet community needs, including programs in languages spoken at home.
- Fund transportation and capital upgrades for early care and education.
- Align and coordinate the different parts of the ECE and K-12 education continuum, connecting ECE to promote continuity of care and engage community-based partners.
- Create shared service systems to efficiently provide administrative, financial, and substitute services.
- Streamline governance by aligning and coordinating funding including Head Start, other federal funds, and state funding.
- Adopt high-quality standards based on Head Start, align eligibility for early care and education programs, and promote socioeconomic and other integration.
- Adopt a unique identification number for every child at birth and connect data systems to integrate





# Student-Centered Learning



## The Vision

Every student, beginning at birth, has a right to a comprehensive, equitable education personalized to their unique needs, strengths, and talents. Designed with the capacity to give space for each child's interests, passions, dreams, skills, and needs, education centers and empowers them as active participants in their learning.

Through a culturally proficient approach, students develop: a sense of agency or control over their own decisions, the capacity to set goals and plan for the future, a heightened curiosity and critical thinking skills to be life-long learners and a sense of compassion and empathy to be engaged

Students are taking more agency over of their identities and embracing their own uniqueness. Likewise, the learning process continues to become more fluid and personalized with technology hardwired into most facets of the daily student experience. As things become more specialized, we've seen an increased focus on the quality and validity of instructional materials our teachers use in classrooms.





# Student-Centered Learning

## Instructional Materials Matter

**Educators are setting a higher bar for their instructional material, helping to drive student-centered learning**

When it comes to instructional classroom materials, quality matters, too—and can have a major impact on student learning. “HQIM” (high-quality instructional materials) is a special designation given to instructional materials that pass the benchmark for “high quality” by Delaware’s Department of Education.



**242**

**Graduating Students**  
in 2024 earned a  
**Certificate of Multiliteracy**  
from the state.

A Certificate of Multiliteracy is an award that recognizes and honors high school students who have attained a high level of proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English.

## Expansion of high-dosage tutoring and why it’s good for getting kids back on track and student growth

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools across the country were faced with a new challenge: combatting the learning loss and low literacy rates left in its wake. Schools across the country and Delaware turned to **high-dosage tutoring** as a countermeasure. Often targeted toward students with the highest literacy and numeracy needs, high-dosage tutoring normally entails regular one-on-one or very small group work with a tutoring specialist.

Research into its effectiveness shows high-dosage tutoring to be not only effective, but also highly cost-effective when compared to other educational interventions. In 2020 a meta-analysis of nearly 100 separate tutoring intervention studies found that on average, tutoring improved learning outcomes significantly—with the equivalent of a student receiving an additional three to 15 months of learning.

In 2024 Delaware was recognized as a leader by Accelerate, a national nonprofit focused on learning acceleration in the aftermath of COVID-19, because it had already begun to form partnerships that brought high-dosage tutoring to schools around the state. Within one of these partnerships, a reported **90 percent of 2023-24 students receiving tutoring during the school year improved their benchmark scores.**

# Priorities & Recommendations

## ◀ Reimagine Learning Structures to Foster Student Agency

- Focus on students' progress toward competencies aligned with the North Star—redesign instructional and assessment structures to support these goals.
- Reimagine how to foster student agency—and build educator capacity to support individual learning needs.
- Provide different ways for students to demonstrate competency, including more authentic opportunities to demonstrate what they know and are able to do, such as portfolios or performance tasks aligned with the North Star.
- Grant schools and districts flexibility to organize learning in structures beyond seat time. Issue state guidance and support for pursuing student-centered learning structures, and review and update requirements regularly.
- Ensure that the state's requirements for graduation, and students' time in high school, are based around mastery of content through meaningful and rigorous learning experiences, rather than time spent sitting in a class.
- Acknowledge and value that learning happens anywhere, anytime, in the community, online, and with families. Provide support to assure equitable access to quality learning experiences and community-based infrastructure including libraries.
- Create flexibility in state graduation and instructional programming requirements for innovative, flexible instructional models, including rethinking the 12th grade year to make it more relevant, valuable, and connected to students' postsecondary aspirations.
- Embrace experiential learning and play, instilling joy, meaning, engagement and social interaction in classrooms.
- Support child-centered learning structures such as multi-age classrooms and keeping educators with children for multiple years.





# Priorities & Recommendations

## Institute and Fund Culturally Responsive Instructional Practices that are Equity- and Student-Centered

- Build learning structures in schools and classrooms that develop, support, and empower student voice and autonomy.
- Teach digital and information literacy—and adopt and integrate instructional technologies in equity—and human-centered ways to supplement quality teaching.
- Build capacity for culturally responsive, affirming, and sustaining pedagogy that recognizes race, nationality, identities (of all types), and abilities—and intentionally leverage pluralistic perspectives and create developmentally appropriate environments.
- Support educators in implementing a student-centered and culturally responsive approach and support continuous growth.
- Adopt student and family surveys, interviews, home visits, and community meetings to collect input and eliminate barriers to engagement.
- Advance teacher training and professional development opportunities that develop expertise in student-centered learning strategies.

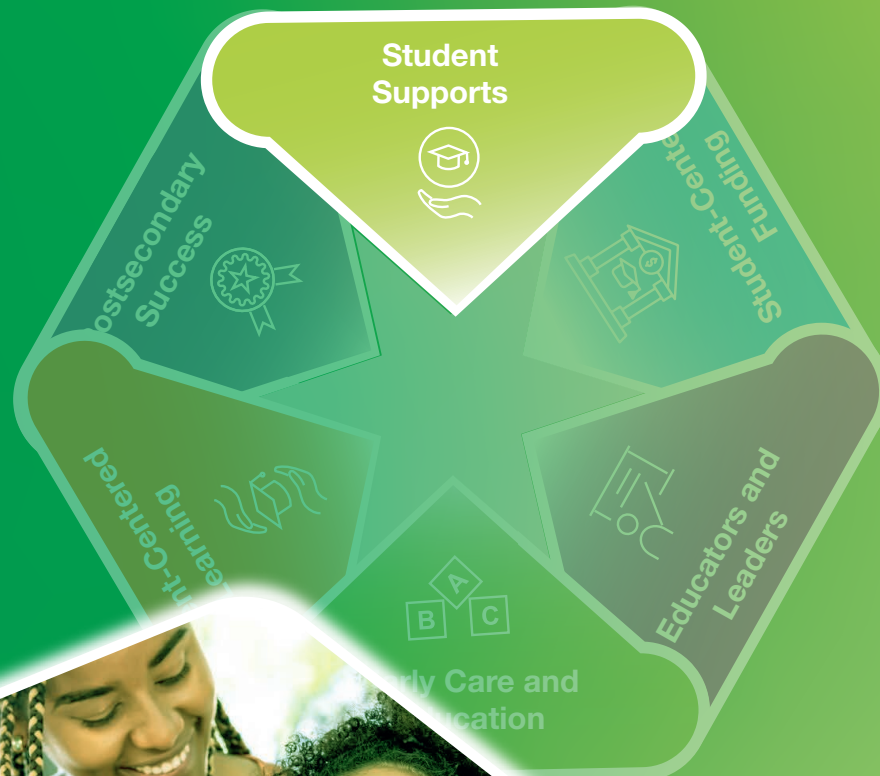
## Work with Students to Build Future-Ready Skills

- Empower students to be self-directed learners, understand their future, create a plan, and prepare them to be career and life ready. Encourage them to cultivate their own North Star career, and life skills and goals.
- Design content and experiences that reflect current and anticipated student experiences in society.
- Build educator capacity to co-create content with students, centered on student-led instruction and culturally responsive practices.
- Strengthen support for skillful use of state-approved high-quality instructional materials.
- Invest early in targeted assessment, interventions, professional learning and coaching.
- Adopt innovative assessments that measure the North Star skills and attributes and experiences including belonging.





# Student Supports



## The Vision

Every student receives the support they need within and beyond the school building to reach their full potential. This includes supporting and nurturing their physical and mental wellbeing, the development of social emotional skills, and building academic foundations and life skills through safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces and communities. These opportunities should foster and celebrate a young person's identity, assets, interests, and aspirations.

An increased focus on mental health has emerged in public education, due to the litany of stressors and trauma faced by today's students. The community schools model has grown, offering wraparound services like check-ups, food pantries, and more. Research demonstrates that when students have someone in school they trust, they have better outcomes.

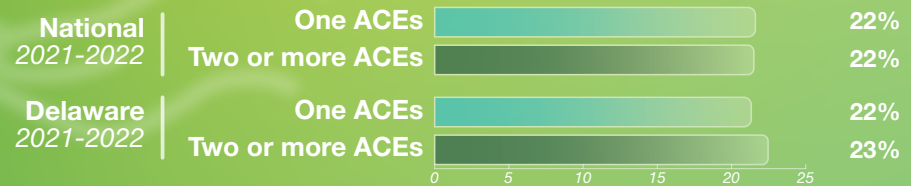
# Student Supports

Brain science tells us that social and emotional learning (SEL) is foundational to learning. We learn not just by being exposed to information, but by interacting with peers and teachers, by speaking, by reading the listener's facial expressions, and adapting accordingly. It's this process of volleying back and forth that builds our understanding of the world.

In 2020, Delaware adopted a set of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies. The Social, Emotional and Behavioral Wellbeing (SEBW) plan supports districts and schools in meeting SEL needs of staff and students and integrates with comprehensive School Discipline Improvement Plan (SDIP).

## Students Experiencing ACEs

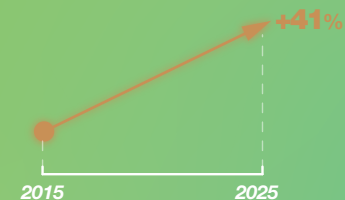
Children Age **6-17** Experiencing ACEs



*Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful events like abuse, neglect, household challenges, and witnessing violence, which can impact a child's health and wellbeing.*

## Special Education

Over the last decade, the population of **students with disabilities** has increased by **41 percent**.



## School-Based Health Centers on the Rise

School-based health centers are supported by state dollars and health systems. They provide comprehensive physical, behavioral, and preventive health services delivered by qualified medical and behavioral health providers located in a school setting. Health centers have shown a myriad of benefits, from improved student outcomes to cost savings.



# Priorities & Recommendations

## Support Students Holistically; Focus on Well-Being, Safety, and Belonging

- Care for students holistically through smaller class sizes and proper multi-tiered systems of support.
- Strengthen home and community partnerships to maintain consistency in and out of school. Shift focus from grade-based outcomes to whole child approaches that empower children to learn and support growth.
- Ensure young people, their trusted adults, and their communities are equipped with mental health literacy.
- Make sure every child and educator feels safe physically, psychologically, and emotionally—and they are connected and have a sense of belonging in all spaces where education happens.
- Build data systems across agencies to help make decisions—leveraging existing surveys and assessments—to connect schools, community partners, and families to meet the holistic needs of students.

## Prioritize Collaborative Partnership and Engagement with Families, Caregivers, and Community Partners

- Grow community-school partnerships to engage families and provide affordable or free wraparound supports.
- Prioritize collaboration through an equity lens to ensure families and caregivers feel safe and welcome in schools— and are treated as equal partners in a young person’s education. Guide them through supports and services, and provide schools with sufficient capacity in the system to serve them.
- Strengthen and diversify communication to families and students on the availability of scholarships, apprenticeships, credentials, work-based learning opportunities, and other bridges to postsecondary and life success.
- Prioritize partnership and communication with families that is multi-lingual/cross-lingual and is offered across multiple channels that are easy for them to access.
- Provide every student with access to high quality out of school programs and opportunities that help them explore and pursue their interests and aspirations, including support for transportation.
- Find ways to embed and liaise educators with the community particularly in cases where educators are less familiar with or do not live where they teach.





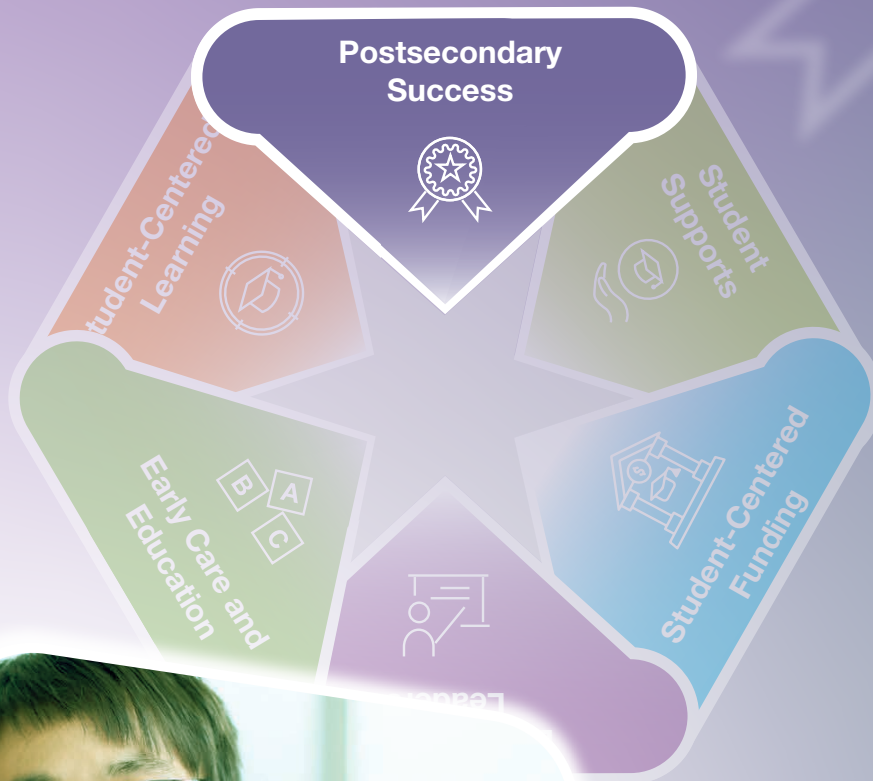
# Priorities & Recommendations

## Fund Training, Health Services, and Basic Needs in Schools

- Provide sufficient funding for schools to support culturally responsive mental and behavioral health services, ensuring dedicated professionals have sufficient capacity and resources.
- Deliver coordinated care through school-based wellness centers and in partnership with health care and outside community supports—and eliminate financial barriers to accessing services.
- Embed mental health literacy training and destigmatization in educators' professional development and in aspiring educator training programs. Include best practices in culturally responsive supports for students' mental health.
- Provide sufficient funding for schools and maximize current funding streams to support and expand healthcare in schools, including mental health for students and educators.
- Provide special education resources and funding, and make needs assessment universally available.
- Support healthy learning conditions: fund school meals and establish partnerships with community based organizations to ensure students' basic needs are met.



# Postsecondary Success



## The Vision

Delaware provides inspired and equitable experiences that equip all students to engage in self-discovery, become economically self-sufficient and actively engage in civic life. For all students to pursue life-long learning and contribute to our state's economy and quality of life, we envision active, seamless partnerships among employers, schools, and higher education institutions supporting a workforce development system aligned with the current and future needs of our workforce.

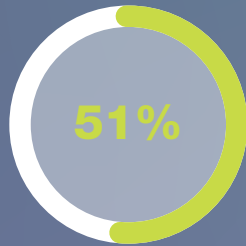
State model career pathways were just taking off when *Student Success 2025* launched in 2015. Today, the idea has exploded, with more than 30,000 students or 75% of Delaware high school students enrolled in a career pathway. Delaware is evolving its pathways work to new levels, from starting sooner with middle grade students, to building more seamless transitions into life after graduation.



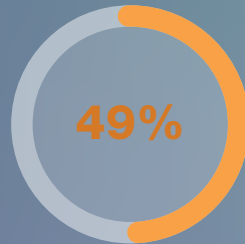


# Postsecondary Success

## Benefits of Career Pathways



of **Pathways graduates** reported participating in one or more **work-based learning (WBL)** experiences



Of employed graduates, 49% of those that completed WBL reported that their current job is aligned with their Pathway

## Shifting Demographics Altering the Postsecondary and Workforce Landscape

Data trends locally and nationally point to major shifts in the labor market—shifts that will have far-reaching impacts on how states, agencies, and institutions think about training the workforce of tomorrow.

- Delaware's labor force participation rate has diminished to 59%, compared to 63% nationally.
- While most jobs still require some postsecondary experience, wages for jobs that require bachelor's degrees have been static, deteriorating the value of a college degree.
- College enrollment has declined in Delaware by 6% over 5 years, due to factors including the COVID-19 pandemic and a declining birth rate.

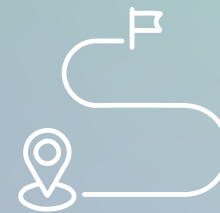
## Advanced Coursework is Paying Dividends

In Delaware, public and private high school students earned **7,994** qualifying AP scores of 3, 4, or 5 in 2023.

These scores translate into an **estimated 23,982 potential college credits**.

At a cost of **\$492.67 per college credit**, the potential tuition and fee **savings to Delaware students and families is \$11,815,212**.

**29%** of the class of 2023 (2,455 graduates) took an **AP course** in high school, with **17%** scoring a **3 or higher** (1,362 graduates).



There are currently

**37,000+**

students enrolled in **Delaware Pathways**, receiving relevant coursework in school and work-based learning experience in 29 different career areas.

## Dual Enrollment



**4,934** students earned **dual enrollment credit** (2023-24)

*Dual enrollment courses allow students to earn college credits in non-technical academic subjects, such as math and science, while still in school.*

## Industry Credentials



**41%**

of all graduates in the Pathways program **earned an industry recognized credential** in high school



# Priorities & Recommendations

## Support Students and Families to Explore Career and Education Opportunities and Develop Life Skills

- Provide youth-centered career exploration for every student starting in elementary and middle school, including career and technical education, academic, and social-emotional programming that cultivates student identity and inspires them to pursue a path to postsecondary success.
- Strengthen communication with students and families and knowledge of postsecondary opportunities, including information on robust academic and technical options.
- Cultivate the skills, knowledge, and dispositions in both adults and learners so they can realize civic, education, and financial goals—while navigating an uncertain future, demonstrating adaptability, durable skills (like teamwork and problem-solving), financial and digital literacy.
- Prioritize opportunities for students to build social capital and expand their networks and skills—and understand how professional relationships and networks can advance their career.

## Strengthen the Infrastructure and Ecosystem to Support Career Success

- Build capacity of state agencies to capture and analyze data to identify when students are off-track and improve support to schools, higher education providers, and employers providing education, training, and work-based learning opportunities.
- Engage students and community partners in the design and delivery of programming that supports students' self-discovery and career exploration, exposure, and immersion.
- Create a statewide longitudinal data system to measure students' career journeys after high school—including postsecondary education, wages, and employment—to strengthen systems of support, improve program design, and link research with practice and policy.
- Work proactively and intentionally to create a coordinated system across labor, education, and workforce development to strengthen offerings, improve communication with learners and job seekers, support co-enrollment, and pursue federal funding with shared goals to support.
- Rethink how the state funds education programs to make sure that they support the North Star vision and are able to make data-driven decisions.



# Priorities & Recommendations



## ◀ Integrate High School, Postsecondary Education, and Work

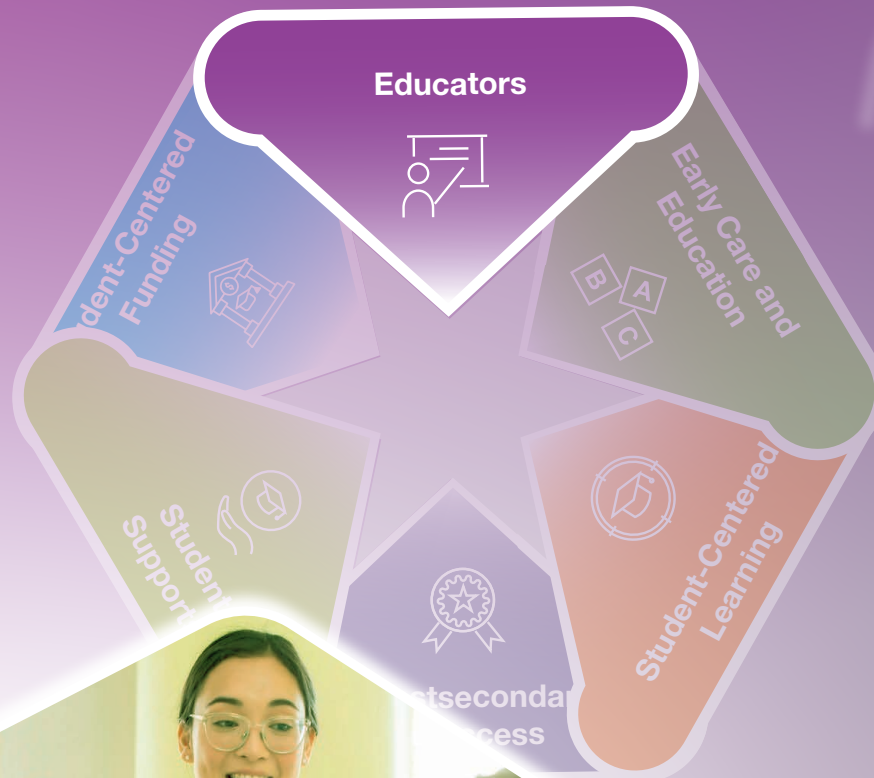
- Prepare students for life after high school by enabling all students to participate in opportunities—starting in high school, in partnership with postsecondary institutions—to earn certifications, credentials, early postsecondary credits, and participate in advanced coursework and immersive work-based learning.
- Integrate systems of secondary and postsecondary support for young adults: Increase opportunities for stackable credentials, competency-based programs, and credit for prior learning; share responsibility for providing young adults opportunities.
- Systemically communicate the transfer and articulated credit process at the collegiate level with students—and their accelerated standing in postsecondary options.
- Create a system for every student to graduate from high school with a learning and employment record demonstrating their competencies, achievements, and postsecondary plans. Explore flexibility in graduation requirements, such as alternative mastery-based transcripts, to adopt these options.
- Bolster counseling, mentoring, and advisement to support students in navigating their postsecondary options, both in education and the workforce, including how to finance them.
- Create and support systems and structures that encourage schools and districts to collaborate regionally and pursue innovative learning models that integrate college and career opportunities throughout the K-12 education experience.

## ◀ Provide Access for Every High School Student to High-Quality Career Pathways, including Work-Based Learning Experiences

- Incentivize schools to adopt career and technical education programs and pathways in high-wage and high-demand fields—and those that lead to industry recognized credentials, and engage employers to ensure programs align with industry needs. Build formal partnerships between comprehensive and vocational technical high schools.
- Remove financial obstacles to pursuing higher education, including funding programs with waiting lists and encouraging employer partnerships with higher education.
- Incentivize and support employers to participate in employer-led training, including co-ops, work-based learning, and apprenticeships starting in high school.
- Create a system of wraparound and persistence supports for learners, including transportation to work sites, supporting financial management, and connections with social services.
- Rethink requirements around when and where learning takes place to make sure all students can take part in postsecondary-oriented learning experiences that are meaningful to them.



# Educators



## The Vision

Educators are empowered for the success of learners, creating safe, welcoming, inclusive, and culturally affirming learning environments that recognize race, nationality, identities, and abilities. Educators are revered, well-compensated professionals who are supported and provided with the working conditions and opportunities that enable them to learn and to grow in their careers. Educator demographics reflect the demographics of the students they serve.

The people who support our students in schools have never been under more strain, while the need for more talented, passionate, and well-prepared educators has never been greater. COVID-19 exacerbated many issues within the structures that support educators and future educators. But Delaware has made concerted efforts in improving how we make education a great career and is a national leader in building its teacher workforce.





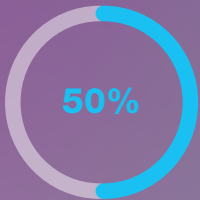
# Educators

## Educators Say Classrooms Need to Look Different

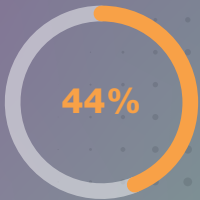
Nationally, many teachers have expressed the need for changes in the classroom environment. A Pew Research Center survey revealed that **teachers often feel overworked and under-resourced**, indicating a need for better support structures and more effective classroom settings to handle diverse student needs.

**70% of educators in Delaware are dissatisfied with their working conditions:** The largest worry is stress and burnout, followed by staff shortages, then employees leaving the profession, followed by lack of respect, then student behavior.

## Teacher Retention Can Be Improved



As of the 2022-23 school year, **only 50%** of classroom teachers who had been working at the same school for at least 5 years continued to work at that school.

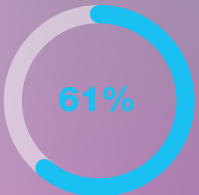


Classroom **teachers of color have a retention rate of 44%** compared to 51% for white educators, over the same 5-year span.

## Teachers Are Not as Diverse as the Students They Serve



2023  
White classroom teachers



2023  
Student population of color

In 2023, about **80%** of classroom **teachers were white**, while the student population was about **61% persons of color**.

## Neighboring States Pay Educators More

In Fiscal Year 2022-2023, the average teacher pay in Delaware was anywhere between **\$6,000 to \$12,000 dollars lower** than our neighboring states.

Delaware is the **only state** among our neighbors that has an **average teacher pay (\$68,787)** that is **lower than the minimum living wage (\$71,499)**.



# Priorities & Recommendations

## ◀ Actively Support Educators to Grow in the Profession

- Establish career progression opportunities for all educators using multiple modalities for professional learning.
- Strengthen mentorship programs and learning opportunities for new educators, and reduce caseload for entry level educators.
- Coach and provide thoughtful and early mentorships for all aspiring and existing teacher leaders and school leaders.
- Provide professional learning pathways that allow educators to pursue their own opportunities to lead, in and out of the classroom.
- Provide support on integrating culturally affirming technology, including A.I., into instruction, ensuring tools and materials are free of bias, especially for students of color.



## ◀ Recruit and Prepare Educators, Starting Early, and Remove Barriers to Entering the Profession

- Expose students in elementary and middle school to the power of being an educator as a career.
- Build pathways programs—including early opportunities for students to explore a career in education and understand the requirements necessary to enter the profession—and opportunities to meet students where they are, especially students of color. Leverage partners to expand access to programming.
- Reimagine incentives and marketing of the education field that is responsive to younger generations.
- Modernize pathways to the profession to be more equitable and innovative, building high-quality educator preparation pipelines that attract diverse and non-traditional educator candidates.
- Remove financial barriers to entering the profession—including debt—and pay salaries competitive to other careers and other states.
- Strengthen recruitment and retention efforts for educators of color by implementing stay interviews, establishing affinity spaces, and providing comprehensive support systems.





# Priorities & Recommendations

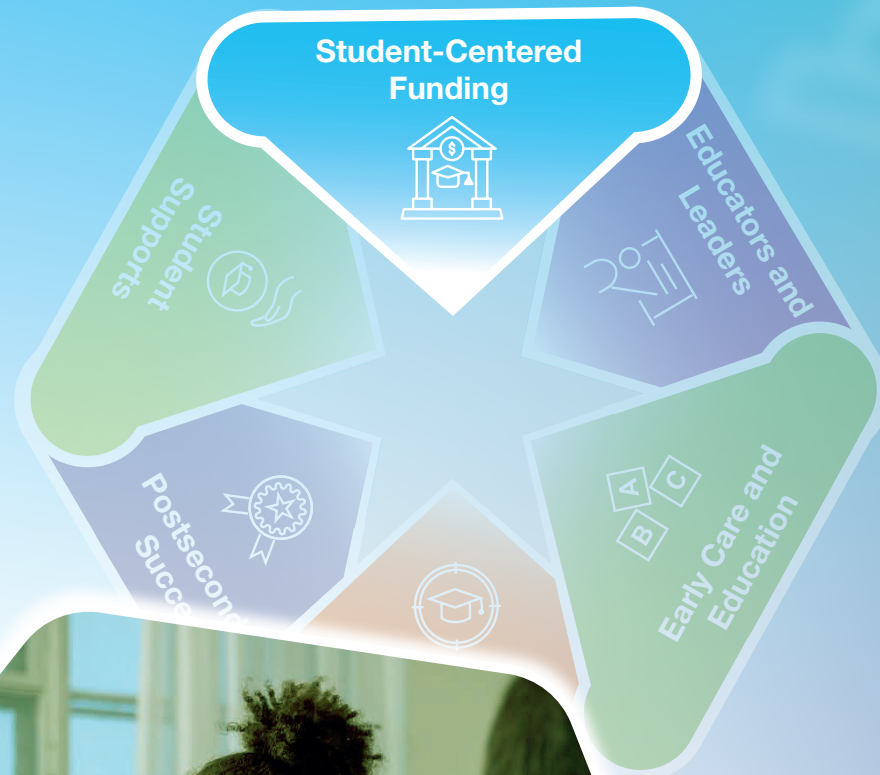
## ◀ Create Conditions for Educators to be Empowered and Sustained

- Compensate educators accordingly as they progress through professional pathways and look to innovate models of compensation.
- Release educators from unnecessary reporting burdens and build more flexibility, autonomy, and opportunities to innovate into their roles.
- Reimagine the future of teaching to allow educators in varying roles, including leadership, teaching part time and playing other roles, including curating authentic learning experiences for students.
- Make schools safe, welcoming, inclusive, and culturally affirming places for educators to work and students to learn.
- Provide culturally responsive leadership development, including coaching and mentoring for educators.
- Empower educators to innovate with flexibility—while being accountable to standards and evidence-based practices.
- Empower educators to create compassionate and safe learning environments—and to represent and advocate for their students' diverse needs.
- Develop policies, practices, and school climates that attract and retain a diverse workforce of educators that reflect the demographics of the communities they serve.





# Student-Centered Funding



## The Vision

Delaware will increase funding for education and create an equitable funding system, with a greater percentage of allocations directly tied to student needs. State funding will account for local inequities and provide greater flexibility to district and charter schools with fewer administrative burdens.

Much has unfolded over the last 10 years, between a high-stakes lawsuit, a settlement, and a series of incremental changes like reassessing property values.

## Total state education budget

Delaware's Department of Education budget for Fiscal Year 2025 is **\$2,157,197,900**, making up about one-third of the overall state budget.

### Federal

12%

\$367,741,369.96

### Local

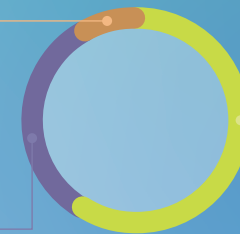
28%

\$894,579,577.89

### State

60%

\$1,907,607,388.43



Delaware is one of seven states that relies solely on a resource allocation-based system, in which funds must be used for specific expenses designated in the state's budgeting system.

Our regional neighbors (Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey) allocate more per pupil and also give an additional 30-100% weight for students with high needs.

### Other States

**30-100%**  
more

# Priorities & Recommendations

- Distribute more state resources based on the numbers of students with particular needs—increase funding for low-income, multilingual learner students, and those with special needs—and ensure funding follows each student to district, charter school, or vocational technical district.
- Adequately fund schools to pay educators and school staff competitively, in order to attract and retain high-performing educators and meet educational goals.
- 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, with more responsible decision making at the school level with those closest to students.
- Remove burdensome restrictions, waiver processes, and reporting requirements.
- Ensure administrators can easily calculate, anticipate and rely on the amount of funding they will receive year to year.
- Provide state funding to account for local wealth inequities across districts, and require districts to pay a local share based on local wealth levels.
- 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.
- 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.
- Simplify how charter schools are funded: establish a target amount inclusive of state and local funding, and provide more predictability year to year.





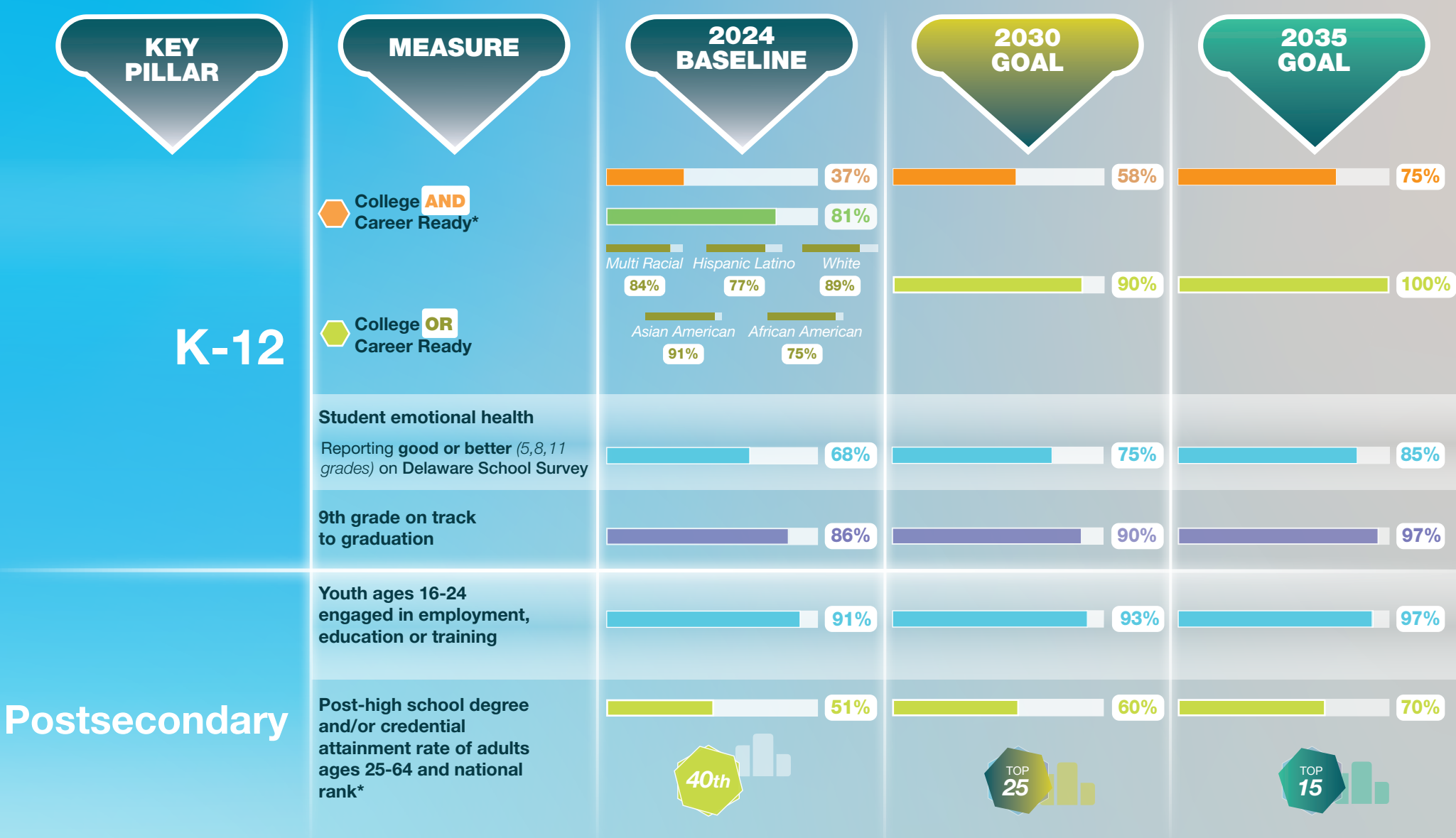
# Measuring Success

As always, quality data and measurable goals are essential in guiding our long-term vision. These ambitions, student-centered goals will provide us with something to strive for, as well as a way to keep track of our progress.

KEY PILLAR	MEASURE	2024 BASELINE	2030 GOAL	2035 GOAL
Early Care and Education	Access to publicly funded early care and education, ages 0-5	<div><div></div></div> 19%	<div><div></div></div> 60%	<div><div></div></div> 80%
	Access to high-quality, state funded pre-k for 3- and 4-year-olds and national rank	<div><div>25th</div><div>3 year-olds</div></div> <div><div>41th</div><div>4 year-olds</div></div> <div>in state pre-k</div>	<div><div>TOP 20</div></div>	<div><div>TOP 15</div></div>
K-12	Smarter Balanced Assessment			
	English Language Arts <i>grades 3,5,8</i>	<div><div></div></div> 41%	<div><div></div></div> 76%	<div><div></div></div> 88%
	Math <i>grades 3,5,8</i>	<div><div></div></div> 30%	<div><div></div></div> 70%	<div><div></div></div> 70%
	NAEP* and national rank			
	English Language Arts <i>4th grade</i>	<div><div></div></div> 25%	<div><div>TOP 25</div></div>	<div><div>TOP 15</div></div>
	Math <i>4th grade</i>	<div><div></div></div> 26%		
*(National Assessment of Educational Progress)		<div><div>42nd</div></div>		
	Chronic absenteeism	<div><div></div></div> 19%	<div><div></div></div> 12%	<div><div></div></div> 7%



# Measuring Success



\*College ready (78% in 2024) includes successful attainment of AP, IB, SAT Essay, and/or dual enrollment. Career Ready (42% in 2024) includes successful attainment of a state-approved industry credential, dual enrollment, co-op education program or work-based learning experience, certificate of multiliteracy, and/or Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery as designated and measured by Delaware Department of Education.

# Steering Committee

Aaron Bass, East Side Charter School

Annie Norman, Delaware Division of Libraries

Ashley Lockwood, 2023 Teacher of the Year, Lulu Ross Elementary School

Brenda Wise, CSC Global, formerly State of Delaware Office of Management  
and Budget

David Tull, Delaware School Board Association

Elizabeth Farley-Ripple, School of Education, University of Delaware

Elizabeth Lockman, The Redding Consortium for Educational Equity and  
Delaware State Senator

Enid Wallace-Simms, YMCA of Delaware

Heath Chasanov, Kent Sussex Industries

Jeff Taschner, Delaware State Education Association

Jennifer Thompkins, Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League

John Wellons, Boys & Girls Clubs of Delaware

Joseph Jones, New Castle County Vocational Technical School District

Karryl Hubbard, Delaware Department of Labor

Kendall Massett, Delaware Charter Schools Network

Lourdes Puig, Las Américas ASPIRA Academy

Mark Brainard, Delaware Technical Community College

Matthew Denn, The Redding Consortium for Educational Equity and Former  
Lt. Governor of Delaware

Meedra Suratte, Parent Information Center of Delaware

Meghan Walls, Nemours Children's Hospital

Michelle Taylor, United Way of Delaware

Midline Oware, Haitian Coalition of Delaware

Mike Quaranta, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce

Nathalie Princilus, Christina School District

Rick Deadwyler, Corteva

Robert Perkins, Delaware Business Roundtable

Scott Malfitano, CSC Global, Delaware Workforce Development Board

Shawn Brittingham, Delaware State Board of Education

Stuart Comstock-Gay, Delaware Community Foundation

Tammy Croce, Delaware Association of School Administrators

Tony Allen, Delaware State University

## National Experts

Albert Wat, Alliance for Early Success

Anna Maeir, Learning Policy Institute

Charlotte Cahill, Jobs for the Future

Jason Swanson, KnowledgeWorks

Joel Vargas, Jobs for the Future

Jon Alfuth, KnowledgeWorks

Josh Parker, Education First

Ken Shores, University of Delaware

Kira Orange Jones, Teach Plus

Lindsay Sobel, Teach Plus

Luke Rhine, Former U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

Shantel Meek, The Children's Equity Project

Tim Knowles, Carnegie Foundation for the  
Advancement of Teaching

Zahava Stadler, New America

# Working Groups

## Early Care and Education

Co-Chair: Caitlin Gleason, Delaware Department of Education

Co-Chair: Kirsten Olson, Children and Families First

Beth Altemus, Delaware Technical Community College

Dawn Alexander, Delaware Department of Education

Asaiah Beaman Fisher, Healthy Communities Delaware

Julie Bieber, Kingswood Community Center

Georganne Buccine, YMCA of Delaware

Rhondalin Cannon-Tingle, Rhonda's Little Angels Early Care and Education Program

Lara Crowley, Wilmington University

Toni Dickerson, Sussex Preschools

Diane Frentzel, Delaware Readiness Teams

Ed Freel, Delaware Early Childhood Council

Rena Hallam, University of Delaware

Jason Hustedt, Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood, University of Delaware

Don Parsons, Rotary Club of Wilmington

Lisa Ratliff, the little school at Kids Cottage

Dannaé Orisamolade, Delaware State University

Crystal Sherman, Delaware Division of Public Health

Melanie Thomas-Price, A Leap of Faith

Angela Wilson Bowers, Precious Moments

Maxcine Williams, Family child care

## Student-Centered Learning

Co-Chair: Margie Lopez-Waite, ASPIRA Delaware

Co-Chair: Pete Leida, Consultant, PJL Partnerships

Laura Burgos, Wilmington Learning Collaborative

Marqueia Davis, Red Clay Consolidated School District

Ed Emmett, Positive Outcomes Charter School

Taquil Foster Lewis, Cape Henlopen School District

Felicia Harrington, University of Delaware

Patches Hill, Seaford School District

Kae Keister, Wilmington University

Kathy Kelly, Delaware Department of Education

Caroline Letner, Strive

Alyssa Moore, Delaware Department of Education

Caroline O'Neal, Reading Assist

Lisa Peel, Delaware Technical Community College

Sheila Ross, Delaware Division of the Arts

Linda Zankowsky, Montessori Works, UD Montessori Teachers Academy



# Working Groups

## Student Supports

Co-Chair: Fay Blake, Pathways 2 Success  
Co-Chair: Jon Cooper, Colonial School District  
Helen Anderson, Dual Generation Center at Stubbs  
Charneise Alston, Appoquinimink School District  
Wanda Barrett, United Way of Delaware  
David Bever, Delaware Center for Justice  
Debby Boyer, University of Delaware  
Gail Charrier, Delaware Technical Community College  
Rosa DiPiazza, Milford School District  
Kristin Dwyer, Nemours Children's Health  
Sandi Hagans, First State Community Action Agency  
Emmanuel Jenkins, Developmental Disabilities Council  
Linda Jennings, Community Education Building  
Teri Lawler, Delaware Department of Education  
Traci Manza Murphy, Coalition for a Safer Delaware  
LaRetha Odumosu, Charter School of New Castle  
Tracey Pritchard, Wilmington University  
Nika Reid, Indian River School District  
Tracey Roberts, Harlan Elementary School  
Jarrett Royster, YMCA of Delaware  
Annie Slease, Mental Health Literacy Collaborative  
Regina Sidney-Brown, United Way/Delaware Afterschool Network  
Willeme Thomas, Church of the Nazarene

## Educators

Co-Chair: Shelley Rouser, Delaware State University  
Co-Chair: Michael Saylor, Delaware Department of Education  
Jennifer Alexander, Colonial School District  
Jill Austin, Delaware Technical Community College  
Lauren Bailes, University of Delaware  
Linnea Bradshaw, Delaware Professional Standards Board  
Jason Cameron, Seaford School District  
Tammy Croce, Delaware Association of School Administrators  
Kim Hee Stock, Brandywine School District  
Kim Karacalidis, Relay Graduate School of Education  
Krissy Najera, University of Delaware  
Jon Neubauer, Delaware State Education Association  
Corey Miklus, Caesar Rodney School District  
Jason Peel, Sussex Technical High School  
Darren Rainey, Delaware State University  
Dave Santore, EdLeadServe  
Maria Stecker, Longwood Foundation  
Alison Travers, Delaware Academy for School Leadership  
Wendy Turner, 2017 Teacher of the Year, Brandywine School District  
Tyler Wells, Wilmington University  
Brenda Wynder, Delaware State University

# Working Groups

## Postsecondary Success

Co-Chair: Paul Herdman, Rodel

Co-Chair: Rachel Turney, Delaware Department of Labor

Don Baker, FAME

Greg Ballance, Diamond Technologies

Matt Burrows, Appoquinimink School District

Shelly Cecchetti, Kent Sussex Leadership Alliance

Dan Cruce, United Way of Delaware

Rob Eppes, Junior Achievement of Delaware

Evelyn Edney, Early College High School at DSU

Richard Fernandes, Delaware Department of Labor

Rony Flechier, Seaford High School

Kurt Foreman, Delaware Prosperity Partnership

Bryan Horsey, Office of Work-Based Learning

Rick Jakeman, Delaware Department of Education

Joe Jones, New Castle County Vocational Technical School District

Margaret LaFashia, Nemours Children's Health

Amanda Leighty, Odyssey Charter School

Juliet Murawski, Delaware Department of Education

Alok Patel, National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing

Biopharmaceuticals

Jalyn Powell, Outloud LLC

Joanna Staib, Delaware Workforce Development Board

Gary Zoll, Seaford School District

Jon Wickert, Delaware Department of Education

## Student-Centered Funding

Co-Chair: Emily Falcon, Colonial School District

Co-Chair: Gary Henry, University of Delaware

David Blowman, Community Education Building

David Carter, Georgetown Middle School

Heath Chasanov, Kent-Sussex Industries

Sara Hale, Milford School District

Taylor Hawk, Delaware State Education Association

Tika Hartsock, Parent and education advocate

Kim Klein, Delaware Department of Education

Mike Jackson, Delaware Technical and Community College

Coby Owens, Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League

Joanne Schlosberg, Newark Charter School

Ken Shores, University of Delaware

Meedra Surratte, Parent Information Center of Delaware



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jcomp; pressfoto; gpointstudio; mego-studio; benzoix

The Rodel team, which provides staff support to the Vision Coalition





Preparing our students for a lifetime of success

Get engaged today. Join us at:

[www.visioncoalitionde.org](http://www.visioncoalitionde.org)