

DELAWARE EDUCATION NEWS

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Education News

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Delaware Drop-out Rate Stays High

Of every 10 freshmen entering Delaware high schools this fall, six likely will earn their diplomas in 2010.

The rest will leave school quietly, some with less than two years left. They will quit because school is too boring or too hard or because they already missed so many days they couldn't pass if they tried.

Others will leave to get a job, take care of a relative or become a parent. Some will give up because, in their teenage minds, two years is a long time, and they can't see the end in sight...

Delaware's graduation rate, under the national average of 68 percent to 71 percent, has remained stubbornly consistent. Programs such as alternative and adult high schools, help some people graduate. New initiatives, including evening classes, specialized programs, the incentive of college scholarships and adviser relationships, aim to reach more.

Education leaders say they, too, are frustrated that in Delaware, only 7 out of 10 white students, and half of black and Hispanic students graduate from high school.

That doesn't take into account those students who quit before reaching the ninth grade. Seventy-two of about 20,000 seventh- and eighth-graders dropped out in the 2004-05 school year. Students must be 16 to drop out with a parent's permission or 18 without it, according to state law....

Delaware Shows Moderate Gains for Needy Students

A new report from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation finds that just eight states can claim even moderate success over the past 15 years at boosting the percentage of their poor or minority students who are at or above proficient in reading, math or science.

The study also finds that most states making significant achievement gains-including California, Delaware, Florida, New York, Massachusetts, and Texas-are national leaders in education reform, indicating that solid standards, tough accountability, and greater school choice can yield better classroom results.

See the study at:

<http://ent.groundspring.org/EmailNow/pub.php?module=URLTracker&cmd=track&j=104914603&u=998506>.

To see the rankings please go to:

<http://www.edexcellence.net/foundation/global/page.cfm?id=388#tfr06edreformachievements>

Delaware's Vision 2015 Coalition Unveils Comprehensive Plan for Improving Public Education in Delaware

Calling for “no exceptions, no excuses,” the Vision 2015 Steering Committee issued a comprehensive plan to develop a world class public education system in Delaware. As designed, the Steering Committee claimed it would serve as a model for the nation and the world.

The six building blocks of Vision 2015, containing dozens of recommendations, reinforce one another:

1. **Set Sights High.** Set high academic standards for every child, coupled with high-quality curricula and additional instructional time to give students the best opportunity to meet them.
2. **Invest in Early Childhood Education.** Target more resources to high-need children to build an early foundation for long-term success.
3. **Develop and Support High-Quality Teachers.** Give teachers the tools, coaching and resources needed to customize instruction for each and every child, and reward teachers for their skills and effectiveness.
4. **Empower Principals to be Great Leaders.** Empower principals with the knowledge, authority, flexibility, resources, and technology required to focus tightly on student achievement and to get results.
5. **Encourage Innovation and Require Accountability.** Provide a rich set of school options and instructional methods to meet the varying needs of students and their families. And require accountability for student success from all

involved, including parents, community groups, teachers, principals, business leaders, and public officials.

6. Establish a Simple and Equitable Funding System. Establish a school funding formula that is easy to understand and weighted to address the needs of individual students, so that taxpayers can be sure that public funds are well spent and so that all students have the resources they need to reach the same high standards. Although Vision 2015 cannot be implemented overnight, the work begins today. The first initiatives will be rolled out in early 2007, and several will require significant changes in policies and practice.

Early work will focus on: providing more professional support to principals and teachers; benchmarking our academic standards internationally; generating high-quality curricula; and improving assessments and technology systems so they can help school leaders, teachers, and parents alike to better understand what is needed for each student's individual success. Top-notch infrastructure paired with highly trained and well-supported educators set the foundation for Vision 2015.

Beginning in 2007, interested school districts and charter schools will be invited to join a statewide network that adopts a full set of Vision 2015 recommendations. Recruitment of an initial group of "Vision districts" and "Vision schools" will pave the way for every other district and school within the state.

In addition, a new entity, the Delaware Public Education Partnership, will be established to reinforce Vision 2015 goals. The partnership—to be governed by a coalition of education, government, business and community leaders—will hold public and private leaders accountable for the transformation and ensure that the Vision 2015 schools and districts receive the resources and support they need to succeed.

To view the full Vision 2015 plan:

<http://www.vision2015de.org/Portals/0/Vision2015report10-12.pdf>

Delaware's Growth Model Approved By USDOEd

The U.S. Department of Education announced today that Delaware is one of only

three states to have their "Growth Model" approved under the guidelines of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Just one year ago, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced a pilot program where states who were closing achievement gaps and increasing student achievement could submit proposals to help strengthen their accountability standards. Secretary Spellings stated that no more than ten high-quality growth models would be approved in 2006.

"I am very pleased that our growth model proposal had been approved by Washington," said Secretary of Education Valerie A. Woodruff. "In the spring of 2006, we submitted what we thought was a viable model that was disapproved. However, we went back to the table and made adjustments based on the feedback we were getting from USDOE, and obviously that has paid off." Delaware's growth model is based on individual student achievement over time and will allow Delaware to look at individual student growth from year to year rather than comparing one class to another.

"The growth model selected by Delaware for the pilot program is similar to one that had been developed prior to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002," said Robin Taylor, Associate Secretary for Assessment and Accountability. "For years, Delaware has had the necessary data systems and infrastructure, assessments for multiple years in the areas of reading and math in contiguous grades, and a model designed to hold schools accountable for all students being proficient by 2013 – 2014. Today's announcement just further enforces our work to ensure all students succeed."

The approved growth model was developed by a statewide NCLB stakeholder group including teachers, building level administrators, administrators' association, special education coordinators, Title I coordinators, curriculum directors, local chief school officers, State Board of Education, parents, business community, advocacy groups, and local boards of education.

In order for the growth model to be approved by Washington, Delaware's accountability system must meet seven core principles as outlined by USDOE.

Those principles are:

- The proposed accountability system must ensure that all students are proficient by 2013-2014 and set annual goals to ensure that the achievement gap is

closing for all groups of students.

- The accountability system must establish high expectations for low-achieving students that are not based on student demographic or school characteristics.
- The accountability system must produce separate accountability decisions about student achievement in reading/language arts and in mathematics.
- All students in the tested grades must be included in the assessment and accountability system; schools and districts must be held accountable for the performance of student subgroups; and the accountability system must include all public schools and districts in the state.
- Annual assessments in reading/ language arts and math in each of grades 3-8 and high school must have been administered for more than one year, must produce comparable results from year to year and grade to grade, and must be approved through the peer review process for the 2005-06 school year.
- The accountability model and state data system must track student progress.
- The accountability system must include student participation rates in the state's assessment system and student achievement on an additional academic indicator.

Delaware will now report the traditional school accountability information as well as the growth model information side by side in school report cards when that information is released.