

DELAWARE EDUCATION NEWS

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Education News

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Delaware Ranks 10th in the Nation for Teacher Pay

Teacher Pay Is Insufficient To Meet Rising Debt, Housing Costs in Many Areas

Delaware ranked 10th in the nation for its average teacher salary in 2004-05, according to the American Federation of Teachers' (AFT) annual teacher salary survey released today. Nationally, anemic teacher salary growth continues to lag behind inflation and precludes many teachers from finding affordable housing and paying off student loans.

The average teacher salary in Delaware for the 2004-05 school year was \$52,924, up 3.5 percent from the previous year. Delaware was ranked seventh in the nation for beginning teacher salary, at \$35,854, an increase of 3.7 percent from 2004.

The average teacher salary nationally in 2004-05 was \$47,602, a 2.2 percent increase from the previous year. This falls short of the rate of inflation for that year, which was 3.4 percent. Between 2003 and 2005, the buying power of the average teacher salary has decreased by almost \$800.

The 2005 salary survey also examines the impact of rising housing costs and student loan debt payments on teachers in America's 50 largest cities. The study concludes that the incomes of mid-career teachers in these cities will limit them to purchasing lower-priced homes. In cities such as Seattle, Oakland, Los Angeles and San Francisco, many career teachers will never be able to realize the middle-class dream of home ownership.

Other states in the Mid-Atlantic region ranked in the AFT survey as follows: New Jersey was ranked third in the nation, at \$56,635; New York was sixth, at \$55,665; Pennsylvania was ninth, at \$53,281; and Maryland was 12th, at \$52,330.

Connecticut had the highest average teacher salary, at \$57,760.

Achievement Gap Report for 2006

The Delaware State Board of Education released the 2006 achievement gap report entitled *Awareness to Action Revisited: Tracking the Achievement Gap in Delaware Schools*. The report was compiled by the Research and Development Center at the University of Delaware and funded by the State Board of Education. It is the fourth in an annual series of reports which tracks the gap by school and by subgroups over a multi-year period.

The report is meant to be informative for both communities and schools. It shows all Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) tested grades by school. For each tested grade in a school both reading and mathematics scores are disaggregated by race, income status, limited English proficiency and special education categories. The scores are plotted from 2003 through 2006. Each school is also identified by its own demographic makeup and its status for 2006 under federal guidelines specified by No Child Left Behind.

In releasing the report, Jean Allen, State Board President, noted that we are seeing some real signs of progress at the school level with many of the elementary schools essentially closing the achievement gap in 3rd grade reading and middle schools and high schools are showing progress. "We continue to be concerned about the gaps that persist in mathematics across many of our schools as well as the large gaps that persist at the high school level particularly in math. These are areas on which we have to put more focus."

Additional findings show that special education students continue to fall further behind as they move through the grades and charter schools have little gap information due to the lack of diversity in their student bodies.

To see full report:

http://www.rdc.udel.edu/awareness_to_action.asp?y=2006

Charter School Report

The State Board of Education, along with the Department of Education, contracted with the Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University in 2003 to conduct a multi-year evaluation of Delaware's charter school program. Dr. Gary Miron is the Chief of Staff of the Center and is the principal researcher on this project. Year three of the report has been released.

The report continues its focus on charter school missions, analyses of student performance, teacher satisfaction and qualifications and policy issues that are relevant to charter school oversight, with the addition this year of comparisons of revenues and expenditures between traditional public schools and charter schools.

Based on the findings in year 3, the report concluded that charter school reform is being implemented successfully in Delaware.

It noted the progress over time in modifying and improving regulations and oversight. It further concluded that the area of finances is a difficult one to assess because of the differences in teacher qualification, types of students served and charter school autonomy for budgeting funds. It was noted that funds for capital costs continue to be an issue for charter schools since they have to rely on operational dollars to provide facilities.

Dr. Miron stated that in the aggregate, charter schools do not look much different from the traditional public schools in terms of student makeup. However, when you begin to look at student makeup school by school, you find substantial differences. Some charter schools serve primarily minority students and other serve primarily white students. Most charter schools also serve few students with disabilities or English language learners. In terms of student performance on the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP), the study concluded that based on the analysis, charter schools performed less well at grades 3 and 5 than traditional public schools.

There was improvement over time at grade 8 and by grade 10, charter school students performed above expected levels.

Mrs. Jean Allen, President of the State Board of Education, noted that the reports have been helpful in giving an outside look to a new and complex area of school governance. “We have seen the charter school reform begin to mature and we have modified our practices as a result. The Board believes that strict oversight in the initial application stages and first years of charter school operations is essential.”

Echoing Mrs. Allen’s remarks, Secretary of Education Valerie A. Woodruff stated “The charter school movement has been an important public education policy initiative in Delaware. Taking stock of its strengths and challenges after a decade of implementation is critical.”

Understanding High School Graduation Rates

Graduation rates are a fundamental indicator of whether or not the nation’s public school system is doing what it is intended to do: enroll, engage, and educate youth to be productive members of society. In today’s increasingly competitive global economy, graduating high school is a critical step towards securing a good job and a promising future. Yet nationally, one-third of our students—about 1.2 million each year—leave high school without a diploma, and graduation rates for poor and minority students are even lower. The failure to graduate every child prepared for the 21st century has serious consequences for both individual students and the rest of American society. Yet, the unacceptably low graduation rates of America’s youth have been obscured for far too long by inaccurate data, misleading calculations and reporting, and flawed accountability systems.

Nationally, and for each state, *Understanding High School Graduation Rates* illustrates the discrepancies in graduation rates reported by government and independent sources, examines why this is important, and describes three core

policy areas that are fundamental to calculating, reporting, and improving accurate graduation rates:

- Use of common, accurate graduation rate calculations
- Statewide data system that track individual student data from the time students enter the educational system until they leave it

Policies that meaningfully holds high schools accountable for improving student achievement on test scores and increasing graduation rates so that low-performing students are not unnecessarily held back or encouraged to leave school without a diploma.

To see Delaware report:

http://www.all4ed.org/publications/wcwc/Delaware_wc.pdf

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