

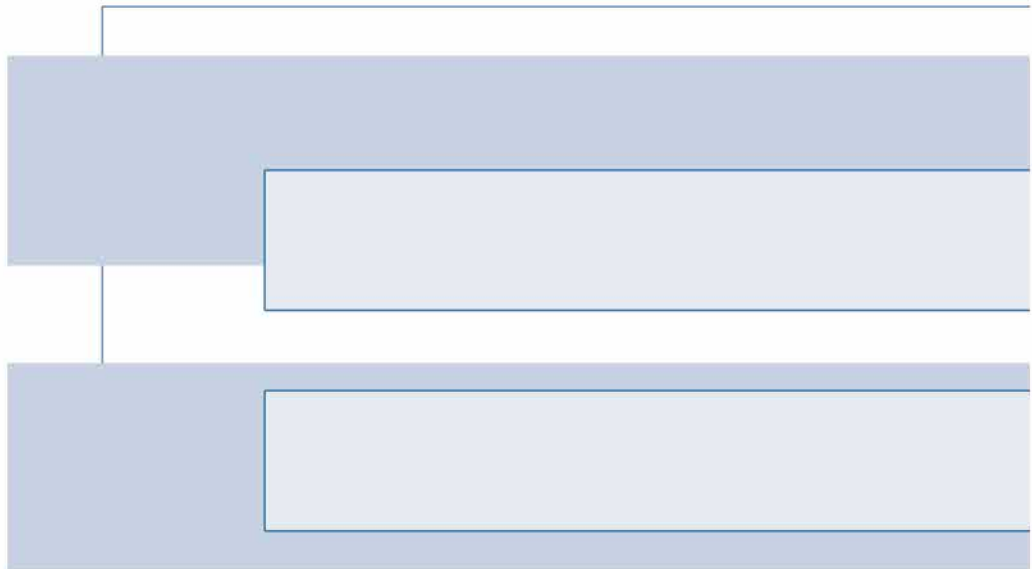


Delaware
Department of Education

Delaware

Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators for All Students (2015–2025)

August 25, 2015



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Section 1. Introduction: Delaware’s Commitment and the Delaware Context

Despite the deeply held American belief that a democracy thrives through a well-educated populous, it is only since 1965 that state education agencies have been bound by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to provide equitable access to education for all students, with particular attention paid to students from low-income and minority backgrounds. For the last 50 years, we as a nation have fallen short of a duty that we should have addressed before the first school ever opened. Across the nation, poor and minority students do not always have access to a level playing field with their nonminority and more affluent peers when it comes to obtaining an excellent education. In Delaware, although many student achievement and access gaps continue to persist, there are several schools and districts that have begun to demonstrate that history need not repeat itself. Delaware has long focused on closing educator equity gaps because we, as a state, believe that *we will only close the achievement gap for our highest need students if all students have equitable access to the most capable and well-prepared educators*. Despite our concerted efforts to date, our student achievement data persistently tell us we have more work ahead. The good news is that many of Delaware’s educators and local leaders are already showing what is possible for ALL students by re-doubling efforts to ensure that “excellent educators for all” is a statewide reality.

Recent state data illustrated that significant achievement gaps exist among Black, Hispanic, low-income, students with disabilities, and English language learners (ELLs) compared with their White peers (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1. Difference in Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced, DCAS 2013–14

Student Subgroup	English Language Arts	Mathematics
Black/White	23*	27*
Hispanic/White	20*	18*
Low-income/non-low income	21*	22*
Students with disabilities (SWD)/non-SWD	49*	48*
English language learner (ELL)/non-ELL	42*	33*

Note. This sample includes all students in Grades 3–10 who participated in 2013–14 English language arts and mathematics assessments. All data are from Delaware Department of Education records.

* Difference is statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

As a state, Delaware recognizes that these persistent achievement gaps strongly predict how likely a student is to attend and excel in college or in a career. The National Center for Education Statistics (2015) recently reported that in 2013, the immediate college enrollment rate for high school completers from high-income families (80 percent) was 31 percentage points higher than the rate for those from low-income families (49 percent). More than half of Delaware public school students who enroll in the state’s colleges have to take remedial courses that are not credit-bearing. Although this fact is concerning, perhaps more alarming is that only 30 percent of

Delaware high school freshmen make it to their sophomore year of college, and only 17 percent of low-income freshmen persist to their second year of college. Further, although much has been written about other contributing factors to these gaps (e.g., poor health care and funding shortfalls), the state-specific data reviewed from Delaware suggests that the achievement gap can be closed by ending educator quality disparities.

Educator quality remains the number-one in-school factor affecting whether Delaware's students have access to the great education that they deserve.

To that end, the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) is pleased to submit to the U.S. Department of Education the following plan for improving equitable access to excellent teachers and leaders in our state. This plan responds to Education Secretary Arne Duncan's July 7, 2014, letter to all state education agencies (SEAs), as augmented with additional guidance published on November 10, 2014. Delaware's plan complies with (1) the requirement in Section 1111(b)(8)(C) of ESEA that each state's Title I, Part A plan includes information on the specific steps that the SEA will take to ensure that students from low-income families and students of color are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers, and the measures that the agency will use to evaluate and publicly report the progress of the agency with respect to such steps; and (2) the requirement in ESEA Section 1111(e)(2) that a state's plan be revised by the SEA if necessary. Given the importance of strong school leadership, the plan also addresses access for students from low-income families and students of color to high-performing school principals.

Delaware is eager to be a leading state in the nation in the development and implementation of this state plan to ensure equitable access. Delaware is uniquely positioned for three key reasons: our commitment to generating and reviewing high-quality educator effectiveness data, our commitment to authentic stakeholder engagement with the full spectrum of actors in the system, and our commitment to a comprehensive, coordinated, urgent approach to ensuring that all students have access to excellent teachers and leaders.

Delaware's Commitment to High-Quality Educator

Effectiveness Data. One way in which Delaware hopes to lead the nation in ensuring equitable access to all educators is through effective establishment and usage of educator effectiveness data. The state's first-round win in the 2010 Race to the Top (RTTT) competition was predicated on state and local leadership's historic commitment to educator excellence, which dates back to the 1980s. Delaware was one of the first states to institute a statewide educator evaluation system, and one of the first to establish statewide data platforms. The educator evaluation system was revised in 2005, creating the critical capacity to link student and educator data and allowing educators and policymakers to quickly analyze the performance of students over time, track how graduates perform in college, and link teachers to teacher preparation programs, all of which provide rich opportunities to use data to drive performance at the system, school, and classroom levels.

Delaware's Commitment to High-Quality Data

One way in which Delaware hopes to lead the nation in ensuring equitable access to all educators is through effective establishment and usage of educator effectiveness data.

Delaware knows from available research data that the presence of a highly skilled teacher is the strongest in-school predictor of a student's academic success, with high-quality school leaders being the second most important factor. However, several recent national studies (Glazerman & Max 2011; Goldhaber, Lesley, & Theobald, 2014; Isenberg et al., 2013; Kalogrides & Loeb, 2013; Sass, Hannaway, Xu, Figlio, & Feng, 2012; Schultz, 2014) demonstrate that educator equity gaps continue to endure for students from low-income and minority backgrounds, according to almost every educator effectiveness metric, at the classroom, school, and district levels. Delaware's educator excellence work is focused on the principle that ensuring equitable access to

