

Vision 2015

Fact Sheet

Q: What is Vision 2015?

Vision 2015 is a private/public effort dedicated to developing a world-class public education system in Delaware. We intend to be the first state in the country to develop a truly innovative, world-class education system for every student in every school—not just pockets of excellence here and there. In so doing, Delaware has a golden opportunity to serve as an example to the rest of the U.S. and the rest of the world.

Q: Why is it important?

In our increasingly competitive world, each and every one of our students needs to be fully prepared for higher education, the work place, and responsible citizenship. As other states and nations gain academic and intellectual ground, we must transform our public education system to remain competitive and ensure the well-being of Delaware citizens. We need to be a state whose education system is strong enough to attract new employers and families.

Q. What are its aspirations?

Vision 2015 seeks a bold, fundamental transformation of Delaware's public education system, which will:

Create boundary-less opportunities for every Delaware child

- Dramatically improve student learning and academic achievement
- Prepare every student for success in post-secondary pursuits and the workforce

Build differentiated, sustainable, competitive advantage for Delaware in an increasingly “flat” world

- Build a highly-skilled labor force of lifelong learners
- Attract employers and families via the quality of Delaware's public education
- Encourage an informed, engaged citizenry

Be the first state to transform public education for the entire state

- Develop a truly innovative and dynamic world-class educational system
- Serve as an example to the rest of the U.S. and the rest of the world

Q: What led to Vision 2015?

A decade ago Delaware made great strides in improving our education system, and we've continued to make good progress. Recently, several factors have converged to create an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate substantially that work:

1.) Shared focus and commitment. The education and business communities have come together to explore a new level of collaboration. Vision 2015 has emerged from the interests of these public and private leaders.

2.) Improved information. We know a great deal more about what is working and what needs improvement in how we educate our students. Overall, the data we have about student performance and other key educational measures have improved, and they are more readily available as tools for teachers, students, parents, and administrators.

3.) Technological advances are changing the way we do everything today, and our students must be positioned to live, compete, and thrive in the 21st century economy. Additionally, we must use the powers of technology and communications to increase student learning by connecting our classrooms, teachers, and students to worldwide resources.

4.) Unprecedented international pressure. Our education system is performing about as well as its design will allow, but many other countries are bolder in their education policies and investments. If our nation continues to follow the path of "incremental" reform, we will be left behind by those who are engaging in a fundamental redesign of their school systems.

Q: What's wrong with what we have?

Very simply, we're not doing all that we can for each and every child. Regardless of whether or not a student pursues post-secondary education or moves directly into the world of work, each will need competencies and competitive skills to thrive.

While there are some noteworthy gains in our elementary schools, only 36% of our graduating students enroll in college within 5 years and, worse still, only 20% of low-income students are likely to attend college. This isn't acceptable, particularly when two-thirds of the Delaware jobs projected for 2010 will require some post-secondary education.

Simply put, the knowledge and skills that were good enough to get and keep a good job a generation ago are no longer enough to support a middle-class standard of living. Today's students need to know and be able to do far more than their parents or grandparents. They need "the basics" and a lot more.

Q: Is this only about getting jobs?

No, the well-being of families, the vitality of our communities, and the strength of our democracy are also at risk. We want all our students to have the opportunity to lead satisfying, healthy, and productive lives. Whether a young person decides to enter college or go directly into the workforce, the skills required for success are basically the same.

Q: Who is leading the process?

Vision 2015 is being led by a 27-member Steering Committee composed of education, business, and community leaders. A series of Work Groups, with broader community representation—including parents and students—will help us address the most important issues.

The effort is chaired by Marvin “Skip” Schoenhals (CEO of WSFS Bank). The Steering Committee includes:

Ms. Jean W. Allen	Delaware State Board of Education
Ms. Raye Jones Avery	Christina Cultural Arts Center
Mr. Peter Basile	Delaware Association of School Administrators
Ms. Lisa Blunt-Bradley	Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League
Dr. Kevin E. Carson	Woodbridge School District
Ms. Ann C. Case	Delaware State Board of Education
Ms. Jennifer W. Davis	Delaware Office of Management and Budget
Mr. Ernest J. Dianastasis	Delaware Business Roundtable; CAI
Ms. Cindy DiPinto	Wood, Byrd & Associates
Ms. Nancy Doorey	Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League
Ms. Susan Francis	Delaware School Boards Association
Ms. Barbara Grogg	Delaware State Education Association
Dr. Paul A. Herdman	Rodel Foundation of Delaware
Ms. Dorothy R. Jacobson	Rodel Foundation of Delaware
Dr. Dennis Loftus	Delaware Academy for School Leadership
Dr. Tony J. Marchio	Appoquinimink School District
Mr. Robert Rescigno	Bank of America Card Services
Dr. Daniel Rich	Office of the Provost, University of Delaware
Dr. Jaime “Gus” Rivera	Division of Public Health and State Health
Mr. Marvin N. Schoenhals	Delaware Business Roundtable; WSFS Bank
Dr. Dianne G. Sole	Polytech School District
Mr. Robert Sutton	Bank of America Card Services
Mr. John H. Taylor, Jr.	Delaware Public Policy Institute
Mr. William M. Topkis	Small Business Alliance; Topkis Financial Advisors LLC
Mr. Howard Weinberg	Delaware State Education Association
Mr. James A. Wolfe	Delaware State Chamber of Commerce
The Honorable Valerie Woodruff	Delaware Department of Education
<i>Mr. Kevin Hall</i>	<i>The Broad Foundation (ex officio)</i>

Two international consulting firms are supporting the effort: the Boston Consulting Group, which will provide research, analysis, and recommendations based on priorities established by the Steering Committee, and Cambridge Leadership Associates, which is facilitating the decision-making process.

Q: What is the timeline?

A “blueprint” plan containing specific recommendations, phasing, and resource requirements will be complete in summer 2006, with a phased implementation beginning in the fall of 2006. This is meant to be a 10-year plan, so some of the initiatives will take shape over time. Some of the recommendations will require changes in state and school district policies. Many will require changes in everyday practice.

Q: How do I get involved?

There will be ample opportunity throughout the process for input and discussion by the public. We will keep citizens engaged and informed through a broad array of forums, special meetings, and communication tools. Work groups will elicit ideas, recommendations, and feedback on specific topics, and draw on those with specific areas of expertise.

Q: Who is paying the bill?

The Rodel Foundation of Delaware and MBNA underwrote the start-up work, and Steering Committee members have contributed invaluable time and in-kind services to planning Vision 2015.

A national foundation, The Broad Foundation (Los Angeles) is co-investing with the Rodel Foundation of Delaware in the development of the blueprint plan, which is estimated at \$2.0 million. Yet Vision 2015 will be a Delaware-driven effort; any outside funding will “support” this effort, not “drive” it. The blueprint, which is due in mid-2006, also will serve as a prospectus for investment by national, state, and local entities for the implementation phase.

(For further information on the Broad and Rodel foundations, see: www.broadfoundation.org and www.rodelfoundationde.org.)

Q. What topics does Vision 2015 address?

We are in the process of identifying the fundamental system conditions and long-term strategies that will make the greatest difference in accelerating student performance. We want to develop a bold plan that will prepare our students to be competitive with students graduating from the best schools in the US and abroad. We aren’t interested in just tinkering at the edges. Among the many topics to be studied will be:

- How we attract and retain the very best educators (teachers and administrators)
- How our public schools are financed and how resources are allocated
- How we test our students and use the data generated by those tests to accelerate learning

- The rigor and relevance of our academic standards and the responsibility of each district and charter school to provide a challenging curriculum aligned to those standards for all children
- The choices we provide to families looking for school options
- How to close the “preparation gap” (through early childhood education) and the “achievement gap” among all student groups
- How much time we commit to educating our students
- How we can meaningfully engage more parents and community members in the education process