

Delaware's education plan approved by State Board

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Dover, Del. -

The Delaware State Board of Education approved key elements of Governor Jack Markell's education reform plan Jan. 14. The new regulations improve the system for evaluating teacher and administrator performance, while also targeting schools that need more assistance to ensure that all of Delaware's children have the opportunity to succeed.

"These reforms are a result of the partnership we have with our legislators, educators, administrators, school boards, businesses and parents," Markell said. "It's clear that what works best about Delaware is that we can all come together as neighbors to find solutions like this."

Two sets of regulations were approved. The first, which includes Regulations 106A and 108A, reforms the teacher and administrator evaluation system by redefining the component of performance evaluations that focuses on student improvement. The rating system will be reoriented so that satisfactory student growth is required for an educator to be rated as "Effective." Teachers and administrators who do not reach "Effective" status will be provided a mentor or coach as part of their improvement plan. For the first time, teachers who make significant strides in improving student success can achieve the designation of "Highly Effective."

"We not only want our children to succeed, we want our teachers to succeed," said Markell, "We all recognized the need for a better rating system to be fair to them and the children they work so hard to help each day. We also recognized that it's not enough to simply tell someone to improve—we must give teachers the support they need."

The changes to the evaluation system will take effect in the 2011/2012 school year. Over the next 18 months the Department of Education and the school districts will work with stakeholders to develop rigorous, comparable measures that will fairly represent what students have learned.

The second set of regulations, Regulation 103, focuses on targeting schools that need assistance and providing appropriate—and effective—support.

Approximately 40,000 Delaware students attended schools that did not meet targets for educational progress in 2008-09. Of those, 26,000 are in schools that have not made their targets for at least five consecutive years.

Four levels of support will be provided to schools, depending on recent performance:

- For schools that have not met targets for educational progress in an area for at least two years: The Department of Education will provide a support team and work with the district to create an improvement plan that may include increased use of community partnerships and supplemental services for students, professional development and mentoring, use of family crisis therapists, technical assistance, and performance incentives.
- For schools that do not show education progress for three or more years: The Department and district will expand support and evaluate more aggressive reforms. This may include replacing school leadership and/or select staff, providing outside expertise to advise the school, decreasing management authority at the school level, and implementing scheduling changes to increase teacher collaboration time and extend learning time.
- For schools that have shown a sustained inability to make educational progress: Districts with such schools will be required to make fundamental changes in the school, which may include closing the school, converting the school to a charter school, contracting with a management company, or other major restructuring efforts that will vary depending on the school's particular circumstances.
- Develop a "Partnership Zone" program in which the Secretary will select a limited number of schools that have been well below performance targets for several years to partner with the district and the Department to chart a new course for achieving student success.

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