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## Education challenges remain; at heart, a test of political will

### DELAWARE'S SCHOOLS

*The News Journal*

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan said it is time for schools to get out of the catch-up business.

He was talking about poor schools, rich schools, city, suburban and even Delaware schools. All of them.

Too many high schools, he said, spend too much time trying to teach students what they should have learned in the lower grades. And too many colleges have to send too many students through remedial courses to learn what they should have picked up in high school.

Because of this, the United States is now trying to play catch-up with the countries winning tomorrow's economic race. What kind of work force will we have if even our college graduates aren't up to the world's competitive academic standards?

The secretary spoke Tuesday at a University of Delaware conference, "Vision 2015 and Delaware's Race to the Top." Vision 2015 is the state's homegrown reform effort to make Delaware's schools among the best in the world by 2015. "Race to the Top" is Secretary Duncan's challenge to all states to show the imagination, the commitment and the political will to truly improve schools. The incentive is a pool of more than \$4 billion for the schools that win.

Delaware has its work cut out for it, the secretary said. It has a 30 percent dropout rate. For black and Latino students, it's 40 percent.

Secretary Duncan said he wants to see an end to the bureaucratic and vested interests that put adult wants over the needs of children. But that, he said, will take real political will.

Can Delaware do it? The state is positioned to. Certainly, enough of the right people say they are willing. Perhaps they should heed two of the secretary's closing lines: "Please don't do it for the money. Do it because it's the right thing to do."

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