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## Vision 2015: How Delaware leads the way

*DELAWARE VOICE*

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One thing that sets Vision 2015 apart from other education reform efforts across the country is the Vision Network of districts and schools.

Established among 10 public schools in 2007, the network has become a real-world platform for best practices that are benefiting 20,000 Delaware students in 25 schools across the state.

Delaware's Vision Network is a national leader in its commitment to addressing the key levers for significant education reform, which are now recognized and promoted across the country by the U.S. Department of Education. The fundamental message that Vision 2015 has established is the necessity for alignment and coherence across all levels of the education system; in fact, there is no parallel effort nationally that is as ambitious in its attempts to align state, district, school and classroom levels in a coherent commitment to reform.

Although efforts at comprehensive education reform typically take five to seven years to show measurable results, an independent evaluation by the American Institutes for Research already reports strong evidence of progress after just two years of work.

Schools that joined the Network in 2007 have made significant progress in the practices that directly affect teaching and learning, with particularly impressive gains in instructional leadership by principals. It is noteworthy that this effect is apparent to all staff members within the schools—those who receive network training and those who have not. Districts and schools that joined the network a year later, in 2008, similarly demonstrate progress in several key areas, including instructional leadership, staff collaboration, and the use of best practices in the classroom.

We also see progress in student achievement. Based on interim assessments conducted by the schools, eight of the ten that joined the network in 2007 noted academic improvements in their instructional focus areas. Additionally, three demonstrated significant improvements in state achievement test results for their focus area. Network schools focus on student performance, they participate in advanced training in using data to customize instruction, and each school chooses an area of instructional focus—such as mathematics or literacy—to address specific needs of its own students.

So why is the Vision Network generating such noticeable results so soon?

One critical difference is the comprehensive framework provided by Vision 2015, itself. Vision 2015 aligns all levels of Delaware's education system—state, district, school, and classroom—with a shared focus on improving student achievement. Delaware is unique in this respect.

In addition, there is a high level of satisfaction with the hands-on professional development training provided to participants in network schools. Principals and teachers cite the best practices and principles on which the training is built—focus, accountability, data use, and collaboration—as strong elements of the network process.

Participants also reported that the grants provided to network schools enable them to develop and refine their instructional practices, pursue meaningful professional development plans, establish additional supports for students with specific needs, and build a school culture highly focused on student achievement. These educators also benefit from opportunities to interact with their peers and observe the best practices of highly effective classrooms and schools within and outside the state.

AIR's formal evaluation results are echoed in comments made by enthusiastic and creative network principals and teachers. In the words of Paul M. Hodgson Vocational Technical High School principal Annemarie Linden, "Our school couldn't be more excited or proud to join the Vision Network. We've heard time and time again from our colleagues within our district that because of the network, they have been able to improve school culture more than ever and make great strides toward deeply impacting student achievement. What educator wouldn't want that?"

Of course, Delaware, Vision 2015, and the Vision Network are still at the initial stage of education reform work -- and there is much more to be done to build on the ground gained to date. It will require that all parties involved in this exceptional collaboration continue to work together to make changes at all levels if Delaware is to provide a world class education to each of its students.

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