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Delaware's Vision Network Expands to Include Six School Districts and Four Charter Schools

***Vision 2015 selects two more districts and two more charter schools,
doubling the number of educators involved in Vision 2015***

Wilmington, Del., May 6, 2008 – Two more school districts and two more charter schools have joined the Vision Network, a public-private initiative that is implementing the recommendations of Vision 2015, the state's plan to create a system of world-class schools in Delaware. The new participants are joining the initial four districts and ten schools that launched the Vision Network in summer 2007, bringing the total number of schools involved to 21.

"I am delighted that the Vision Network is expanding," said Marvin N. Schoenhals, chair of Vision 2015. "It's been particularly gratifying to hear from teachers and principals in the first year's group that they are learning and implementing practices that will make them even more effective."

Members of the second cohort of districts and schools include: *Christina School District* – Christiana High School, Glasgow High School, Newark High School, Bayard Middle School, Gauger-Cobbs Middle School, George V. Kirk Middle School, and Shue-Medill Middle School; *Lake Forest School District* – W.T. Chipman Middle School and Lake Forest High School; *Charter Schools* – Sussex Academy of Arts and Sciences and Thomas A. Edison Charter School. Participating leadership teams include Superintendents, Heads of School, principals, teachers, other district and school leaders, Board members, and parents. Each leadership team will receive monthly professional development, individual expert coaching, and opportunities for strategic collaboration with other educators.

"We are thrilled to join this exciting effort, because high quality professional development and best practices are essential for improving student achievement" said Dr. Alina Columbus, Head of School of Thomas A. Edison Charter School. "Over the next year, we will be examining our core values, looking closely at how we serve students, re-evaluating our policies and procedures, and collaborating with other high-achieving Network schools – all in an effort to improve student learning."

Beginning in June 2008, leadership teams from the new districts and schools will receive intensive training provided by the University of Delaware's Academy for School Leadership and by Focus on Results, an education consulting firm that has worked successfully with exemplary public school initiatives in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and Boston, Massachusetts. The research-based training allows educators to use student achievement data to drive instructional decisions and to support students' individual needs.

The first cohort of the Vision Network will continue its work with Focus on Results and the Delaware Academy for School Leadership through 2008-2009. Activities will focus on using data to implement school-wide instructional improvements. "Participation in the Vision Network over the past seven months has been an incredible learning experience and one in which administrators, teacher leaders, and parents are all working collaboratively to improve student achievement," said Susan Bunting, Superintendent of the Indian River School District. "I am sure the second cohort will find the training as stimulating and thought-provoking as we have."

Districts and schools interested in joining the Vision Network attended introductory meetings this spring to explore the opportunity. Participation in the Network is determined by a variety of factors, including a district's or school's geographic and demographic distribution; its belief in the need for change; an expectation that every student can be successful; alignment with Vision 2015 recommendations; and the capability, stability, and collaborative skills of its leadership.

Various public and private partners support the Vision Network, including the Delaware Department of Education, University of Delaware, Delaware State Education Association, Delaware Public Policy Institute, Delaware Business Roundtable, JPMorgan Chase, Delaware Community Foundation, and Rodel Foundation of Delaware. "The Vision Network is an exciting opportunity for principals and teacher leaders to play an active role in our state's reform efforts," said Valerie Woodruff, Secretary of Education. "The Department of Education is committed to helping the Vision Network schools by overcoming regulatory obstacles and adopting instructional best practices."

The nine-member Vision 2015 Implementation Team, which oversees the Vision Network, is a subset of the 28-member Steering Committee that drafted the Vision 2015 Plan. The nine members include: Chair Marvin N. Schoenhals, Chairman, WSFS Bank; H. Raye Jones Avery, director of the Christina Cultural Arts Center; Dr. Kevin Carson, Past President, Delaware Chief State School Officers Association; Cynthia DiPinto, WolfBlock Public Strategies; Dr. Paul A. Herdman, President and CEO, Rodel Foundation of Delaware; Dr. Daniel Rich, Provost, University of Delaware; John H. Taylor, Jr., Executive Director, Delaware Public Policy Institute, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce; Howard Weinberg, Executive Director, Delaware State Education Association; and the Honorable Valerie A. Woodruff, Delaware Secretary of Education. Robert W Rescigno is the liaison between the Implementation Team and Vision Network participants.

The first cohort of Vision Network districts and schools includes: Howard High School of Technology and St. Georges Technical High School of New Castle County Vo-Tech District; Brick Mill Elementary School and Silver Lake Elementary of Appoquinimink School District; Central Middle School and William Henry Middle School of Capital School District; Indian River High School and Sussex Central High School of Indian River School District; Kuumba Academy Charter School; and MOT Charter School.

Visit <http://www.vision2015delaware.org/vision/network/main> to learn more.

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