

State Board of Education Meeting March 18, 2021

This week marks the anniversary of COVID's dramatic impact on education here in Delaware. On March 13th, 2020, students left school as usual without any idea that their attending in-person classes had ended for the 2019-20 school year. On March 16th, both students and teachers had to immediately pivot into a remote learning environment. Only some had devices, and internet accessibility was dependent upon geographic location within the state. A year later we can reflect upon the results of the gallant collective effort students, staff, parents, and community supports have made to continue instructional delivery despite the challenges. On behalf of the Department I would like to express our deepest gratitude to our numerous partners for supporting learning during the pandemic.

During the first two weeks of this month we have been engaged in a swirl of activities. Although the legislators are meeting virtually, we have been extremely busy addressing the myriad education-related bills that are either in the design stage or have been introduced. This week we are sincerely hoping that the Opportunity Funding bill will be passed by the House, thus, upon Governor Carney's signature, codifying the weighted funding for low-income and English learner students that has proven to be highly effective in better addressing those two subgroups' needs. In addition to our legislative work, the DDOE team has been engaged in the following:

- On March 5th, I submitted a letter to USDOE requesting additional state-wide summative assessment flexibility and outlining the state's alternative plan. We had an opportunity to speak on the following Monday with USDOE representatives, who asked a number of questions about our proposal and provided an opportunity for us to provide deeper context and additional details regarding our request. As of the submission of this report, we had not received a final response from USDOE. However, I will provide an update during the March 18th meeting.
- I endorsed the final version of the ESSER II and GEER II stimulus funding plan, which has subsequently been submitted to USDOE. We invested a significant portion of our funds in promoting learning during Summer 2021 as outlined in the attached Accelerated Learning Plan.
- DDOE has released an interactive portal for Delaware educators called [Digital DE](#), which serves as Delaware's online hub for best-in-class instructional, professional development, and family resources for this academic year and beyond. This site, which is accessible, searchable, and free, contains over 200 resources including information on high quality instructional materials, supplemental instructional resources, professional learning, remote learning supports, assessment supports, whole child supports, and resources for families.
- Districts and charters across the state continue to make increasingly informed and strategic decisions concerning instructional materials. Data over the last three years demonstrates increased numbers of Delaware students now have access to high quality, standards-aligned instructional materials (HQIM). From 2019 to 2021 elementary students with access to English language arts (ELA) HQIM increased from 33% to 54%; middle school ELA increased from 6% to 43%; high school ELA increased from 10% to 43%. Similar trends have been established in mathematics. Elementary math increased from 53% to 76% and high school math increased from 58% to 71% while middle school math remained steady. As these adoptions continue to occur, equitable access to grade level standards-aligned resources is increasing for traditionally marginalized students. Since **2019**, students of color have increased access to high quality instructional materials from 30% to 55% in elementary English language arts and from 6% to 37% in middle school mathematics. The same can be said for low income students who have increased access from 33% to 54% in elementary English language arts and 8% to 38% in middle school mathematics.
- I have completed all nineteen individual superintendent mid-year conferences as well as the related reports.
- Visits during the past month have included Delmar Middle School and Delmar High School (Delmar), Phillis Wheatley (Woodbridge), and the newest charter addition, Sussex Academy

Elementary School. Tomorrow I will tour Brandywine's Hanby Elementary, Bush Early Childhood Center, and Brandywine High School.

The following recaps the Department's collective efforts to facilitate the vaccinating of educators:

- Since late January, the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has been organizing COVID-19 vaccination opportunities for Delaware public and private K-12 educators and school staff as well as licensed child care providers.
- For K-12, DDOE launched a website for interested educators and school staff to request vaccination. More than 16,000 requested vaccination through DDOE. Everyone who registered in the system has now been invited to a vaccination event. All interested licensed child care providers also have been invited through DDOE's Office of Child Care Licensing.
- DDOE's events, which have included school-based clinics as well as drive-thru events at Dover Downs, were made possible through our collaboration with a pharmacy partner, Albertsons/Acme (site-based clinics) and the Division of Public Health (DPH)/FEMA (drive-thru events). At each of the DDOE events, educators and school staff also received a second dose appointment, all of which will have been administered by April 17th.
- We greatly appreciate the assistance of our hosting schools and the many district and DOE staff volunteers who helped ensure the events ran smoothly. As of today, there have been approximately 10,000 educators and school staff members and over 2,600 child care providers vaccinated through DDOE events alone.
- On March 27th, DDOE will host its final first shot vaccination clinic. Educators and school staff will continue to be able to schedule appointments through pharmacies such as Walgreens and to take advantage of other DPH events offered that are offered.

In addition to volunteering at the Sussex County COVID vaccination events during the past month I have

- participated in a meeting with the State Human Relations Commission.
- participated in the Wilmington's COVID-19 Community Mobilization Group's meeting at the invitation of Gwen Angalet.
- hosted another successful bi-monthly DDOE All-Staff Meeting.
- met with the Secretary's Liaison Group to seek feedback on the proposed revised DDOE staff evaluation template.
- participated in a UD Dean's Advisory Committee meeting about scholarships for black and brown students.
- worked with OGOV, Christina School District, and Christina Education Association reps on the MOU revision.
- presented at the Delaware Association of Chief School Officers' Spring Conference and the Vision Coalition Annual Conference.
- joined my fellow Chiefs around the county in a session to discuss COVID-related legislative issues as well as accountability and assessment challenges.
- discussed SAT testing and reporting with College Board representatives and legislators.
- held monthly meetings with the state's Curriculum Directors', the Chief Financial Officers', the Special Education Directors', charter school heads, the Delaware State Education Association leadership teams, and the Delaware Association of School Personnel administrators.
- staffed the Opportunity Funding Oversight Committee meeting and completed the meeting minutes.
- talked with UD's Dean Henry about a proposed Learning Network for the Wilmington city schools.
- provided opening remarks at the Focus on the Family conference, which included my introduction of First Lady Carney.
- provided opening remarks at the Vision Coalition's Virtual K-12 Conference.
- videotaped an introduction to the Delaware Teacher Growth and Support System, which will be piloted by several districts in Fall 2021 and is slated to become the state's new teacher evaluation system in school year 2022-23.
- joined fellow staff members in the DDOE's quarterly equity Lunch and Learn event.

- held my monthly meeting with DDOE's Equity Council co-leaders to help plan the October Equity Summit.
- conducted another liaison meeting with DDOE's support staff.
- participated in our equity group's 7 a.m. final *Cultivating Genius* book talk.
- attended both the House and Senate Education Committee meetings during the past two weeks to provide addition information about education bills.
- joined fellow educators in a portion of the Office of Equity and Innovation co-sponsored Educators of Color and Linguistically Diverse Educators Recruitment Fair.
- weekly worked at the Sussex County's vaccine clinics on Friday evenings when scheduled at Sussex Central and Laurel High School and during the day-long vaccine events at Cape Henlopen High School. At all events educators express their gratitude for receiving the vaccine.
- was interviewed by a Delaware State News reporter about COVID impacts and recovery plans.
- attended the first Governor's Efficiency and Accountability Review meeting of the year.
- presented the keynote address at the state's STEM Educators of the Year Awards Ceremony.

Susan S. Bunting, Ed.D.
Secretary of Education