

## State Board of Education Meeting April 22, 2021

Spring has finally arrived! However, again this year the pandemic has prevented our involvement in the normal April activities that include the banquets and recognition ceremonies that signal the end of the year is rapidly approaching. Although we have been unable to congregate to celebrate students' accomplishments, the DOE leadership team has continued to admirably fulfill its responsibilities. Most are still telecommuting, but some of us are now working from our offices several days each week. Despite our varied locations, teams at the Department have accomplished much. Highlights follow.

- I had the privilege of joining US DOE's new Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, during his March 31<sup>st</sup> visit to Laurel Elementary School.
- On March 24<sup>th</sup> we received our formal grant award for the American Rescue Plan (ARP), round three of federal relief funding for public education. We are now in the process of calculating allocation figures for LEAs and some preliminary details around the timeline and acceptable use of funds.
- Late on the afternoon of April 1<sup>st</sup>, I received the long-awaited letter from the US DOE announcing its denial of Delaware's request for greater summative assessment flexibility. I immediately forwarded the letter to district superintendents and the Charter School Network Executive Director so that LEAs could finalize plans to administer the English language arts and math Smarter assessments after returning from spring vacation on April 12<sup>th</sup>. Students are also required by federal law to take the science assessment; Delaware Code requires their taking the social studies assessment.
- DDOE's accountability waiver was approved by US DOE. Therefore, although students will be administered the Smarter assessments, the results will provide information to parents, educators, and the public about student performance and help target resources and supports but will not lead to consequences for the student, the teacher, the school, the LEA, or the state.
- The Department has initiated a School Choice Barrier Committee to research, discuss and identify barriers to school choice statewide. The Committee will be asked to develop an action plan and make recommendations around how to best eliminate such barriers. The development of the committee is a key activity of our federal Charter School Program (CSP) grant. Thus, we have invited several stakeholders, including legislators, to participate in the planning sessions.
- The Department has released the 2019-2020 Graduation and Dropout Summary Reports, which indicate that the graduation rate for the Class of 2020 was lower than that of the Class of 2019 by 0.57 percentage points and that the Class of 2020's dropout rate equaled that of the previous class (1.3%).
- Through DDOE sponsored events, over 2,000 child care providers have been vaccinated. The Office of Childcare Licensing (OCCL) and the Office of Early Learning (OEL) team members not only created a registration process but also volunteered at the events to ensure that eligible childcare teachers and support staff as well as those who worked in residential facilities, day treatment programs and child placing agencies were provided the opportunity to register to receive the vaccine. The April 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> clinics were the last events sponsored by DDOE.
- The Educator Support Team partnered with Delaware institutes of higher education and several school districts and charter schools in its application to join the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)'s [Consortium for Research-Based and Equitable Assessments \(CREA\)](#). The 15-state consortium, created with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, will evaluate cut scores for entrance into educator preparation programs. Specifically, the consortium will seek to examine the processes and considerations that states use to determine cut scores and how they can be refined to attract, rather than exclude, potential teacher candidates.
- The Educator Support Team held a recruitment fair on Saturday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, at the Middletown Fire Hall. Nearly 70 applicants from ten districts and one charter school were in attendance. Informal feedback from the participating LEAs was very positive.

- On March 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> over 400 educators and partners from across the state participated in the virtual two-day *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Instruction for Multilingual Learners* conference. Participants included paraprofessionals, general educators, special educators, teacher leaders, specialists, and coaches, building administrators, district level administrators, preservice educators, members of Delaware's institutes of higher education, legislators, members of community advocacy groups and partner agencies from around the state.
- DDOE is partnering once again with Division of Public Health to expand current antigen testing efforts in LEAs through a \$29 million population-based formula grant, ELC Reopening Schools: Support for Screening Testing to Reopen and Keep Schools Operating Safely. Delaware was already ahead of the curve since over 83 schools are currently implementing testing in a variety of models. This grant will help to onboard additional LEAs this spring and summer as well as provide funding for planning for the 2022-2021 school year.
- The [Knowledge Matters Campaign](#) will visit Seaford, Cape Henlopen, Brandywine, and Red Clay districts over the next month as part of a national tour that highlights schools and districts using high-quality instructional materials to improve literacy, student engagement, and student achievement. The four Delaware districts were selected because they are pioneers in adopting a new breed of English language arts (ELA) curriculum that is both rigorous and seeks to foster students' love of reading and writing. The tour highlights schools across the country that are implementing curricula that intentionally build students' background knowledge of the world as literacy skills are being developed. Participants in the Tour will have the opportunity to observe classrooms, review student work, interview principals and teachers, and sit in on roundtable discussions that give school leaders, teachers, and parents an opportunity to share the impact the curriculum is having on student achievement.
- I joined the Lt. Governor and black ministers and community leaders to discuss COVID-related issues during their biweekly calls on April 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. During this week's meeting I outlined summer accelerated learning initiatives and solicited their support in encouraging student participation.
- Speaking of the Accelerated Learning Plan (ALP) for the summer, all 19 districts and 21 of the 23 charters have selected items from our ALP menu of resources.
  - 76% have selected Zearn Math Summer Intensive
  - 79% have selected HQIM Summer Booster Literacy cohorts (American Reading Company, Bookworms, CKLA – Core Knowledge Language Arts)
  - 93% have provided a contact person for SORA launch
  - 70% have selected high-dosage tutoring - 47% have selected 1-3 Reading Assist tutoring, and 63% have selected Back to Basics tutoring
- To date community partners who have volunteered to assist with this summer's ALP include Back to Basics, Reading Assist, First State Community Action, Delaware Adolescent Program Inc., The Latin Center, Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Center, Network Connect – Learning Space, WAVE, Kingswood Community Center, Read Aloud Delaware, and Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware.
- DDOE recently shared the Delaware Strategy to Accelerate Learning with Community Partners in the United Way of Delaware (DWDE) Learning Pod Collaboration. Organizations were invited to participate in high-dosage tutoring training by DDOE that is aligned with training offered to districts and charters.
- The first administration date of the SAT was March 24<sup>th</sup>; all LEAs except one district and two charters participated. The remaining LEAs will test by the end of April. Delaware is piloting a digital version of the SAT with four districts and two charters; the digital version eliminates the need for paper booklets and labels to be shipped to and from the school.
- DDOE, The Data Forum, and The University of DE have partnered to collect, analyze, and report our Opportunity to Learn data to best provide a context with which stakeholders can frame summative data as well as plan for the 2020-2021 school year. To support this effort, DDOE will also be administering the same survey administered at the end of last year to gather feedback from students, parents, teachers and administrators across the state in the areas of Access & Connectivity,

Students' Academic Needs, Resources & Supports, Communication, and Wellness and Social/Emotional Learning.

- DDOE held its final second shot clinic for educators and school staff on Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup>. Over 15,000 educators who registered in the DDOE system have been vaccinated. DDOE has been working with DPH to provide direction to LEAs in moving forward with vaccinating students 16 years of age and older. These efforts will begin within the next two weeks using a variety of providers and scheduled directly through school sites.
- The Office of Child Care Licensing
  - expects to resume regular monitoring visits soon. Providers will be informed at least ten days in advance of these visits resuming.
  - will soon distribute revised guidance, already approved by Public Health, to licensed child care providers that will relax some of the restrictions currently in place due to the pandemic, especially ones about who may enter a facility.
- Delaware will receive \$110 million to support child care through the American Rescue Act. There are two buckets of funds. One focuses on child care quality (\$47 million); the other, the Stabilization Fund, provides \$66,752,816 to provide subgrants directly to eligible child care providers. The goal of the program is to help child care providers stay in business and make child care more affordable for families. The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) is leading the administration of this grant and is working in close collaboration with the DDOE and public partners to benefit child care providers statewide.
- The Office of Child Care Licensing has drafted a DELACARE Regulations for Youth Camps proposal for summer camps receiving purchase of care. All licensed providers and interested community partners have been invited to participate in a Task Force to review the draft. The first task force meeting to discuss proposed summer camp regulations will be held this week to collect feedback and reactions
- The Department has finalized the scope of work for the Statewide Ombudsman Program and has released the public advertisement for bid.
- The Office of Equity and Innovation is partnering with Department of Human Resources (Keith Hunt) on surveying State agency workers and engaging in “listening sessions” on four topics of work environment - belonging, overall, diversity and discrimination.
- DDOE's Higher Education Office and Delaware colleges/universities are hosting a College Application Month: Spring Edition to support our seniors. Several colleges have already signed up to host in-person events where students can complete applications, be considered for same day admissions, and get FAFSA support.

### **In addition, I have recently**

- Visited five preschool learning centers – Precious Moments and Kids-R-U's in Dover, Primeros Pasos in Georgetown, Next Steps in Selbyville, and Giggiebugs in Millsboro; Christina's Jones Elementary, Maclary Elementary, and the Christina Early Education Center (CEEC); Brandywine's Bush Early Education Center, Hanby Elementary, and Brandywine High School; and East Side, Odyssey, and Academia Antonia Alonso charter schools.
- Provided opening remarks at the UD-sponsored Third Annual Women Leading Delaware Education Conference.
- Hosted the March Teacher of the Year Advisory Council meeting.
- Participated in the Delaware Workforce Development Board's board meeting.
- Joined DDOE staff members in our monthly Equity Council meeting
- Served as a breakout session leader during the Biden Center's Annual Women's History Month Luncheon.
- Participated in a CCSSO Webinar with USDOE regarding American Rescue Plan details.
- Joined chiefs during a portion of this month's University of Delaware sponsored Superintendent's Study Council.
- Participated in the Mid-Atlantic SEEC Quarterly Alliance meeting.

- Met with House and Senate Education Committee leaders and invited legislators to present and discuss the state's proposed Delaware Teacher Growth and Support System, which will replace DPAS II.
- Joined my fellow chiefs from across the country for our weekly CCSSO meetings that last week focused on American Rescue Plan details and adaptive leadership.
- Planned the Opportunity Funding Oversight Committee meeting with Dorrell Green and staffed the meeting on April 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Met with Safe Schools representatives to discuss potential parent engagement initiatives.
- Participated in the Ombudsman planning meeting.
- Conducted the quarterly Interagency Resource Management Consortium (IRMC) meeting.
- Presented at the Chiefs' April meeting.
- Attended DDOE's Equity Resources Committee meeting.
- Filmed a Teleduction COVID-impact segment with the superintendents from Lake Forest and Seaford.
- Joined the Lt. Governor in the Behavioral Health Consortium Quarterly Meeting at which Teri Lawler presented the Department's current SEL initiatives.
- Discussed potential Community Grant Project partnership proposals with UD's Dean Gary Henry.
- Held an introductory meeting with the new Food and Nutrition Services regional leader from USDA.
- Attended the April Family Service Cabinet Council meeting at which Monica Gant shared the Department's Accelerated Learning Plan for Summer 2021.
- Held separate monthly meetings with DDOE's Equity Council leadership team, the Charter School Liaison Team, the Special Education Directors' Leadership Team, the Chief Financial Officers' Leadership Team, the principals' liaison group, and the DSEA president and Executive Director.
- Participated in the half-day training LEA leadership training focused on the state's new teacher evaluation system.
- Collaborated with RAND representatives during our monthly check-in call related to the third-party evaluation of the state's Opportunity Funding and Student Success Block Grant.
- Met with the Legislature's education committee heads to discuss DHSS's and DOE's co-leadership of the Child Care Development Fund (Purchase of Care).
- Participated in the Military Child Proclamation event with the Governor.
- Attended all of the House and Senate Education Committee meetings as well as the House and Senate sessions.
- Taped a congratulatory message to be included in the Project Search participant's graduation celebration.
- Joined Secretaries/Commissioners of Education from across the country in a virtual meeting with US Secretary of Education Cardona on Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Susan S. Bunting, Ed.D.**  
**April 20, 2021**