



Joint Finance Committee Hearing

March 3, 2026





Meyer Administration Values

INTEGRITY

Actions speak louder than words - actions build trust. We will lead with transparency and accountability to ensure every decision serves the public good.

EFFICIENCY

Government should work smarter, not harder. We will eliminate waste, streamline services, and prioritize execution over excuses.

COLLABORATION

Lasting change requires teamwork. We will break down silos, build strong partnerships, and deliver solutions that work.

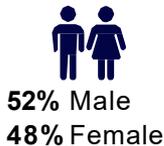
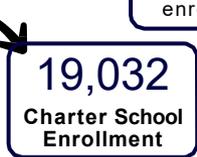
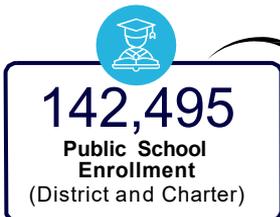
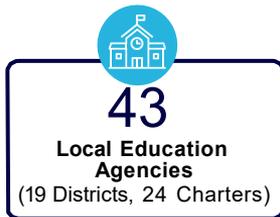
Demographics



Delaware's education system serves children in early child care programs through the PK-12 system. Delaware learners represent a rich mix of backgrounds, languages, and learning needs. This diversity is a key strength and provides essential context for understanding student outcomes, identifying needs, and shaping strategies.

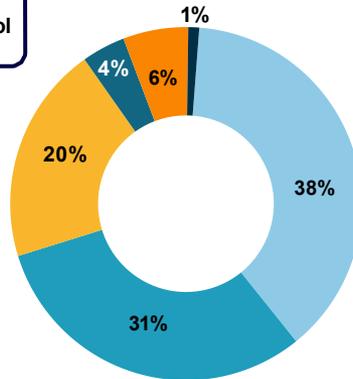


What does PK-12 public education look like in Delaware?



Student Population

- 13%** Multilingual learners
- 19%** Students with disabilities
- 27%** Low income



In the 2025 School Year
1% of graduated students (1,205 students) demonstrated readiness by successful attainment in industry credentials*

- 38% White
- 31% Black
- 20% Hispanic
- 4% Asian
- 6% Multi-Racial
- >1% Native American
- >1% Pacific Islander

*Industry Credentials: Measurement of attainment is based on the specific credential within a state-approved CTE program of study (i.e., certified nursing assistant)

National Performance

How do Delaware NAEP scores compare to nationwide scores?

The **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)**, which measures 4th and 8th grade proficiency in math and reading nationwide, showed declines in national reading performance between 2022 and 2024. While Delaware's fourth-grade math scores showed the greatest improvement of any state, overall performance remains below pre-pandemic levels and the national average.

National Scores		2022 score	2024 score	Point change	Notes
 Math	4 th grade	235	237	+2	+24 pts from 1990
	8 th grade	273	272	-1	+11 pts from 1990
 Reading	4 th grade	216	214	-2	No statistical difference
	8 th grade	259	257	-2	

Delaware Scores		2022 score	2024 score	Point change	Comparison to National Score
 Math	4 th grade	226	233	+7	-4 pts
	8 th grade	264	263	-1	-9 pts
 Reading	4 th grade	208	210	+2	-4 pts
	8 th grade	253	249	-4	-8 pts

Performance Outcomes

State Assessment (SBAC)

	2019	2024	2025
English Language Arts (ELA)	53%	40%	41%
Mathematics	44%	33%	34%

Graduation Rate: 89.05% (up from 88.9% the year prior)

Drop-out Rate: 2.2% (down from 3.9% the year prior)

Chronic Absenteeism 15.18% in 2025

- 2024: 19.15%
- Low: 12.14% (2019)
- High: 24.77% (2022)



Department of Education Strategic Priorities

Our Promise: Start with Students. Build for Impact.





The Delaware Department of Education



Our Vision

Every learner is ready for success in college, career, and life.



Our Mission

To empower every learner with the highest quality education through shared leadership, innovative practices, and exemplary services.



Our Promise

Start with Students.
Build for Impact.



Building Blocks and Priorities

Turning clear priorities into measurable results.



BRIGHT BEGINNINGS

Priority:

Expand Early Education



SAFE, SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS

Priorities:

- Student Wellbeing
- Instructional Leadership
- Educator Workforce Growth and Retention



GREAT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Priorities:

- Early Literacy Success
- Improved Student Achievement
- Data and Assessment Systems
- College and Career Readiness



FAIR OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERY LEARNER

Priorities:

- Education Funding Reform
- AI Proficiency for Impact



FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES AS PARTNERS

Priority:

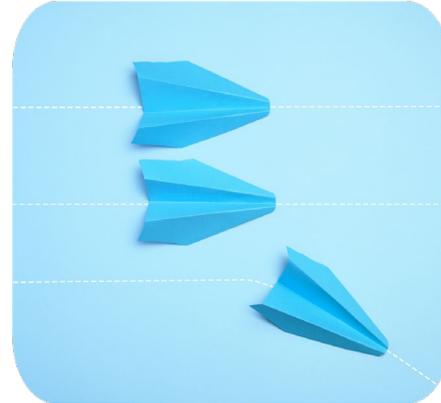
Family and Community Partnerships

Deep Dive

Deep Dive into the Building Blocks and Priorities



In this section, each priority is paired with measurable outcomes to track progress as well as implementation plans that define the actions, timelines, and responsibilities needed to achieve results. Together, these metrics and plans provide a clear roadmap for building a stronger foundation for Delaware learners.



Bright Beginnings

Priority

- Expand Early Education

Metric

- By September 2028, increase the percentage of children birth through age five who are enrolled in funded early care and education programs and services from 25% to 40%, through expanded access, as measured by state-led enrollment.

Strategies

- Support children being developmentally prepared to enter kindergarten by aligning health, early learning, family support, and community partnerships to promote whole-child development.
- Increase the availability of early learning opportunities by opening more licensed child care programs statewide and expanding access to state-funded care and family support programs.
- Strengthen the quality of early learning programs and services across settings by implementing program standards and monitoring progress.
- Increase the percentage of children served in high-quality early learning environments statewide.
- Increase access to high-quality professional learning and advancement in credentialing pathways to recruit, retain, and elevate early childhood educators, ensuring that early learning programs and services are staffed by skilled, well-prepared professionals.



Safe, Supportive Schools

Priorities

- Student Wellbeing
- Instructional Leadership
- Educator Workforce Growth and Retention

Metrics

- By June 2028, increase the three-year retention rate of ALL early career teachers from 72% to 75%.
- By June 2028, improve student wellbeing and belonging by reducing chronic absenteeism (missing 10%+ of school days) from 15% to 13%, as tracked in state attendance.

Strategies

- Build trauma-informed, inclusive environments through professional learning that improve student resilience, educator well-being, and access to physical, mental health, wellness, and nutrition services.
- Deliver targeted services for students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, in secure care, military-connected, or facing chronic truancy.
- Develop strong school and district leaders through preparation, recruitment, mentoring, leadership networks, and staffing models that focus on coaching and ongoing improvement.
- Carry out a statewide educator workforce strategy that expands Grow Your Own, residency, and apprenticeship pathways; strengthens career ladders; adds transparency for licensing; expands scholarships and mentoring; and partners with higher education to prepare educators for strong reading instruction and workforce needs.



Great Teaching and Learning

Priorities

- Early Literacy Success
- Improved Student Achievement
- Data and Assessment Systems
- College and Career Readiness Indicators

Metrics

Graduation and Readiness, by June 2028, increase percentages in:

- Grade 9 on track to graduate (district/charter): 84% → 86%
- Graduation rate (state): 89% → 91%
- College and Career Readiness indicator met (state): 78% → 80%

Academic Proficiency by June 2028, increase:

- Grade 3 reading (state assessment): 38% → 53%
- Grades 3–8 Delaware School Success Framework Composite Score: 264 → 300

Strategies

- Ensure high-quality teaching by using evidence-based materials to support learning in all schools.
- Implement statewide professional learning and coaching that strengthen instruction across subjects.
- Improve student success by strengthening multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to provide academic, behavioral, and well-being supports, including personalized instruction across student groups.
- Make data and assessments work better by helping educators use student data and ensuring tests are fair, accessible, and aligned to state standards.
- Prepare students for college and careers by expanding career and technical education (CTE) pathways, work-based learning, industry credentials, college credit, and stronger advising.
- Expand access to a well-rounded education through dual language immersion, multilingual pathways, arts education, health and physical education, and driver safety education.



Fair Opportunities for Every Learner

Priorities

- Education Funding Reform
- AI Proficiency for Impact

Metrics

- By June 2026, provide agency support for the passage of legislation enabling a transition to a new hybrid funding model by August 2027.
- By June 2028, at least 75% of districts and charters will use AI tools to support educator workload or student outcomes, while maintaining 100% compliance with state AI governance, data security and privacy, and human-in-the-loop requirements.

Strategies

- Put business processes in place to carry out Delaware's updated education funding model, ensure accountability, and guide fair use of federal and state funds.
- Roll out a statewide Assurance Lab to support operational and instructional decision-making.
- Provide clear guidance on media literacy and safe, responsible, and ethical use of generative AI for educators.
- Strengthen educator and system capacity for inclusive, high-quality instruction by building in supports for multilingual learners, advancing State Board priorities, and improving data-driven planning.
- Create and use fair, accessible assessments for multilingual learners and students with disabilities.
- Launch Early Warning Systems and improve inclusive, evidence-based instruction and coordinated supports for students with disabilities, including assistive technology, behavior supports, literacy help, and career transition services.



Families and Communities as Partners

Priority

- Family and Community Partnerships

Metrics

- By July 2028, the use of data dashboards by educators to inform decision-making, equity, and accountability will increase to 75%.
- Launch an easy-to-use family and community portal that increases transparency and connects families to learning tools, updates, and support.

Strategies

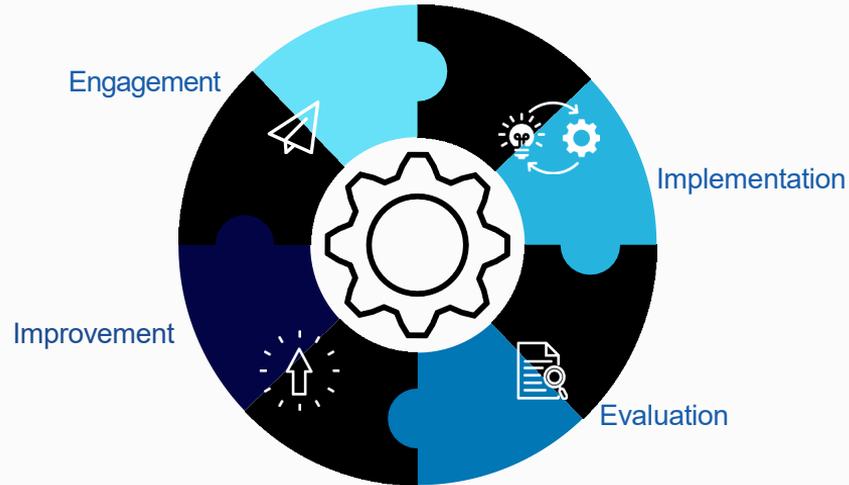
- Share clear, easy-to-understand data and reports that help educators, families, and communities see how students are learning, growing, and preparing for the future.
- Work with community groups, employers, and training providers to expand flexible learning options for adult learners.
- Strengthen afterschool and summer programs that build literacy skills, support academic success, and increase college and career exploration.
- Develop a statewide, easily accessible, dynamic dashboard to improve decision-making, equity, and accountability.
- Provide an Early Literacy Family Toolkit to increase exposure to literacy at home.



Implementation and Next Steps

Implementation of this Strategic Plan will continue with the further development, refinement, and execution of strategies, initiatives, and programs to achieve the outcomes and goals identified. Effective implementation will involve clear communication, strong leadership, and continued stakeholder engagement.

Through a cycle of implementation, evaluation, and improvement, the Strategic Plan will remain dynamic, responsive, and aligned with evolving needs. Progress towards meeting the targets will be regularly monitored at the state and local levels, and shared publicly on a regular basis.





Key Targets - 2028

- **Grade 3 reading proficiency:** 38% → **53%**
- **Graduation rate:** 89% → **91%**
- **Teacher retention:** 3-year retention rate of all early career teachers from 72% → **75%**
- **Chronic absenteeism:** 15% → **13%**
- **Early education access:** 25% → **40%** of families
- **Science of Reading training:** **100%** of K–3 teachers
- **Grades 3–8 Delaware School Success Framework Composite Score:** 264 → **300**



FY27 RECOMMENDED Operating Budget





Recommended Operating Budget

FY26 GF Budget	\$2,389,007.8
FY27 Recommended GF Budget	\$2,479,956.8
\$ Increase	\$90,949.0
% Increase	3.81%

Excludes DACCTE (95-06)



FY27 Recommended Budget Reallocations

FY26 Salary and OEC Contingency

FY26 General Contingency



FY27 Recommended Budget 95-01 Department of Education

Digital Learning Operations	\$50.0
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Contractual Services (Collette Lease)	\$20.0
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Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB)	\$15.6
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Public Education Funding Commission (PEFC) Implementation (one-time)	\$2,823.6
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FY27 Recommended Budget 95-02 District & Charter Operations

General Contingency	\$17,893.6
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Related Services	\$4,070.6
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Cafeteria Funds	\$2,551.1
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Child Nutrition	\$39.9
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FY27 Recommended Budget 95-02 District & Charter Operations

Education Block Grants

Academic Excellence	\$3,084.7
Student Success Block Grant	\$215.3
Teacher Driven Projects (one-time)	\$3,000.0
Public School Transportation	\$3,990.0



FY27 Recommended Budget 95-03 Pass Through & Support Programs

Driver's Education	\$47.6
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Adult Education/Work Force Training	\$1,500.0
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Veterinary Tuition Assistance	\$19.9
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Delaware Early Childhood Care & Education Alliance (one-time)	\$8,000.0
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FY27 Recommended Budget Reductions

Department Reductions (Contracts)

Delaware Literacy Plan	(\$300.0)
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Professional Accountability & Instructional Advancement Fund	(\$888.6)
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School Improvement	(\$191.6)
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FY27 Recommended Budget Reductions

District / Charter Operations Reductions

Unique Alternatives	(\$5,000.0)
Mid Year Unit Count	(\$1,000.0)
Athletic Trainer Block Grant	(\$2,300.0)
Substitute Teacher Block Grant	(\$2,000.0)
Substitute Reimbursement	(\$2,400.0)
Wilmington Learning Collaborative	(\$8,000.0)

Staffing

- 306.5 authorized FTE positions
- 15 current vacancies
 - Longest vacancy is 23 months (Prison Education position)
 - All other positions have been open fewer than 18 months





Federal Funding

- \$294 million in Federal Funding during FY26
 - Title Funding, Adult Education, Early Childhood, Child Nutrition, and other programs
- The FY27 Federal Funding Bill (released 1/20/26) does not include significant reductions to education programs
- Continue to monitor and evaluate on a consistent basis



Thank You!



Delaware
Department of Education