

Why Delaware needs state funding targeted for low-income students, English language learners, and basic special education grades K-3

Student Needs

- Over 50 percent of Delaware students qualified for free or reduced lunch in 2014.
- Learning outcomes for low-income students are consistently below other Delaware students based on test scores, persistence rates, graduation rates, and college attendance.
- Delaware has the second largest 10-year increase in English language learners among all states.
- Between 1997 and 2015, English language learners in Delaware increased by 369 percent.
- English language learners face the challenge of adapting to a new language, while simultaneously being expected to develop their understanding of grade-level content without the additional resources necessary for success.
- Learning outcomes for Delaware’s English language learners are consistently below those for native English speakers, with far fewer English language learners scoring as proficient or advanced on state assessments in math and English language arts.
- Delaware’s children are evaluated in their early years but services to meet their needs are not funded until grade 4.

Absence of State Funding to Meet Student Needs

- **Delaware is one of approximately 15 states that do not provide some type of targeted funding for low-income students.** All of the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast states provide some type of targeted funding for low-income students, including: Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Maine.
- **Delaware is one of four states without targeted funding for English language learners (ELL).** Delaware joins Mississippi, Montana, and Rhode Island as the only states without a funding mechanism for English language learners.
- **Delaware does not fund basic special education for students in grades K-3.** Delaware’s state funding only supports basic special education starting in grade 4.

Delaware scores 50th in the nation on two of the school funding fairness measures examined by Rutgers University and the Education Law Center, citing it as one of the least fair funding models in the nation. Delaware scored a “D” on the funding distribution grade due to its regressive funding system, providing high-poverty schools with less state and local funding than low-poverty schools.

What needs to be done?

The General Assembly and the Governor need to establish an additional funding unit for low-income students, English language learners, and basic special education grades K-3.

The funding unit should be phased in statewide as rapidly as possible, starting with an initial phase-in that supports at least one district in each county in FY2017. In New Castle County, funding should be provided for the Red Clay Consolidated School District and the Christina School District schools in the City of Wilmington during the initial phase (FY2017), since these will be impacted by the proposed redistricting.

How will the targeted funding be used?

Funding will be used to support district plans for improving student learning outcomes using research-based best practices. These best practices may include:

Teachers and targeted, supplemental instruction

- Additional teachers and paraprofessionals to reduce class size.
- Before and after school programs aimed at filling in the gaps in instruction.
- Individualized tutoring.
- Daily supplemental blocks of time during the regular school day to be used for research-based core instructional programs aligned with learning standards.
- Culturally diverse curriculum design and implementation.
- High-quality early childhood education options for at-risk students.
- Recruitment and retention of certified bilingual and ELL educators.
- Professional development for mainstream teachers/administrators on the educational needs of ELLs.
- Professional development directly linked to changing instructional practice to improve achievement.

Student-centered services

- Certified counselors, school psychologists, therapists, social workers, etc., skilled at working with students who experience trauma or other social-emotional challenges.
- Trauma-informed classrooms and schools, including routine screenings for trauma exposure and symptoms; culturally-appropriate and evidence-based assessments and treatments for students; resources and information for families.

Parental support

- Increased access to quality materials for parents in different languages.
- Adult English classes and family literacy programs.
- Community and family outreach programs for schools to learn more about the students/families they serve.

What will this accomplish?

With dedicated funding from the state to support low-income students, English language learners, and basic special education grades K-3, local districts and charters will be able to deliver the services that these students need to be successful.

States in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions that provide this funding typically produce better student outcomes than Delaware. Further investments in these best practices listed above will begin to address the diverse student needs and to improve student learning.

Sources

http://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/ELC_schoolfundingreport.2013.pdf
http://www.schoolfundingfairness.org/National_Report_Card.pdf
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgt/serv/C4E/ModelProgramsforLEP-ELLs-Rev7-28-08.htm>
<http://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Trauma-Informed-in-Schools-Classrooms-FINAL-December2014-2.pdf>
<http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Organizing-a-school/High-performing-high-poverty-schools-At-a-glance-/High-performing-high-poverty-schools-Research-review.html>
<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/10/20/11020.pdf>
<http://www.rodelfoundationde.org/condition-of-education-report-delawares-ell-population-grows/>
<http://delawarepublic.org/post/enlighten-me-helping-delawares-english-language-learners#stream/0>
Delaware Department of Education 2015 Smarter Balanced Assessment Results.
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012045.pdf>