

## **Delaware's Promise Dropout Prevention Committee Meeting Highlights**

Cabinet Room, Townsend Bldg.

April 13, 2011

1:30 – 3:30 pm

Dr. Judi Coffield, Chair, welcomed the committee members and asked for introductions.

Dr. Susan Haberstroh and Dr. Coffield led the group through a policy audit activity that was developed by America's Promise Alliance and is included in their Grad Nation Guidebook. (See Tool 13, Policy Audit and Next Steps.) *Grad Nation Guidebook, A Guidebook to Help Communities Tackle the Dropout Crisis* was commissioned by America's Promise Alliance. It is a new tool comprising the best evidence-based practices for keeping young people in school paired with suggestions for effectively preparing them for life after high school. It can be found on the America's Promise website at the URL below:

<http://www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Dropout-Prevention/Grad-Nation-Guidebook.aspx>

As stated in the guidebook, policies and practices at the state, district and school levels influence graduation rates. They can either help or hinder students' odds of graduating from high school. By understanding and becoming aware of the policies and where the decision making authority lies, committee members can evaluate what the research says about the effects of such policies and promote/support changes that will better serve our students and help Delaware achieve our graduation targets.

Some examples of policies or practices to consider are:

### Individual School or District Policies and Practices

- Attendance
- Grade Retention
- Grade Promotion
- Grading
- Over-promoting GEDs as an alternative to completing high school
- Promoting alternative schools to all struggling student

### State Policies

- School Accountability Measures
- Compulsory Attendance Age (legal dropout age)

The exercise created awareness that many of the policy decisions around these issues reside at the local level.

Dr. Coffield then provided an update regarding the release of the final DE Graduation Targets study that was conducted by the Regional Education Lab Mid-Atlantic. She also

shared that the report was distributed via email to the Superintendents and will be distributed as part of the three regional state-wide rollout session for the Dropout Early Warning System scheduled for May 3 in Milford, May 17<sup>th</sup> in Smyrna, and May 18<sup>th</sup> in New Castle County in Red Clay School District.

Claudia Burzichelli, RELM-A Lab Director, shared resource materials from the Regional Education Lab including the Issues & Answers volume number 103, Dropout Prevention Programs.

Finally, the group discussed potential collaboration on a statewide communications campaign with Mr. Jim Purcell, Director of Communities in Schools. A memo drafted by Mr. Purcell dated 4/12/2011 regarding Graduate Delaware Public Campaign was shared. The memo outlined key stakeholders, core objectives, campaign elements, action steps and next steps. There was some concern regarding the memo based upon the fact that it appeared that decisions and agreements had already been reached. Some present were mentioned as having agreed to the proposal that the Delaware's Promise Subcommittee establish a subcommittee to work on the communication campaign or that their organizations had signed on in support of the effort described in the memo, but they did not believe that they had made such an agreement. Dr. Coffield agreed to follow up with Mr. Purcell who was on leave due to the birth of his daughter.

Follow up & next steps:

- The group would like to see the state definitions and business rules for dropout. Dr. Coffield will contact Joanne Reihm to provide an overview for the next meeting.
- The group asked for a demonstration of the Dropout Early Warning System (SSP module in eSchool).
- Share copies of the High School Graduation Task Force and the World Language Task Force Reports.
- Strategic Planning...what 2-3 big goals does the committee think are a priority to address in the coming one to two years?
- Considering the Policy Audit Task, are there 2-3 policies that the group should study in depth to develop a white paper/position paper with recommendations around?
- Look into the REL replication of the data base.