

Progress Report
P-20 Council
May 2005

Since the last report, the P-20 Council gathered to hear a presentation by Michael Cohen, President of Achieve, with whom the Department of Education and the State Board of Education had contracted to analyze Delaware's content standards and the level of achievement needed for students to be successful. After a brief description of the American Diploma Project and general statistics on the preparedness of high school graduates, Michael Cohen detailed both the strengths and weaknesses of Delaware's content standards in the areas of Mathematics and English Language Arts.

Math Strengths:

- An emphasis on problem-solving skills and mathematical understanding
- A favorable comparison on certain math topics with the benchmark standards

Math Weaknesses:

- A general lack of specificity
- The need for more rigor and a downshift of certain concepts to lower grades.

English Strengths:

- A thoughtful response to the task of elaborating what students should know up to the end of Grade 10.

English Weaknesses:

- A need to increase the level of specificity
- Delaware needs to increase the rigor of its present standards

Cohen then compared the current high school standards with admission requirements for Delaware's postsecondary institutions. He noted several gaps between the two and an even larger discrepancy when analyzing students who perform well in college.

In December 2004, the Subcommittee on Post Secondary Success met to form a Data Subcommittee that would begin a project to track students across the P-12 or K-12 system and into higher education. Five higher education institutions were willing to enter discussions and are exploring the depth of their data to identify common elements.

The Subcommittee also had the opportunity to hear a presentation from Mr. Ed Simon of the Delaware Department of Labor on the job market and wage information at the county, state and federal levels. It was noted that there is a need for greater community understanding of the jobs market, especially in how it relates to the need for increased training beyond high school in order to be prepared for well paying jobs.

At a meeting in January 2005, the Data Subcommittee began its data project to further integrate collection and collaboration methods across grades and into higher education. Currently, the Subcommittee is identifying common variables for a data grid that high

schools, districts, higher education institutions and the Department can access to monitor the progress of Delaware students. The intent of the data cube is to be able to track high school students into Delaware colleges and universities to see what courses they took in high school, what courses they took in college and how well they did relative to grades. Some of the variables for higher education are being asked to look at to see if they can add them to the data are:

- Course information on reading, writing, math, science, and social studies subjects
- Course level/description
- Regular or remedial
- Grade earned
- Credits granted
- Time course taken (fall semester, spring semester, etc.)
- End of year cumulative index

Access to this information would be available on a need basis using the Department's password protected system. In the coming months, the Data Subcommittee will continue to make progress on the data grid and address issues, such as collaboration, access, and privacy.

On April 26, 2005, many members of the P-20 Council attended the Delaware Secondary Schools Summit presented by the State Board of Education. The format outlined six strands to increased learning. Among these were increasing rigor, distributing leadership, personalizing learning, creating learning environments, connecting with parents and communities, and leaving no child behind. The Summit also had two speakers. Joe DiMartino, Director for Secondary School Redesign at The Education Alliance at Brown University, delivered the keynote address on reforming secondary school education. The lunchtime speaker was Michael Cohen, President of Achieve, Inc., who gave a presentation that underscored the messages he presented to the P-20 Council in January. The Summit was an outgrowth of discussions within the P-20 Council.

In May 2005, the P-20 Council proposed legislation to amend the Delaware Code to include the creation of the P-20 Council. The bill reflects Governor Minner's original Executive Order 47 by outlining the Council's responsibilities, designating its membership, and giving it the authority to establish subcommittees as needed.

The next meetings of the Council and the Subcommittee on Post Secondary Success will be held in June or July 2005 at a date yet to be determined. The Data Subcommittee is scheduled to meet in May 2005.

If you would like additional information about any of our work, please don't hesitate to contact Dr. Pika or Mrs. Woodruff at your convenience.