

Progress Report P-20 Council October 2004

Since the first report, the P-20 Council and the Subcommittee on Post-Secondary Success met jointly in August to hear a presentation on the American Diploma Project. Michael Cohen, President of Achieve, one of the principals to conduct the study, was our guest and presented the findings from several states revealing:

- Most high school students need remedial help in college;
- Most college students never attain a degree;
- Most employers say high school students lack basic skills;
- Too few high school students take challenging courses; and
- Most high school exit exams don't measure what matters to colleges and employers.

Achieve, The Education Trust and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation took on the challenge of determining what it would take to restore confidence in the high school diploma. They have established benchmarks in English and mathematics that high school graduates must have mastered to be successful in postsecondary education or in high-performance, high growth jobs. They have also established an action agenda and have challenged us, along with others to make the high school diploma count.

Toward that end, the Department of Education and the State Board of Education have contracted with Achieve to look at Delaware content standards and the level of achievement needed for students to be successful. The research will also give us:

- Benchmarks defining the knowledge and skills needed by students to be successful at college level work or high-performing, high-wage jobs;
- Comparisons of the State course-taking requirements in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies to those required by Delaware's three public institutions of higher education to those in other states and against those recommended by the American Diploma Project.

We expect the work to be completed in late December and will share it with the P-20 Council and the Subcommittee on Post-Secondary Success at that time. From this report, we expect to make recommendations about course content and high school graduation requirements. We also expect that the report will generate additional topics for discussions and action.

At the August meeting, the Council also had the opportunity to tour the state of the art Early Learning Facility at the University of Delaware. We had discussion around the staffing, salaries and programs offered at the facility and how it is providing services to our districts and early care providers on best practices. The tour was very informative and showed what could be done to improve opportunities for young children.

Subsequently, the Subcommittee on Post-Secondary Success met in September. At that meeting, the representatives of the University of Delaware shared some information they compiled on recent Delaware high school graduates and their performance at the end of their first year at the University of Delaware on the core courses.

There was much discussion of how this data could be used by high school principals, guidance counselors and teachers. The representative of higher education also saw utility in the data and stated they would go back to their respective institutions to see if they could replicate similar data.

Dr. Pika sent them all a follow-up letter in early October to see what progress or road blocks could be reported. In the meantime, we are going to pursue establishing the protocols we would need to add a data "cube" to the data the Department currently has. This would provide seamless data from K to 16, an important step in our work.

The next meeting of the Council will be held in December 2004 or January 2005, depending on when the Achieve work is completed. The Subcommittee on Post-Secondary Success is scheduled to meet in early December 2004.

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