



Building Successful School Leaders in Times of Great Change

**Delaware School
Leadership Task Force:
Report and
Recommendations**

January 2001



edited by

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sponsored by the

**Delaware Department of Education
and**

**College of Human Services, Education & Public Policy
University of Delaware**



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The final report of the Task Force on School Leadership provides a blueprint that is action oriented and forward thinking. It presents an opportunity for Delaware to take bold steps to ensure that quality leadership is in place in our public schools so all students are given every chance to succeed in school and in life.

Leadership must come from all levels of our school districts. Instructional staff must mentor their peers and assist in the development of standards based instructional strategies. Building administrators must support and enhance the learning environment in their schools. Superintendents, along with other district administrators and members of local boards of education, must work collaboratively with all facets of the district to continuously improve instructional services and programs. Boards of education and superintendents must engage their communities in the development of a new vision of success, and then provide the leadership for achieving that vision.

We have many possible partners and resources that can help move this agenda forward. In order to meet our most critical needs, we must take steps to re-examine and realign all of our current resources, both human and fiscal, to be sure they are aligned for efficient and effective use to help us achieve our goals.

A strong technological infrastructure has been put in place for Delaware public education. It can be an important vehicle for professional development for our administrators and teachers, but it must also be used effectively as an on-going means for communication and support.

Delaware's reform agenda is impressive and holds significant potential for ensuring the success of all children. The shareholder groups that have developed this common agenda for school leadership must use the synergy that has evolved throughout this process to carry us forward to success.

The Department of Education is committed to providing support, assistance, and leadership in this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Valerie A. Woodruff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Valerie A. Woodruff
Secretary of Education

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FOREWORD

During the past ten years, Delaware has made an unparalleled effort to improve the State's schools and raise student achievement. The continuing success of Delaware's reform agenda will be influenced significantly by its ability to strengthen the knowledge and technical competencies of our current school leaders, while adequately preparing others to assume the responsibilities of school leadership in the future. A report by the Institute for Leadership indicates the need for school administrators will increase by 10 to 20 percent in the next five years and warns that the "shrinking pool of qualified candidates portends a catastrophe." The Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL) has been created to address these challenges through on-going programs of professional development and technical assistance for current and aspiring school leaders.

To better understand the complex issues impacting the school leadership environment and to guide the development of DASL, a statewide Task Force was established. The goal of the Task Force was to examine the needs for, and barriers to, effective school leadership, and to make recommendations to guide the development of programs to address those needs and overcome those barriers.

From the work of the Task Force, we have created a report entitled "Building Successful School Leaders in Times of Great Change," identifying proactive measures that can be used to improve school leadership.

The implementation of our recommendations can help to provide Delaware with a continuing supply of qualified school leaders and guard against ensuing educational misdirection.

We want to thank all members of this Task Force for their dedication and thoughtful insight into how we can best address the issues and concerns of effective school leadership.



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Valerie Woodruff
Secretary of Education
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THE CHALLENGE

Building Successful School Leaders In Times of Great Change

Since 1992 efforts to improve student achievement in Delaware have focused on four major components: content standards, student assessment, enhancing classroom instructional support, and system accountability. First, content standards were developed to determine what each student should know and be able to do in order to succeed in the increasingly global economy impacting Delaware's economic future. Second, the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) was established to provide assessment data for students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 in mathematics, science, English language arts and social studies. Recently, several pieces of legislation created an accountability system for students, staff, schools, and districts linked to student achievement on the DSTP. There has been an ongoing effort to ensure that a comprehensive system is in place to give all students an equal opportunity to learn and succeed through improved curriculum and instructional strategies during the regular school day and through special assistance in extended day and summer school activities. In addition, the options of statewide choice and charter schools were added to the educational landscape. These options provide the educational consumer a new range of choices in selecting school locations and programs for their children.

Despite all of this activity and attention, significant change in student achievement and in basic school practice has been slow at best. The reasons for slow progress are many and complex. One reason receiving increasing attention is the need for stronger school leadership – developing the principals, superintendents, school board members, and other educators who are in the best positions to direct and implement effective changes in curriculum, instruction, and school organization.

School board members set the policies that make or break the achievements of other school leaders and teachers. They have considerable power over the things that matter in a local school system, but often they are the leaders who have the least opportunity for structured formal training.

The superintendent, who articulates the vision for and oversees the activities of a large organization, is the highly visible public figure on the front lines of education policy and controversy. Today's superintendents not only must be skilled in their interactions with the school board, principals and teachers, but also must be able to communicate well with policymakers, parents, the media and the public.

The principal has considerable influence over the environment in the school building, where the most meaningful actions in education take place. Research on effective schools suggests that a good principal creates a climate that fosters excellent teaching and learning, while an ineffective one can quickly thwart the progress of the most dedicated educators.

The challenges embodied in each of these roles are growing dramatically as states and school districts raise standards for student learning, reform curriculum and instruction, educate a more

diverse student population, decentralize management, and confront citizens who have lost confidence in public education. At the same time, school leaders are retiring, resigning, and leaving education in unprecedented numbers. Many cite the imbalance between responsibility and salary, the stress and the time-consuming nature of the job. But these objections may hide a deeper and more pervasive problem: state educational stakeholders are not at all clear about what it means today to be an effective educational leader. What precisely and realistically do we want school leaders to know and be able to do? How can such qualities and capabilities be developed and supported? Does the system permit educational leaders to function in a manner we intend them to function? Is the organization of Delaware schools – its incentives and rewards, the relationship between school management and instruction, and the interaction between local politics and effective school governance – conducive to leadership that assigns the highest priority to improvement in teaching and learning?

Recognizing that administrators must have special knowledge and skills to be effective instructional school leaders, the Delaware State Board of Education adopted new Administrator Standards in 1998. These five standards for school leadership include:

1. Systemic Leadership

An educational leader possesses the knowledge and skills to foster vision and purpose, to achieve common goals, to frame problems, to utilize information, to exercise leadership processes, and to promote teamwork to achieve the vision.

2. Instructional Leadership

An educational leader possesses the knowledge and skills to facilitate the design of appropriate standards-based curricula, to develop a positive learning environment, to initiate with faculty a variety of instructional programs, to assess outcomes, and to plan professional development activities with staff.

3. Community and Political Leadership

An educational leader possesses the knowledge and skills to act in accordance with legal provisions and statutory requirements, to influence public policy, to apply regulatory standards, to understand schools as political systems, to inform and involve parents and community groups, and to develop public relations and media relations programs.

4. Organizational Leadership

An educational leader possesses the knowledge and skills to establish and improve organizational structure and processes, to design and implement operational plans, to secure and manage resources, and to engage others in the decision making process.

5. Interpersonal and Ethical Leadership

An educational leader possesses the knowledge and skills to facilitate teamwork and collegiality and the attributes to act ethically and with integrity.

To date, the statewide delivery system for providing staff development training in these identified areas is fragmented and incomplete. Many critics suggest that there has been little

opportunity to learn and practice leadership techniques and strategies prior to being thrust into such complex responsibilities.

In a collaborative effort to examine how school leadership can impact more positively on Delaware's reform efforts, the University of Delaware and the Delaware Department of Education assembled a statewide Task Force of fifty educators, community leaders and policy makers. The charge was to focus on the needs for, and the barriers to, effective school leadership. The Delaware School Leadership Task Force was assembled to better understand the complex issues surrounding school leadership and to recommend a delivery system of professional development programs and activities which can bolster and enhance instructional improvement at the school level.

The Task Force was initiated as a result of the establishment of the Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL), a program created by the University of Delaware in partnership with several stakeholders to create a broad-based support network among school leaders, to strengthen skills and technical competencies of incumbents, while preparing others to assume roles of school leadership. It is expected that the recommendations made by the Delaware School Leadership Task Force will structure and direct the future activities and programs of DASL, as well as other educational stakeholders, in providing professional development opportunities to school leaders statewide.

Within the Task Force, four sub-committees were created, with each group focusing on one of the following topics:

- ❖ Identification of essential school leadership skills
- ❖ Development of a broader pool of aspiring school leaders
- ❖ Creation of a public relations initiative that facilitates community support for school leadership and school change
- ❖ Enhancement of superintendent/school board collaborative partnerships

Each sub-committee was issued several questions about these topics and then asked to develop recommendations related to the assigned topics.

The Task Force members were in consensus on the school leadership challenges Delaware faces. Delaware is traveling down a path of school reform uncharted by any previous generation. State reform initiatives raised standards for all of our schools and all of our children. This new transformation requires all school leaders to rethink what they do and how they do it. Schools are being asked by elected officials to be accountable for their contributions to student learning. State standards are the articulated expectations of what students should know and be able to demonstrate on statewide tests and in public school classrooms. These standards shape the instructional activities and the pedagogical techniques used to determine what should be taught and what students should be able to demonstrate as a result of this learning experience. As schools become the focal point of accountability, the manner in which schools plan, implement and evaluate improvement activities becomes extremely important in determining how schools will be judged by their communities. The impact of standards-based reform in education is changing the expectations the public has for its schools and its school leaders. As noted researcher and authority Dr. Joseph Murphy says, *the rules have changed*.

To be successful in leading education reform, principals must shift from being effective building managers to being effective instructional leaders in their schools. Research continues to show the crucial role the principals can play in improving the teaching and learning environment of our schools. Therefore, the top priority of the school principal must become more focused in leading improved teaching and learning throughout the school. This critical new role will require that each school leader thoroughly understands:

- ❖ Academic content standards and the pedagogical techniques for helping all children meet the new state promotion and graduation requirements
- ❖ How to motivate and strengthen the teaching skills of their faculty
- ❖ How to collect, analyze, and utilize data to better align instructional strategies and current resources to better meet the new demands for instructional improvement
- ❖ How to effectively communicate these new changes and requirements throughout the broader school community

If being the instructional leader were the sole responsibility of the school principal today, the task would be challenging enough, but the position also continues to carry responsibilities for basic building operations, which more often than not, compete directly for the time and attention needed to be an effective instructional leader. The topic of how to change or modify the duties of instructional leadership and building management consumed a significant amount of time and attention of Task Force members. Two major themes surfaced which included the possibility of dual leadership roles in schools or providing more flexibility to school districts to design leadership teams that make greater use of personnel serving different functions (i.e., principals, assistant principals, teacher-leaders, and instructional specialists or interns). Regardless of which approach is utilized, the Task Force believes the current overload of responsibility on school leaders must change if we expect to improve instruction in all of Delaware's schools.

To concentrate on moving school reform initiatives forward in Delaware, the Task Force suggests that a moratorium on new educational mandates at the state level be implemented immediately. Such a moratorium would not preclude providing flexibility or refinements in current laws/regulations to enhance the school learning environment. But the education reform agenda is now full and that agenda should be implemented before new agenda items are added. Time and focus of purpose are extremely important to the success of the transformation underway within Delaware's schools and all energy and resources must be directed to the tasks at hand.

The Task Force and its sub-committees met on fifteen separate occasions and invested over 750 person-hours of discussion and deliberation regarding the importance of providing the levels of support and training for school leadership. In addition, Dr. Joseph Murphy addressed the Task Force on current trends and issues impacting school leadership at the national level. As a result of the many meetings and discussions, the Task Force offers **five** recommendations that, once implemented, will have a profound impact upon the continuing success of the school reform initiatives underway in Delaware.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1: Provide More Flexibility to Encourage School Districts to Restructure Organizational Responsibilities

While the educational reform initiatives in Delaware will require a new kind of environment and instructional leader, shifting to a new kind of instructional leadership model will not be easy for schools or for school leaders. Not only must school leaders continue to perform what Richard Elmore (2000) calls “The ritualistic tasks of organizing, budgeting, managing and dealing with the numerous disruptions inside and outside the school house, today we expect them to be the new instructional catalyst in their schools as well.” This will require a complete understanding of the alignment strategies impacting state standards, curriculum strategies, teaching methodology and assessment data in order to facilitate a continuous improvement process. In addition, school leaders must build learning communities within their schools and engage the broader school community in creating and achieving this new vision for its schools.

We need to reassess the effectiveness of the century-old model of the principal as a middle manager directly responsible for every aspect of school operation. Historically, being an effective manager was good enough to be successful as a school leader and certainly the need to manage school properly continues to be an important responsibility. Now the challenges underway require building administrators to become leaders for student learning. To date, there has not been a systematic reorganization of responsibilities. Instructional leadership responsibilities have simply been added to the existing overall management responsibilities. The question of whether the job can effectively be carried out by one person as it currently exists is worthy of serious discussion. New models and strategies of organizational leadership need to be explored. While there are many designs for possible models of school leadership, the Department of Education needs to heighten its efforts to encourage creative restructuring of leadership duties and functions. These new models of organizational leadership may be different internally by school function and level as well as externally based upon community norms, building enrollments and program function. We would suggest the Department of Education strongly encourage the involvement of business leaders in helping schools analyze the current tasks and functions required of school leaders. This exchange of thinking could lead to the redesigning of leadership roles and functions that may provide a variety of approaches and models worthy of consideration and implementation. Schools that restructure their leadership responsibilities should be analyzed and information should be shared throughout the state. These new “best practices” may prove to be practical designs that should be replicated in other sites statewide.

Recommendation #2: Design and Implement a Plan to Identify and Develop a Larger and More Diverse Pool of Prospective School Leaders

Delaware schools and school districts will face grave administrator shortages in the near future. Each year, fewer candidates express an interest in entering administrative roles than in previous

years. The demands on school administrators make the position unattractive to many who possess leadership skills, but prefer to exercise them in the classroom environment. Serious efforts must be undertaken now to make school administration more appealing to larger numbers of potential candidates. Salary considerations are one area of concern, as many teachers in leadership roles and performing extra duties make more money than many school administrators. We are convinced, however, that money is not the only impediment to increasing the number and quality of potential candidates for school administration. The role must be made appealing by placing a higher societal value on the role of school leaders, by ensuring that potential school administrators know they will be nurtured and supported throughout their careers, and by realigning some of the duties and responsibilities now required of school leaders.

The increasing negative perception of the role of a building administrator has resulted in educators retiring early. Research by the Institute for Leadership and the American Association of School Administrators continues to document the fact that new administrators are reverting to previous teaching positions or leaving the profession entirely. Finally, teachers, as well as other educators who are potential outstanding future leaders, are more reluctant to consider this professional move.

There are two most obvious sources of prospective candidates for school leadership positions. Current administrators often recognize teachers in their schools who have leadership ability, but follow-up is wanting. A comprehensive program needs to be developed that rewards current leaders for identifying and stimulating teacher leaders to consider school leadership opportunities. Resources need to be made available that will permit aspiring leaders to gain some experience in leadership, whether that occurs through differentiated staffing strategies, internships, special projects, or similar opportunities.

Recruitment of educational leaders from other states can be enhanced using a variety of approaches. Providing moving and temporary living expenses would be helpful. The establishment of portable pension programs would remove a significant hurdle and certification barriers should be removed.

The School Leadership Task Force repeatedly encountered the issue of adequate compensation in maintaining and recruiting school leaders. While the charge of the Task Force was not intended to make recommendations regarding compensation, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge its importance in addressing some of the issues discussed by the Task Force. Many national reports repeatedly cite the lack of adequate compensation as an important factor to the declining applicant pool of school leaders. Given the issues of job security, increasing expectations, stress, and other issues, educators are losing interest in school administration. In school administration in Delaware, the compensation issue will become particularly acute. The largest pool of aspiring administrators is the pool of teachers. With the summer school teaching opportunities that are becoming available, teachers can teach in the summer and be essentially as well off economically as they would be as administrators, without the additional responsibilities. A comprehensive analysis of administrative salaries via a cooperative initiative that includes the Delaware Association of School Administrators and the Department of Education should be conducted and appropriate recommendations made to the Governor and General Assembly.

Recommendation #3: Design and Implement Professional Development that Supports the Changing Role and Responsibilities of School Leaders

It was the consensus of the practitioners and other members of the Essential Leadership Skills Committee that the body of skills and knowledge necessary for effective school leadership is clearly and comprehensively defined in the five leadership domains of the Delaware State Standards for Administrators. However, there is a need to develop a taxonomy of skills related to each Administrator Standard. Once delineated, an appropriate series of professional development activities could be designed to expand the knowledge base school leaders will need to handle increasingly complex leadership and management responsibilities. These professional development activities must be job-embedded and related to the practical problems faced on the job each day. The scope and depth of skills/knowledge needed for effective school leadership cannot be delivered through traditional pre-service program models alone. Many of the essential skills and knowledge for effective leadership require a working knowledge of, and experience in, school administration.

New paradigms for delivering professional development and for creating support networks for school leaders must be developed. Technology should be utilized to its fullest extent to support and drive this new paradigm. Delaware has made significant investments in technology infrastructure and related equipment and is therefore well-positioned in this regard. First-rate staff development is extremely difficult to provide within the current educational structure. It is imperative that school systems, institutions of higher education, and state government work collaboratively to ensure the proper training of our educational leaders. We must utilize the leadership expertise in the state to train new administrators, and we must fully utilize distance learning to expand staff development opportunities for practicing administrators. Professional development academies should be established throughout the state to deliver ongoing training to both practicing and aspiring administrators.

Additionally, a framework for school board training should be developed that provides board members structured opportunities to acquire the skills necessary to appropriately lead the districts based upon sound educational research and practices. This structured curriculum should contain instruction in such areas as: the roles of the board and superintendent, vision and direction, accountability, standards, assessment, data interpretation, fiscal structure, community engagement, legislation, and regulations.

Recommendation #4: Create a Tiered System of Induction and Professional Development for School Leaders

A tiered staff development system is needed that initially prepares new school administrators for the challenges of school leadership and then fosters the development of skills and knowledge throughout their administrative careers. There are certain core requirements and attributes that are essential for any future educational leaders:

- ❖ Essential skills and knowledge requirements should be embedded in graduate preparation programs in instructional leadership or educational leadership. Many of the skills and knowledge requirements are essential for teacher leaders, as well as for

educators who aspire to administrative positions. Including such skills and knowledge requirements in graduate programs in education encourages every educator to become an educational leader.

- ❖ Certification and/or licensure requirements for administrative positions should be, at minimum, completion of an approved graduate program in Educational Leadership or School Administration. The current option, completing a specified list of courses that is not part of an approved, coherent program, does not prepare educational leaders for the rigors of administrative responsibilities.

Because the skills and knowledge requirements for administrators are complex, a classification of these job-embedded requirements should be developed. This taxonomy could then serve as a matrix from which to develop a continuum of professional development programs to nurture and support both associate and experienced administrators. Professional development for school administrators can no longer be a voluntary activity. The challenges facing all school administrators demand the coherent, rigorous programs be made available, regardless of their assignment or their years of experience.

A tiered staff development system should include three phases. Similar to an apprentice system, for the purposes of this document, administrators are identified as “associate,” “competent,” or “master.” Just as the apprentice must learn his or her craft at the hands of a master, an associate administrator must learn and hone his or her craft with the assistance of master administrators, focused professional development programs, and specialized training in the form of institutes, seminars and workshops. During the induction phase, which is proposed to last between three and five years, the associate administrator would participate in the Associate Administrator Institutes, would be coached and mentored by an experienced administrator, and would develop a portfolio that is relevant to his or her administrative assignment.

Upon the successful completion of the induction phase, the administrator would be deemed a competent administrator practitioner. A special set of focused professional development experiences developed and continuously revised and improved by universities, principals’ academy, and independent academies working in concert, must be available and accessible to all competent administrators. The effective use of technology could be of great assistance by providing such programs in a format and at times and locations suitable to the schedules of busy professionals.

An administrator who has successfully fulfilled a role in administration for ten or more years and who has been judged on the Administrator DPAS II instrument to be beyond competent, would be viewed as a master administrator. The need for highly-developed, challenging content to continue to challenge master administrators to the next level cannot be overstated. Cutting-edge programs featuring national leaders in the field, in-depth institutes focusing on emerging issues, and recognition, support, and salary credit for mentoring associate colleagues could help to fill the need of master administrators for continuing professional growth and development.

A tiered system of induction and continued professional development would also be helpful to local and state school board members, who must learn to become effective governing bodies. By developing a structured sequence of professional development opportunities, there is a higher

probability that new school board members and incumbent board members can grow into a cohesive leadership team, more knowledgeable and comfortable with their duties and responsibilities.

Recommendation #5: Increase Public Engagement to Assist Stakeholders' Understanding and Support of School Reform

In the current political climate of Delaware, public education is the highest priority among all the stakeholders. With the increase in attention on the efforts of educational reform and accountability in all counties across the state, it is important that all stakeholders are recognized, included, and engaged. Without efforts focused toward this endeavor, public support and understanding will be diminished and improved student achievement will be significantly more difficult to achieve.

Understanding the problems of collaboration and communication among stakeholders is an important issue. The perceptions of educational conditions that each stakeholder holds must be taken seriously by the school districts. In order to accommodate better understanding and avoid misperceptions, it is important to establish commonly understood and agreed upon measures of performance. These measures should include those the state has identified, as well as the other accountability factors that are district or school generated. Development of this consistent language may be one of the more difficult tasks of school leaders since data are often interpreted differently by various stakeholder groups. Public engagement will also require renewed efforts to simplify educational jargon in order to make it clear, understandable and less threatening to the stakeholders and communities.

The Task Force also believes that the process of public engagement in the transformation of the school's learning environment and the school leadership role and responsibility could serve as a catalyst for building a stronger and more unified governance and leadership team. Delaware's educational reform initiatives are improving the delivery of educational services to all children. It is important that school leaders at all levels continue to engage, involve and inform the public with a higher level of frequency and clarity about what is happening in our schools.

These past nine years have witnessed unparalleled efforts to improve Delaware's schools and raise student achievement. New content standards for math, science, social studies and language arts, increased requirements for high school graduation, reduced class size, especially in the early grades, new statewide testing and assessment efforts linked to performance-based accountability for schools are initiatives being integrated into the fabric of the new school culture.

Improved student achievement and school performance will happen by concentrating much more squarely on the internal workings of the school. Developing more effective school leaders may depend much more centrally on creating the conditions in the state, which, by their very structure and operation, encourage and allow leaders to succeed in implementing the reform initiatives underway in Delaware. The Task Force recommendations are intended to seize the opportunity before us to guarantee that this transformation significantly makes a difference in the lives of the children it was intended to help.

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In October of 2000, Secretary Woodruff and Dean Rich called the Task Force members together and assigned each member to serve on one of four sub-committees. The sub-committees, under the leadership of co-chairpersons, were presented with a set of questions to focus their discussions around the four topics described earlier in this report. Periodically, the sub-committee chairpersons would report to the full Task Force membership regarding the status of the information and ideas being discussed in their meetings.

In December of 2000, each sub-committee was asked to develop three to five recommendations that would serve as the starting point for resolving many of the questions discussed in their committee meetings. These recommendations would help to shape the final report.

From these sub-committee discussions and recommendations several common themes evolved that embody the final recommendations of the Task Force. The five recommendations are intended to shape a staff development structure that provides focus to better prepare our school leaders to succeed in leading the educational reform in our schools.

The following sub-committee reports contain many other recommendations and strategies that should be reviewed and considered as the State of Delaware continues down the path of educational reform.

Essential School Leadership Skills/Knowledge

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ESSENTIAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE

Recommendations:

1. Recognize the core skills and knowledge defined under the Delaware Administrative Standards.
2. Enhance administrator recruitment and retention through realigning duties and responsibilities of the job.
3. Create a tiered system of induction and professional development.
4. Design administrator assessment and evaluation procedures to identify areas where administrators need continued professional development.
5. Develop compensation program more closely aligned to business leadership role and responsibility required by the job.

What precisely and realistically do we want school leaders to know and be able to do? How can such qualities and capabilities (leadership skills) be developed and supported?

There are certain core knowledge requirements and attributes that are essential for any future educational leaders. Thus, the following strategies are proposed:

❖ Core requirements should be embedded in graduate programs that are focused on instructional or educational leadership. Many of these requirements are essential for teacher leaders, as well as for educators who aspire to administrative positions. Including these requirements in graduate programs in education encourages every educator to become an educational leader. All approved administrator preparation programs offered by higher education institutions in Delaware must align their programs with the Delaware Administrator Standards.

❖ Certification and/or licensure requirements for administrative positions should consist of completion of an approved graduate program in Educational Leadership or School Administration. The current option of completing a specified list of courses that is not part of an approved, coherent program, does not prepare educational leaders for the rigors of administrative responsibilities.

❖ Many of Delaware's school administrators are prepared in programs outside of Delaware. The presence of skills and knowledge requirements in neighboring states should be examined as part of any reciprocity agreements that may be negotiated with other state departments of education. Additionally, a mechanism is needed that allows administrators prepared elsewhere to demonstrate their mastery of the requisite skills and knowledge without having to enroll in a preparation program that duplicates skills and knowledge they have already acquired.

❖ All approved programs in Educational Leadership or School Administration should require an administrative internship, which is comprehensive and features a capstone project.

- ❖ Each school district in the state should support additional administrative internships, which may take place during the summer, during the school year or throughout the year. Internships should be designed to provide a variety of experiences, for example, student and staff scheduling, conferencing, problem resolution, data collection and analysis. The internships should be available at all levels of public school administration, and should not be viewed as exclusive to any one school within a district or to any particular level of administration.
- ❖ Alternative routes to administrative certification and/or licensure should be developed for individuals who already possess a master's degree in instruction, curriculum, counseling, or other educationally related discipline. Such programs should feature an intense, cohesive institute, which focuses on extensive skills assessment, using instruments such as the NAASP skills assessment to evaluate initial skills and to identify the personal attributes necessary for successful school leadership. All individuals enrolled in an alternative routes program would be assigned a mentor, either from education and/or from the business sector.

How can the organization of the school environment be made more conducive so that leadership assigns improvement in teaching and learning as the highest priority of the school?

It is the consensus of this sub-committee that the body of skills and knowledge necessary for effective school leadership is clearly and comprehensively defined in the five leadership domains of the Delaware State Standards for Administrators. It is also the consensus that the scope and depth of the skills and knowledge cannot be delivered through traditional pre-service programs alone. Many of the essential tools necessary for effective leadership require a working knowledge of, and experience in, school administration. A tiered staff development system is needed that initially prepares new school administrators for the challenges of school leadership and then supports the development of skills and knowledge throughout their administrative careers.

ASSOCIATE PHASE

Similar to an apprentice system, administrators are identified as associate, competent or master. An associate administrator must learn and hone his or her craft with the assistance of master administrators, focused professional development programs and specialized training in the form of institutes, seminars and other mediums.

Programs for aspiring administrators are offered several times a year by the Delaware Principals' Academy. These programs provide an opportunity to identify potential administrative candidates. The Aspiring Administrator program should be strengthened and augmented by support to provide a comprehensive, coherent mechanism for identifying and recruiting qualified candidates who display interest in the administrative role. Additional support from school districts, DOE and college and university graduate programs could help to facilitate these aspiring administrators' career goals.

During the induction phase, which is proposed to last between three and five years, the associate administrator would participate in the Beginning Administrator Institute, would be coached and mentored by an experienced administrator, and would develop a portfolio which is relevant to his or her administrative assignment. In order to meet the need for experienced administrative mentors, it is proposed that recently retired administrators could be recruited to serve in this role. Such an arrangement would necessitate a change in the state pension system to allow retirees' earnings from these activities to be exempt from the earnings cap for state employment. Assessing the portfolio could be part of the administrative mentor's role, after training is provided to the cadre of administrative mentors in portfolio assessment.

COMPETENT PHASE

Upon the successful completion of the associate phase, the administrator would be deemed a competent administrative practitioner. A special set of focused professional development experiences developed and continuously revised and improved by universities, the Principals' Academy, and independent academies working in concert, must be available and accessible to all competent administrators, regardless of their assignment and their geographic location. Visioning and facilitation skills should be included in the professional development offerings for this group of competent administrators. The effective use of technology could be of great assistance in providing such programs in a format and at times and locations that suit the schedules of busy professionals.

MASTER PHASE

An administrator who has successfully fulfilled a role in administration for ten or more years and who has been judged on the Administrator DPAS II instrument to be beyond competent, would be viewed as a master administrator. The need for highly-developed, challenging content to continue to challenge master administrators to the next level cannot be overstated. Cutting-edge programs featuring national leaders in the field, in-depth institutes focusing on emerging issues, and recognition, support, and salary credit for mentoring associate colleagues could help to fill the need of master administrators for continuing professional growth and development.

Given the complexity and time constraints of the school leaders' responsibilities, where can we find time to provide staff development opportunities in a meaningful manner during the work week, month, and year?

Professional development for school administrators can no longer be a voluntary activity. The challenges facing all school administrators demand that coherent, rigorous programs be made available, regardless of their assignment or their years of experience. Because the skills and knowledge requirements for administrators are complex, a classification of skills and knowledge requirements should be developed. This could serve as a matrix from which to create professional development programs to nurture and support both associate and experienced administrators.

The role of the assistant principal is frequently that of the disciplinarian. It is important that assignments given assistant principals be varied and challenging so that, should they so desire, movement into the principalship or into an instructional leadership role at the district level is

possible. It is suggested that an appropriate role for an assistant principal might, in fact, be that of assistant or associate principal in charge of instruction.

The common notion of the role of the assistant principal as one of “a principal in waiting” needs to be re-examined. The value to the organizational structure of schools of the assistant or associate principal needs to be assessed and recognized as an important element of the school organization. Differentiated assignments for assistant principals may make that position one that, for many individuals, is considered as a career goal in itself, instead of a stop along the career ladder to the principalship or to a central office position.

Likewise, the relationship between the principal and department chairs at the building level and with curriculum leaders at the district level should be collaborative. Frequently, the principal is viewed as the manager, and his or her instructional leadership skills are overlooked. Those skills must be nurtured and enhanced, so that the principal can effectively serve the dual role of building manager and instructional leader.

Just as there is recognition of the dual roles of the principal as building manager and instructional leader, it is also recognized that there is considerable difference in the role of the principal at different levels of K-12 education. Although professional preparation programs may, of necessity, address administration at all levels, the period of induction for the associate principal, as well as a continuing focus for on-going administrator professional development, must include instruction and experiences specific to the different levels of school administration. For example, elementary level associate assistant principals and principals should be paired with mentor principals experienced in leading elementary level buildings, to help design an induction program and a program of professional development for the administrator focused on elementary level school leadership. Likewise, associate high school assistant principals and principals should be teamed with mentor principals, either within or outside the associate’s district, to design an induction program and a program of professional development for the administrator focused on secondary school leadership. There is a special recognition of the unique nature of middle school leadership. Depending on the district, middle schools may take on a uniquely elementary flavor or a secondary orientation. Great care must be taken to develop an appropriate induction program for the middle level school leader, which encompasses both leadership and middle school-specific issues. Again, the associate middle level administrator should be paired with an experienced middle-level school leader, either within or outside the district, who will assist in designing an appropriate induction phase and on-going professional development for the middle-level school leader.

Much of this report has emphasized the principal as the instructional leader of a school. Yet, it is acknowledged that the principal is also responsible for the management of the school and for establishing a climate conducive to teaching and learning. There is constant tension between the need to manage the school effectively and the desire to exercise instructional leadership. While the overall responsibility for both management and instructional leadership resides with the principal, the individuals who fill that position bring many different skills and strengths to the position. The scope of the position continues to outpace the most gifted individuals, making it difficult to attend fully and effectively to all the demands of the job. Just as it has been suggested that individuals could be hired to handle some of the management functions of the

principal, it is also suggested that an “instructional facilitator,” whose primary function is improving instruction for students, could serve as instructional coaches, model effective standards-based lessons, and otherwise focus the instructional staff on quality instruction. The inclusion of such a position in each school makes a strong statement that instructional excellence is an essential goal for education in Delaware. This twelve-month position could be a short-term (2-3 year) assignment for a master teacher, serve as a rung on the career ladder for aspiring administrators, or be filled by recent retirees who possess the attributes of master teachers or master administrators.

ADMINISTRATOR ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

The administrator assessment instrument (Administrator DPAS II) must be designed to identify areas in which administrators need professional development. The role of evaluators to administer DPAS II must be taught and nurtured. Evaluators must be given sufficient time to assess the skills of administrators, and to develop collaboratively with the administrator being evaluated, a professional development plan for that administrator. Participation in the professional development set forth in the evaluation should be mandatory in order to retain certification and/or licensure as an administrator.

Assessment of administrative skills, knowledge, and performances must be made a priority for each school district. A high level of institutional value must be placed on continuing professional development. In order to support this cultural and institutional value, several things must take place:

- ❖ Becoming a skilled educational leader and school administrator takes time. The system needs to support the evolutionary nature of the job and the need for on-going training throughout a career.
- ❖ To parallel the recertification requirements for teachers and specialists, recertification for administrators must be required.
- ❖ Mentoring relationships for beginning administrators and collegial teams for experienced administrators must be encouraged and facilitated by school districts, the Department of Education, the DE Principals’ Academy, and universities.
- ❖ To provide time for school administrators to focus on instructional leadership, a team approach to leadership should be explored.
- ❖ Recently retired teachers and administrators could be employed to serve as coaches for teachers, to enhance their skills in pedagogy and in content. This would allow the school administrator to focus on pressing leadership tasks.
- ❖ Explore providing more educational leadership opportunities within the schools for teachers, so that they can assist in coaching peers, in curriculum development, and in other essential activities.

- ❖ Explore ways in which some of the managerial functions of schools can be shared by a team.
- ❖ Give consideration to hiring one master administrator for every 10 to 12 practicing school administrators (principals and assistants) in order to provide 20 days per year per administrator of personalized training on the essential leadership skills/knowledge identified in the Delaware State Administrator Standards. These master administrators could provide mentoring/training for practicing/aspiring administrators and/or could manage buildings to free administrators for specialized training during the school year.
- ❖ New paradigms for delivering professional development and for creating support networks for administrators must be explored. Technology should be utilized to its fullest extent to support and drive this new paradigm.

First-rate staff development is extremely difficult to provide within the current educational structure. It is imperative that school systems, institutions of higher education, and state government work collaboratively to ensure the proper training of our educational leaders. We must utilize the leadership expertise in the state to train new administrators and we must more fully utilize distance learning to expand staff development opportunities for practicing administrators. Professional development academies should be established throughout the state to deliver ongoing training to both practicing and aspiring administrators. These programs should align staff development with the state administrator standards.

Development of a Pool of Aspiring School Leaders

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DEVELOPMENT OF A POOL OF ASPIRING LEADERS

Recommendations:

1. Clarify and categorize the responsibilities of building administrators into leadership and management and create a new position in each school to manage the management responsibilities.
2. Upgrade administrative salaries and benefits to make them more attractive to aspiring leaders and competitive with other states, especially contiguous states.
3. Implement professional training and mentoring to improve the ability of the building administrator to be an instructional leader.
4. Develop programs to identify and train aspiring administrators.
5. Develop comprehensive recruitment programs for the pool of in-state aspiring leaders and practicing administrators from other states.

The task of this sub-committee was to focus on the shrinking pool of aspiring administrators. During its initial meeting, the sub-committee brainstormed a variety of topics and issues related to the problem. The discussion could be generalized as falling into two major categories. The following are the results from the discussions.

Why is the pool of interested and qualified applicants declining?

At the present time, it is not publicly recognized that a shortage of qualified candidates for administrative positions in education exists. However, for the reasons discussed in the recently released report titled *Leadership of Learning: Reinventing the Principalsip*, a shortage may become acute in a very short period of time.

Historically, being an effective manager was good enough and the need to manage school properly continues to be important. But schools are changing. This change requires that building administrators become instructional leaders, leaders for student learning. To date, there has not been a realignment of responsibilities to reflect this change. Instructional leadership responsibilities have simply been added to the existing management responsibilities. The question of whether the job can be effectively carried out has now surfaced.

The increasing negative perception of the role of a building administrator has resulted in educators retiring early. New administrators are reverting to previous teaching positions or leaving the profession entirely. Finally, teachers, as well as other educators who are potential outstanding future leaders, are more reluctant to consider this professional move.

What can be done to increase the pool and make either becoming an administrator or staying an administrator more attractive?

The committee identified four major areas that can have a significant impact on improving the pool of qualified candidates for educational administrative positions. These

categories are *Scope of Work, Compensation, Training, and Recruitment*. The following are the recommendations the committee agreed are most significant.

SCOPE OF WORK

Recommendation #1: Clarify and differentiate the responsibilities of building administrators into **leadership** and **management** roles and create a new position in each school to which the management responsibilities can be assigned in order to permit building administrators to concentrate on instructional leadership activities.

It is anticipated that conducting management activities in each school will not necessarily require training in education. This opens the applicant pool for this position to individuals that have training and experience in administration and management in other sectors. This in turn could result in a related increase in the number of potential applicants for leadership positions. Certification requirements for management positions would have to be addressed by DOE. The creation of this position would provide the principal relief from many management activities, permit him/her to concentrate on instructional leadership, and address many of the quality of life concerns that have been expressed. The committee suggests that simply permitting districts and schools to do this with existing or new staff may not adequately address the problem. Concurrent with this new approach is the need to change the culture of the way the school operates and the way parents and communities perceive the way schools operate. The culture change may be the greatest challenge. Finally the legislature will need to be asked to appropriately staff schools, especially schools that currently have only one administrator, to permit this approach to occur.

COMPENSATION

Recommendation #2: Upgrade administrative salaries and benefits to make them more attractive to aspiring leaders and competitive with other states, especially contiguous states.

This report repeatedly cites the lack of adequate compensation as an important factor to the declining applicant pool. Given the issues of job security, increasing expectations, stress, etc., educators are losing interest in administrative positions. In Delaware, the compensation issue will become particularly acute. The largest pool of aspiring administrators is the pool of teachers. With the summer school teaching opportunities that are becoming available, teachers can teach during the summer and be essentially as well off economically as they would be as administrators without the additional responsibilities. A comprehensive analysis of administrative salaries via a cooperative initiative that includes the Delaware Association of School Administrators and DOE should be conducted and appropriate recommendations made to the Governor and General Assembly.

TRAINING

Recommendation #3: Develop and implement professional training and mentoring programs that improve the ability of a building administrator to be an instructional leader.

Recommendation #4: Develop and implement programs to identify and train aspiring administrators.

With student learning as the focus and leadership as their primary responsibility, building administrators need to continue to improve their skills in the areas of teaching and learning, professional development, data-driven decision-making, accountability, supervision, etc. Schools change and administrators should be on the cutting edge of the knowledge base for change. New administrators, like new teachers, often require assistance to deal with the realities of their new responsibilities. Mentors should be available to new administrators to assist them, especially during their initial two or three years in administration. Finally, the educational system needs to become more aggressive in the identification of potential leaders and providing these aspiring administrators experiences in administration that will encourage them to consider the important step into educational leadership. Resources will need to be identified to provide stipends for professionals who volunteer to mentor new administrators. A partnership among institutions of higher learning, DOE, professional organizations, and school districts should be developed to define professional development programs for veteran and aspiring administrators. When possible, these programs should be linked to advanced degree programs.

RECRUITMENT

Recommendation #5: Develop and implement comprehensive recruitment programs that focus on (1) the pool of in-state aspiring leaders and (2) practicing administrators from other states.

These are the two most obvious sources for school leadership positions. Current administrators often recognize teachers in their schools that have leadership ability, but follow-up is left wanting. A comprehensive program needs to be defined that encourages current leaders to identify and encourage teacher leaders to consider school leadership opportunities. Resources need to be made available that will permit aspiring leaders to gain some experience in leadership, whether that occur through differentiated staffing strategies, internships, special projects, or similar opportunities. Recruitment of educational leaders from other states can be enhanced using a variety of approaches. The compensation issue has been previously discussed. Providing moving and temporary living expenses would be helpful. The establishment of portable pension programs would remove a significant hurdle and certification barriers should be removed.

***Public Relations Program
for School Leaders***

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PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Recommendations:

1. Provide flexibility for school leaders to maximize the new role of school leadership.
2. Develop core job descriptions based on the Delaware Administrative Standards as approved by the State Board of Education.
3. Reinforce importance of collaboration of the school leader with teaching staff, support staff, parents, and other members of the community.

In discussing the issues around the questions posed to the subcommittee, it is clear that this is a very complex issue, one that is being debated at the national level, as well as by most other states.

How can the role of the school administrator be explained and validated in the community?

It is necessary to formulate a clear definition with respect to the role of the principal. Research shows, however, that the role of the principal is changing. Educational leadership is not the same as school management. It is clear in the accountability movement that the principal is expected to serve as the leader for student learning. This is also addressed in the Standards for Administrators that were approved by the State Board of Education in January 1998. This will require different training for those coming into the principalship as well as retraining of existing staff.

The role of the principal cannot be explained through a superficial public relations campaign. Rather, it must be part of a communications plan that is developed through collaboration with the teaching staff, support staff, parents and other members of the community. This plan must address internal and external communications.

The principal needs to play an important role in communicating and engaging all segments of the community. It is important that the principal takes the initiative in explaining the role of the school leader and not depend on others to “fix” the perception. One way to begin is to share the vision of the school with the community. During meetings such as the school Open House, the role of the principal could be explained in relationship to the vision.

Community engagement should also be part of the school improvement effort. Student and school accountability changed the focus from teaching to learning. The staff and community need to be engaged in a process that helps them see this as an opportunity for students, not as a system of punishment.

In looking at the principal as the leader for student learning, a new role is emerging that cannot be accommodated within the current system structures. What is expected of today’s principal is too much to expect from any one person. The committee supports the concept of new leadership models. The committee also agrees with Dr. Joseph Murphy’s contention that, “While the principal must provide the leadership essential for student learning, the role of the principal and

of other school staff can be restructured. Responsibilities for getting the work done can be distributed among a leadership team or given to others as specific functions.”

School districts need to play an important part in communicating the role of the principal. All school district staff need to know what is expected of the school leader.

The community should have a way of providing input and feedback to the administrator and the district on its satisfaction with the educational program. When new policies and programs are being developed, community engagement needs to occur on the front end, and not as a sales effort to buy support. The role of the principal is then one of partnership with the community and parents.

STRATEGIES:

- ❖ Develop a clear definition of the role of the principal with a focus on leadership for learning. This must be done with practitioners being active participants.
- ❖ Communicate with the Professional Standards Board the need to re-examine the certification requirements for school administrators. This includes Program Approval regulations for higher educational institutions to incorporate communication and community engagement skills.
- ❖ Communicate with the Professional Standards Board and other institutions and agencies providing professional development for administrators the importance of skills and knowledge in the area of communications and leadership. These groups should be encouraged to develop professional development clusters in this area. This has implications for the DASL program, DASA, the Delaware Principals’ Academy, and others providing staff development for administrators.
- ❖ Schools and school districts should include a community communications and advocacy strategy in all strategic and improvement plans.
- ❖ The new appraisal system for administrators should include a component on communications and community engagement. This recommendation should be referred to the DPAS II Committee and the Professional Standards Board.
- ❖ Develop strategies for using parents and community members that are actively involved in education to help communicate the vision of the school and the principal’s role as a leader for learning.
- ❖ Involve key business leaders to work with schools in looking at the current tasks required of principals and what jobs could be removed from the principal’s plate.
- ❖ Establish pilot programs that would look at differentiated leadership using a variety of approaches. These schools should be given flexibility from regulations similar to Charter Schools.

- ❖ More data is needed before a strategic plan can be formulated for gaining public support for school leadership. A questionnaire should be sent to each principal to help evaluate the current communications capabilities at the school level.

How can the perception of the school administrator role be increased to enhance its appeal for aspiring future administrative recruitment? What are the major deterrents to people aspiring to the school leadership level? How can they be changed or overcome?

There has been increasing research in this area as districts are finding it more difficult to attract qualified applicants for administrative positions. One of the most extensive studies was commissioned by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals and conducted by the Educational Research Service. It was released in January of 1998. Since half of the administrators in Delaware are over 52 years old, there is going to be a critical need to attract quality leaders.

The ERS study lists the top factors (in order) that discourage applicants:

- Compensation insufficient compared to responsibilities
- Too much time required
- Difficult to satisfy parents/community
- Societal problems make it difficult to focus on instruction
- Testing/accountability pressures
- Job viewed as less satisfying than previously
- Bad press/ PR problems for districts
- Inadequate funding for schools
- Openings not well publicized
- Would lose tenure as teacher
- No tenure for position

Additional Recommendations:

- ❖ Since there are other groups working with these same concerns, our committee recommends that the Task Force invite the co-chairs of the Standing Committees of the Professional Standards Board to meet with the Task Force to share work done to date. This would help the Task Force connect its charge with the work required by the Professional Accountability Act. It would also give the Standing Committees a heads-up on the work of the Task Force.
- ❖ The Task Force should develop strategies to move the recommendations forward to the Secretary of Education, State Board, General Assembly, and other policy makers.
- ❖ A communications plan needs to be developed to accompany the recommendations of the Task Force.

- ❖ The work of the Task Force should be a starting point and not an end. There should be strategies developed to evaluate the progress made toward the fulfillment of the recommendations and the success in building successful school leaders.
- ❖ A study similar to the ERS study should be done in Delaware to gain the data needed to make future recommendations in this area. This could be done in collaboration with the R & D Center at the University of Delaware, preparation programs and school districts.

Enhancement of Superintendent/Board Partnerships

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ENHANCEMENT OF SUPERINTENDENT/SCHOOL BOARD PARTNERSHIPS

Recommendations:

1. Enforce a moratorium on new education mandates and an increase in flexibility of current laws/regulations.
2. Build a framework of commonly understood and agreed upon measures when communicating with the stakeholders and the public.
3. Develop a framework and strategy for community engagement.
4. Acknowledge that training must begin with the leadership team.
5. Provide flexibility for executive session discussions.

The task of this sub-committee was to analyze and make recommendations on questions relating to the enhancement of superintendent/school board relationships and to establish specific activities to address these recommendations. Certainly in the current culture and political climate of the United States, the importance of public education is paramount among all the stakeholders. With the increase in attention on the efforts of educational reform and accountability in all states across the country, it is important that each of the stakeholders' groups is recognized, included, and engaged. Without efforts toward this, public support and understanding is diminished and the road to improved student achievement is significantly more difficult.

How does the relationship between the different stakeholders affect the outcome of reform efforts?

One of the first tasks of this committee is to identify the stakeholders and their relationship to reform initiatives. This group includes legislators, the Department of Education, local boards, superintendents, district office and school administrators, teachers, parents, business community.

It is important to recognize that the relationship among stakeholders does, indeed, make an impact on the initiatives and thus, the effective results of reform. The perception of each of the stakeholder groups becomes reality for those groups and must be aligned with both the realities and outcomes. Therefore, the relationships among the stakeholders, the roles of each group, and methods of communication among these stakeholder groups must be supported and maintained in order for the efforts for improved student achievement to progress in an orderly and meaningful fashion. The philosophy of making friends before we need them is critical to the reform efforts.

What can be done to assist the board and superintendent in becoming a unified governance and leadership team?

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

- ❖ **Parents** need to know the broader reform issues and how to address specific issues. School board members are responsible for filtering the issues and help constituents “self-solve” problems.
- ❖ **Media** need to have an ongoing, open relationship in order for balance to occur. If there is a negative relationship, the negative reports will continue to flow.
- ❖ **Taxpayers** need to have a positive contact for continued support and passage of referenda. This can also have an impact on new personal relationships, as in the link between children and senior citizens.
- ❖ **Business community, higher education, the military** are consumers of the product of our schools. Involvement can enhance programs through commitment of time and money. Displeasure can impact legislation.
- ❖ **Department of Education** is a link with the broader issues regarding the political entity and educating all children (advocacy v. regulations).
- ❖ **State Board of Education** provides the voting authority for the regulations.

Currently, we see several problems that need to be addressed.

There is a blending of the perceptions of the roles of different elected official groups. Attention should be addressed as to the different roles and responsibilities of the members of the legislature and the governing bodies of the school districts. Many of the laws that have been enacted during the education reform movement in Delaware have been prescriptive and do not provide for flexibility for the districts. The issues resulting from increased mandates and regulations that decrease the necessary time to attend to student needs and achievement should be investigated.

Locally, activities should be addressed on how to filter problems through the education system. For example, school board members should be responsible for the filtering of problems through the policies and the superintendent. Parents are responsible for filtering problems through the chain of command to find solutions at the lowest level of responsibility or authority.

How could collaboration and communication among stakeholders be altered to increase student achievement?

Understanding the problem of collaboration and communication among stakeholders is an important issue. As described earlier in this paper, the perceptions of educational conditions that each stakeholder holds must be taken seriously by the school districts. In order to accommodate better understanding and avoid misperceptions, it is important that we establish commonly understood and agreed-upon measures. This includes the measures that the state has imposed as well as the other accountability factors that are district-generated and important to the local communities. Aligned with this is the need to educate and engage all of the stakeholders on the factors that are assessed and utilized. This includes an increased use of

data to evaluate improved student achievement in these areas. It is recognized that this is probably one of the more difficult tasks since data are often interpreted differently. Public engagement must also include work to simplify educational jargon so that it becomes clear, understandable and less threatening to the stakeholders and communities.

Support for the ability of the public to understand the issues of reform and student achievement would be enhanced if districts maintain clear goals and the leadership teams link their agendas, discussions and programs to these goals.

Without doubt, the education leadership teams of the state and districts must strive to improve public engagement in the articulation of the strides that have been made to date. This includes meaningful discussion of the changes in the requirements of education. It also includes meaningful demonstration of the excellent work that has been done. We are educating more students than ever before in the history of the nation, and we are doing remarkable work. The needs of students are greater than ever, physically, emotionally and educationally. The education systems have striven to meet all these needs as well as deal with the increase of knowledge required of students. A program of public engagement that balances these strides against the negative perceptions is critical not only to the increased well-being of students but, especially, for those who serve them.

Above all, there is a greater need for increased communication with all stakeholders and formal partnerships to be developed and supported across the state and in the districts.

How can the system permit educational leaders to function in a manner we say we want them to function? What changes are needed?

It is apparent that there is a need for the board and superintendent to become a more unified governance and leadership team. We would like to suggest the following recommendations for this purpose. We recognize that DASL Task Force is not equipped to support all of the recommendations that might be necessary. Therefore, we have addressed these recommendations through several different avenues.

Recommendation #1: If learning, not just teaching, is important, a moratorium on new education mandates and an increase in flexibility in the current laws/regulations should be provided in order to make changes in the learning environment (i.e., longer school day/longer school year).

Recommendation #2: Identify commonly understood and agreed-upon measures and language.

- ❖ Educate stakeholders regarding achievement measures and changes.
- ❖ Simplify educational jargon to share a common language around educational issues.
- ❖ Recognize the dilemma of different interpretations of the same data.
- ❖ Link boards' goals and agendas back to the commonly understood and agreed upon measures.
- ❖ Districts should relate building level plans and activities to measurable student achievement goals.

Recommendation #3: Work collaboratively with the districts to develop a framework and strategy for effective community engagement, including a component for articulation of the effective work that is already being done.

- ❖ We are doing a better job with more students. We need to communicate not just that there is improvement but how well systems are doing.
- ❖ The framework should include effective methods and strategies for communicating with and including all stakeholders groups from planning through implementation to results stages of education efforts should be developed.

Recommendation #4: Focus on the importance of professional development with the acknowledgement that training must begin with the leadership team (the board and superintendent). A more detailed board/superintendent training curriculum should contain, but is not limited to:

- ❖ Roles of board/superintendent
- ❖ Vision and direction
- ❖ Standards
- ❖ Assessment
- ❖ Accountability
- ❖ Fiscal structure
- ❖ Community engagement (advocacy)
- ❖ Legislation and regulations
- ❖ How to utilize data in decision making with a focus on output rather than process

Recommendation #5: Provide more flexibility in criteria for executive session discussions. School boards and superintendents are required by law to interact in public. At the least, in the instances where interpersonal relationships are impeding the effective work of the group, provisions for non-public discussion to solve personal problems should be considered.

We are also recommending that DSBA (Delaware School Boards Association) and CSOA (Chief School Officers Association) work jointly on the following recommendations:

- ❖ Specific superintendent professional development opportunities:
 - Training to be an executive secretary
 - Orientation for new superintendents in Delaware
 -
- ❖ Specific board member development opportunities:
 - New board member training
 - Opportunities for observations of other boards
 - Training for board presidents
- ❖ Board/district retreat framework development:
 - Board members should be encouraged to schedule time for long-range and in-depth discussions of the directions of the districts. The development of a framework for meaningful retreats would support effective use of time.

- ❖ Two-way evaluation system of boards:
 - Non-threatening introduction
- ❖ Develop mechanism to better share best practice:

This mechanism should be an avenue to share effective board practice as well as the programs and strategies that are implemented in the schools. There are several opportunities that could be considered, including:

 - Mentoring
 - CSOA/DSBA clearinghouse

We would like to encourage the districts to address the following:

1. Forming formal partnerships with stakeholders.
2. Increased personal contact, which is critical.
3. Involve board members in discussions of administrative initiatives.
4. Increased focus on keeping the attention on student achievement.