Delaware Teachers Weigh in on School Funding

In 2024, members of the Rodel Educator Network came together to explore Delaware's school funding system–which has raised concerns due to its lack of equity, flexibility, and transparency.

The educators conducted research and launched a survey of their colleagues to learn more about how school funding is experienced at a classroom-level. Here is just some of what they discovered.

What We Heard from Delaware Educators

62%
say funding is either inadequate or very inadequate

88%
say that funding inequity negatively impacts student outcomes

58%
say the current funding formula does not adequately support student needs

56%
say the funding formula is not transparent

What are the Top 5 Most Underfunded Areas?

- Mental health supports
- Programs for multilingual learners
- Special education programs
- Staff salaries
- Extracurricular activities

How Would Educators Improve the Funding System?

- More equitable distribution of funding
- Increased overall funding
- Improved transparency in funding allocation

How Can decision-makers Engage with Educators?

- School visits and live conversations with educators
- Hosting meetings that educators can attend (not during school hours)
- Surveys

Educators Said:

" There are plenty of examples of students who are able to come to school with supplies or the funds for activities beside peers who are not...schools should have funding to help accommodate the students."

" Talk to [educators]; include them in meetings. Find out where the deficits are and try to address them systemically."

" There is no transparency and no one on the school level has access to that information...Transparency means letting the people that the distribution affects have access to that information."

" Every group that works on these decisions should have as many educators as non-educators...legislators need to hear from actual teachers in Legislative Hall when they are voting on budget allocations."

Policy Recommendations and Next Steps

Fair Distribution of Funding

- Adopt a formula where funding follows the student (a "foundation" or weighted formula)
- Direct funding to students with exceptional needs including students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), students from low-income backgrounds, and multilingual learners
- Direct additional funding based on need in schools and districts
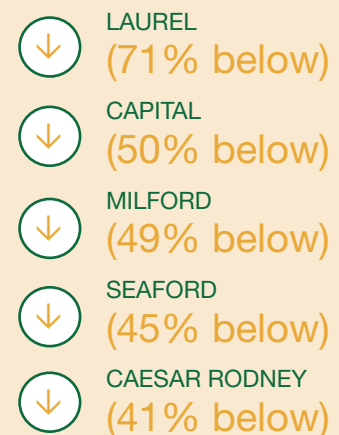- Create more flexibility at the district and school level to use funds as needed

Increased Overall Funding

- Invest an additional $600 million to $1 billion into our education system, as recommended by the *Assessment of Delaware Public School Funding (2023)*
- Referendum reform to allow districts to raise funds to cover operational costs

Other Systemic Changes

- Increased transparency in funding allocation
- Include more educators and community members in funding decisions
- Adopt a funding formula that is more clear and transparent

Which Delaware School Districts are Farthest Away from the Funding Adequacy Target?

- ↓ LAUREL (71% below)
- ↓ CAPITAL (50% below)
- ↓ MILFORD (49% below)
- ↓ SEAFORD (45% below)
- ↓ CAESAR RODNEY (41% below)

How Can Educators and Administrators Advocate?

- Give public comment at meetings and in testimony
- Participate in working groups and committees
- Write a letter to the editor

- Raise the issue with other educators and educate others
- Inform students
- Become an influencer with family, friends, and colleagues

- Continue learning
- Post on social media
- Meet and speak with legislators

To get engaged with the Rodel Educator Network, visit rodelde.org/partner/rodel-educator-network.
To read the full AIR report, visit: bit.ly/3z7DY96
Sign up for the Vision Coalition newsletter to stay up to date on school funding in Delaware: visioncoalitionde.org/get-involved/contact

Contributing Teachers
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Note: This survey was conducted between April and May 2024, and collected more than 50 responses.

To learn more about school funding visit

www.delawareschoolfunding101.com