

Sunset Committee Members

Comments on the sunset review of the State Board of Education.

While the State Board of Education should have great value, its current structure and practices leave it, through a chair who serves at the pleasure of the Governor, essentially a political entity furthering the goals and mandates of an administration rather than what their mission/vision/principal statement purports.

"Vision Statement All Delaware students are prepared to lead full and productive lives and be successful in the 21st century global society.

Mission Statement In collaboration with community and stakeholders, the Delaware State Board of Education serves as the primary voice for Delaware citizens on education policy to create a world class education system for every student.

Guiding Principles

1. Further our thriving democratic society with opportunities for an excellent and equitable education for all students.
2. Enrich education policymaking with the inclusion of diverse perspectives that represent the breadth and depth of Delaware's citizens.
3. Utilize research-based viewpoints to inform decisions in the best interest of all students.
4. Advocate for the development of the whole child through learning, teaching, and community engagement"

The State Board in recent history has never collaborated with a broad array of stakeholders, rather has chosen to work with special interest on a predetermined agenda. While valuable as an element of an education system, their myopic focus on academic achievement, has led to a gross failure to address the needs of whole child, to address the needs of our at risk students or help determine the best practice requirements and plot a path to equitable needs based funding for all students in Delaware, This is made all the worse since they have been asked and at times begged to engage in this critical work, but instead engage in an outside agenda has little to do with what the majority of stakeholders believe is needed to dramatically improve the outcomes for children.

Despite endless opportunities to engage and collaborate with stakeholders on various workgroups, councils and initiatives, in the vast majority of cases simply send their Executive Director, who rather than truly collaborating, simply tries to reinforce a predetermined agenda and set of priorities. This leaves the members ill prepared to make the decisions for which they are charged, which is evident to the public as they discuss and deliberate issues, often armed only with one side of an issue, which supports a predetermined outcome. It is also concerning that the Executive Director functions like a government paid lobbyist, rather than a fact finder for the board.

This is all the more striking, since I know a couple of the members who outside the board have historically and naturally pursued the mission vision and principles above, yet as members of the board do not, which gives a strong indication that the State Board system is greatly at fault.

For myself and most of the stakeholders I work with it is clear the State Board of Education system is severely broken and if it cannot be fixed should be eliminated. It could fill an important road if it truly collaborated and represented the stakeholders of Delaware including our children. As first step I have been working with stakeholders on language to make the board more representative and have attached a number of possibilities.

In conclusion the State Board of Education is held in such low regard by so many stakeholders and has failed to follow its own Mission, Vision and Principles and is so out of touch with the reality and /or fails to address needs of our at risk student, that they have no position or moral authority to move Delaware's education system forward on path to success for all children

Thank you for your consideration

Bill

Bill Doolittle

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