



## **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT POSITION PAPER**

### **ISSUE DEFINED**

In today's world, our children must be proficient at reading, writing, math, and other practical life skills that will help them grow to be successful adults. Delaware schools have failed our kids for the past decade. It's time to ensure teachers can focus on teaching and ensure that every student regardless of zip code achieves academic success.

### **THE CASE FOR CHANGE**

The statistics are alarming. For the past ten years, Delaware public schools have underperformed. In 2022 Delaware experienced the largest drop in math scores in the entire country for 4<sup>th</sup> grade and second largest drop in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Over the last decade, Delaware has failed to achieve a proficiency score over 50% in either reading and math. The impact on Delaware's students has become multi-generational. (source: National Assessment of Educational Progress, also known as the Nation's Report Card)

### **WHY YOU SHOULD CARE**

Research from the National Research Council shows that a child's reading ability by third grade is a clear predictor of academic success.

For students who are not able to read by the age of nine, the odds of gaining those skills or graduating from school go down significantly every year after that. And the odds of ending up homeless, in prison, in poverty, experiencing poor health and engaging in illegal activities increase extensively.

When kids get to older grades and see their peers at a higher skill level, they tend to have low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy, which can be manifested as discipline issues and may lead to them dropping out of school.



## **OUR POSITION**

We want better schools for all children, so they can fulfill their future potential and secure jobs needed to support themselves and our economy. All children, regardless of skin color, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, deserve to receive an excellent standard of teaching in a safe, supportive and encouraging setting.

## **POLICY SOLUTIONS**

In a Nutshell: We need to create a challenging learning environment that encourages high expectations for success through development- and age-appropriate instruction that allows for individual differences and learning styles.

Educators need to return to proven methods for learning reading, writing and math. The return to phonics, passed by Delaware legislators in 2022, is a step in the right direction.

Teacher evaluations should be based on improvements in student test scores over time.

Teachers need to be able to focus on their core responsibility: teaching core academics free from activism, politicized views, or providing “social emotional learning” counseling to all students.

American civics should be re-emphasized as a core learning objective to help youth become upstanding citizens. The full facts of United States history should be taught with honesty and without political bias.

Issued: March 2023