

INCLUDED:
ENGAGING EVERYDAY
DELAWAREANS
TO TRANSFORM
EDUCATION



IncluDEd: Engaging Everyday Delawareans to Transform Education

This report was published
in June 2017 by DelawareCAN:
The Delaware Campaign for
Achievement Now

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**DelawareCAN: The Delaware
Campaign for Achievement Now**
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Design & Layout
house9design.ca

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DelawareCAN Executive Director Attre Alleyne takes questions about education from Youth In Government students at Caravel Academy.



Introduction

Latin American Community Center Executive Director María Matos engaged at DelawareCAN's launch event.



Background

There are few topics that evoke the type of passion and interest that education does. When asked about education, we easily reflect upon our experiences with the education system—good, bad and indifferent—and the experiences of our children, siblings, family members and friends. It is not hard for us to understand the impact the education system has on us, on those around us and on our society. Thus, most want to see an education system that provides high-quality learning experiences for all children.

But there is no shortage of data indicating that America’s public education system is not yet giving all kids the education they need to thrive after high school. In Delaware, 41 percent of public school system graduates who attend Delaware colleges need to take remedial courses.¹ Additionally, only 27 percent of these students met the SAT college-readiness benchmarks² in math and ELA.³

There is also ample evidence that despite passion and interest in education at the community level, the education policymaking process is mostly an “inside job.” Education policy conversations are largely limited to insiders and powerful interest groups representing teachers, administrators, school boards and higher education institutions.

“Primary and secondary education should prepare students not just for college, but for life after college too.”

—Dan Rose, Community Advocate

This is why the Delaware Campaign for Achievement Now (“Delaware-CAN”) was launched in January 2017. We work to empower, mobilize and collaborate with everyday Delawareans to advocate for a high-quality education system. It is our strong belief that it will take a community of advocates pushing the system to make sure all schools help kids achieve their potential. This report provides highlights from our interactions with the more than 650 Delawareans we engaged over the past year through a statewide listening tour, an engagement survey and additional outreach activities.

1 Delaware Department of Education, “Delaware 2017 College Success Report”, March 2017, accessed May 24, 2017, <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib/DE01922744/Centricity/omain/161/17collegesuccess.pdf>.

2 According to The College Board, the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks are: 480 for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and 530 for math.

3 Delaware Department of Education, “Delaware 2017 College Success Report”, March 2017, accessed May 24, 2017, <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/161/17collegesuccess.pdf>.

Findings

We interviewed more than 150 Delawareans, surveyed more than 400 people and met with more than 100 people at outreach events. We asked questions about how knowledgeable people were about education in Delaware; looked at how involved people were with their neighborhood schools, local school district and at the state level; explored the ways people were becoming involved as local advocates; and asked about perceptions of the Delaware public education system. Our findings are by no means conclusive, but they help paint a picture of the breadth of work that DelawareCAN is ready to tackle.

Here is what we have learned:

People are not satisfied with the quality of Delaware's education system. The majority give the system a C on an A-F grading scale, with people of color even less likely to have a positive perception of the system.

Regardless of race, political ideology or socioeconomic status, Delawareans made it clear they are ready to work on improving their schools, districts and state education system.

People are not nearly as engaged with the Delaware education system as they would like to be.

Who We Spoke To

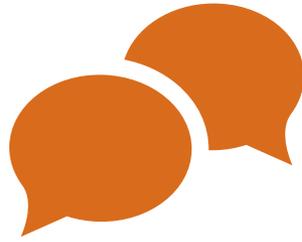
Education advocate Marsha Carter at DelawareCAN's launch event.



WE VISITED

10

SCHOOLS



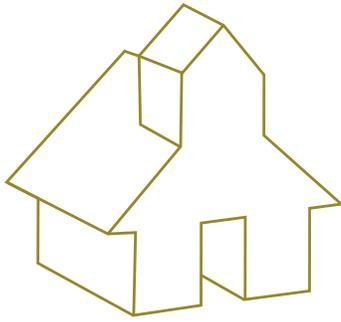
WE INTERVIEWED

150+

AND SURVEYED

400+

DELAWAREANS



AND SPOKE WITH

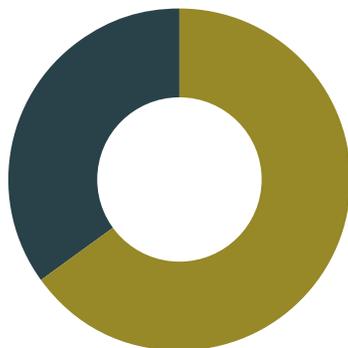
30

STUDENTS

⁴ There were 404 respondents to the survey. Survey respondents were asked to choose all that apply of the following: parent/guardian, student, student attending private school, teacher/specialist, administrator, not a teacher/specialist/administrator but working in education system, Delaware resident, policymaker, no relationship to Delaware education system, or other.

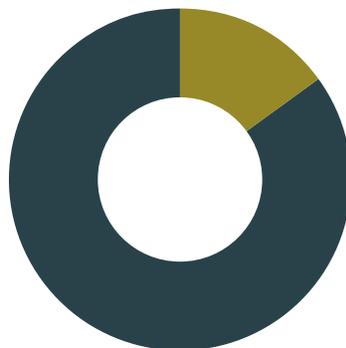
FIGURE 1 DELAWARE'S EDUCATION SYSTEM⁴

DELAWARE
RESIDENT



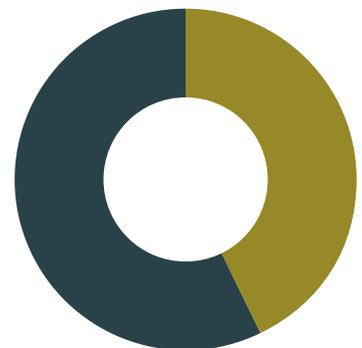
65.5%

TEACHER/
SPECIALIST



15.4%

PARENTS/
GUARDIANS



42.9%

What We Heard

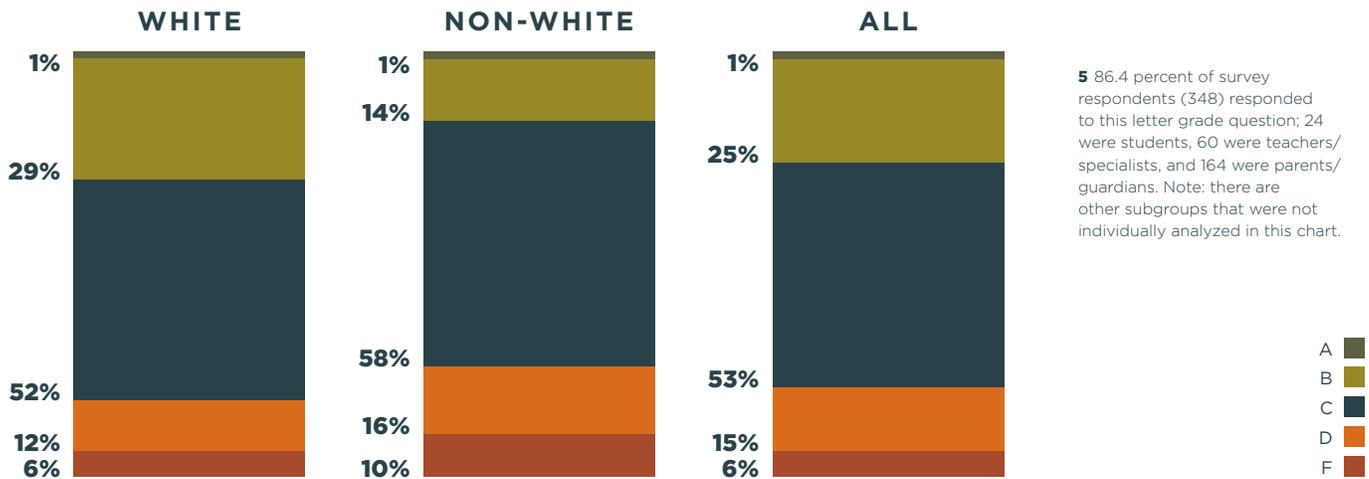
DelawareCAN State Outreach Manager Daniel Walker talking education at a community event.



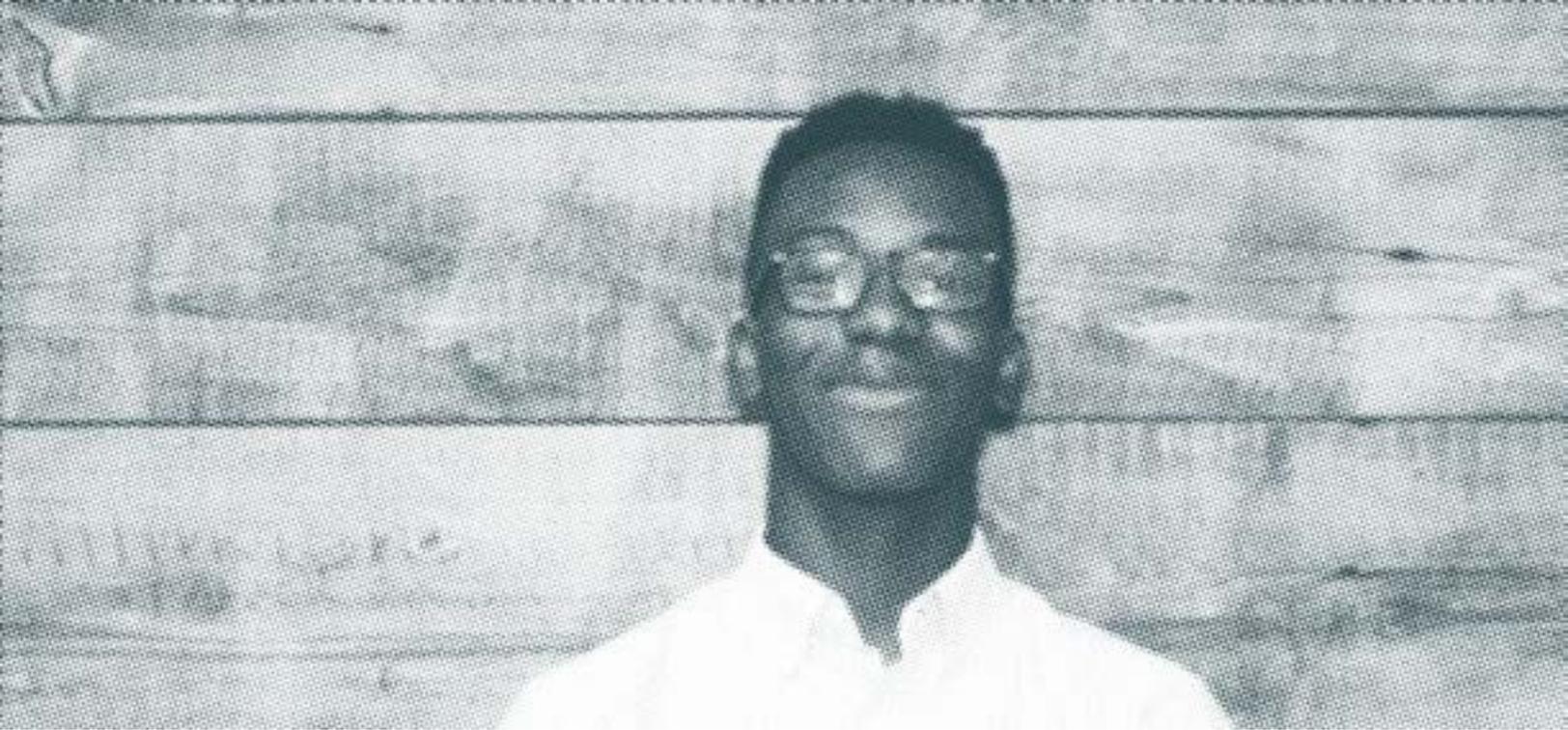
FINDING 1: PEOPLE ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF DELAWARE’S EDUCATION SYSTEM.

The majority of respondents to DelawareCAN’s survey give the system a C on an A–F grading scale, and people of color are less likely to have a positive perception of the system.

FIGURE 2 RESPONDENTS’ RATINGS OF DELAWARE’S SCHOOLS⁵



“School should prepare me for both college and life after college. Schools should provide me with more opportunities for success.”
—11th grade student at Middletown High School



Advocate Spotlight

James Massaquoi

James has lived in Delaware in the Dover/Camden area since he was four years old. Both of his parents were born and raised in Sierra Leone. He grew up constantly seeing the police due to his mother's gambling and spending issues and his father's addiction problems, which often led to arguments and fights. After his parents got divorced, he had to move into neighborhoods that exposed him to drug dealers, hunger and a lack of hope. Fortunately, his school noticed his grades dropping and quickly put him in counseling, gave him a mentor and did whatever they could to help him through those troubling

years. His school put him in summer programs, gave his mother advice on how to deal with her issues and played a large part in saving James' future. James is now a freshman economics major with minors in entrepreneurship and organizational leadership at the University of Delaware. He credits his successes in spite of tremendous challenges to having a great school with compassionate leaders. He joined DelawareCAN's work as a citizen advocate because he believes stories like his are few and far between, and that not enough kids are blessed with a great school system.



Advocate Spotlight

Erica Dorsett

Erica Dorsett is a Wilmington resident and mother of five kids. Erica believes a quality education is the difference between poverty and success, but found that her feeder school district—one of Delaware’s lowest-performing—was not going to meet her kids’ needs. Because she did not see a commitment to high standards for student achievement in the district she made the choice to find other options. In search for quality and high expectations, Erica has sent her children to public charter schools in the city and to private schools made possible by generous scholarships. She believes

it is unfair for parents whose zip code affords them access to a high-quality neighborhood public school to suggest that other parents should be invested in a traditional public school system that has failed them for so long. She joined DelawareCAN as a citizen advocate because she wants to see every parent have access to an amazing school. She also wants to see accountability and high standards for achievement across Delaware’s education system.

FINDING 2: REGARDLESS OF RACE, POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OR SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS DELAWAREANS ARE READY TO WORK TO IMPROVE THEIR SCHOOLS, LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT AND STATE EDUCATION SYSTEM.

FIGURE 3 RESPONDENT’S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AT VARIOUS LEVELS

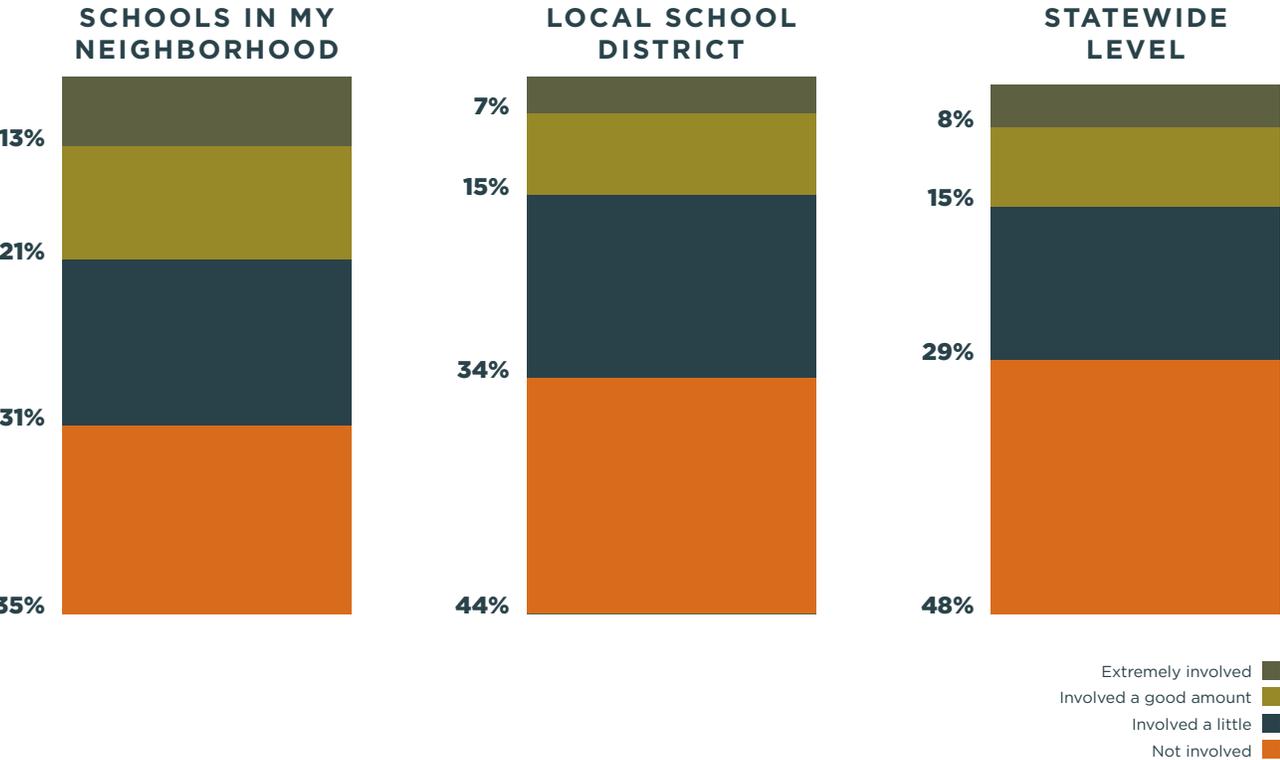
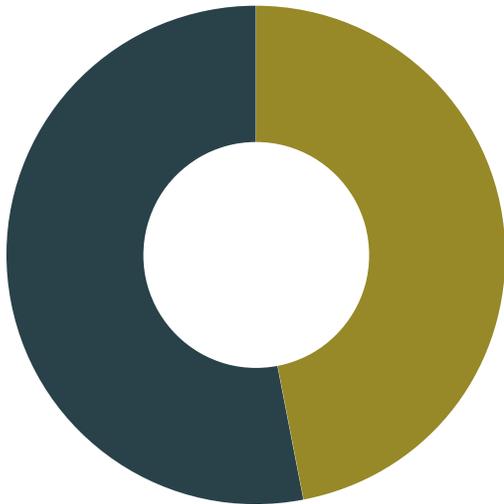


FIGURE 4 PARENTS/GUARDIANS LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT WITH NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS



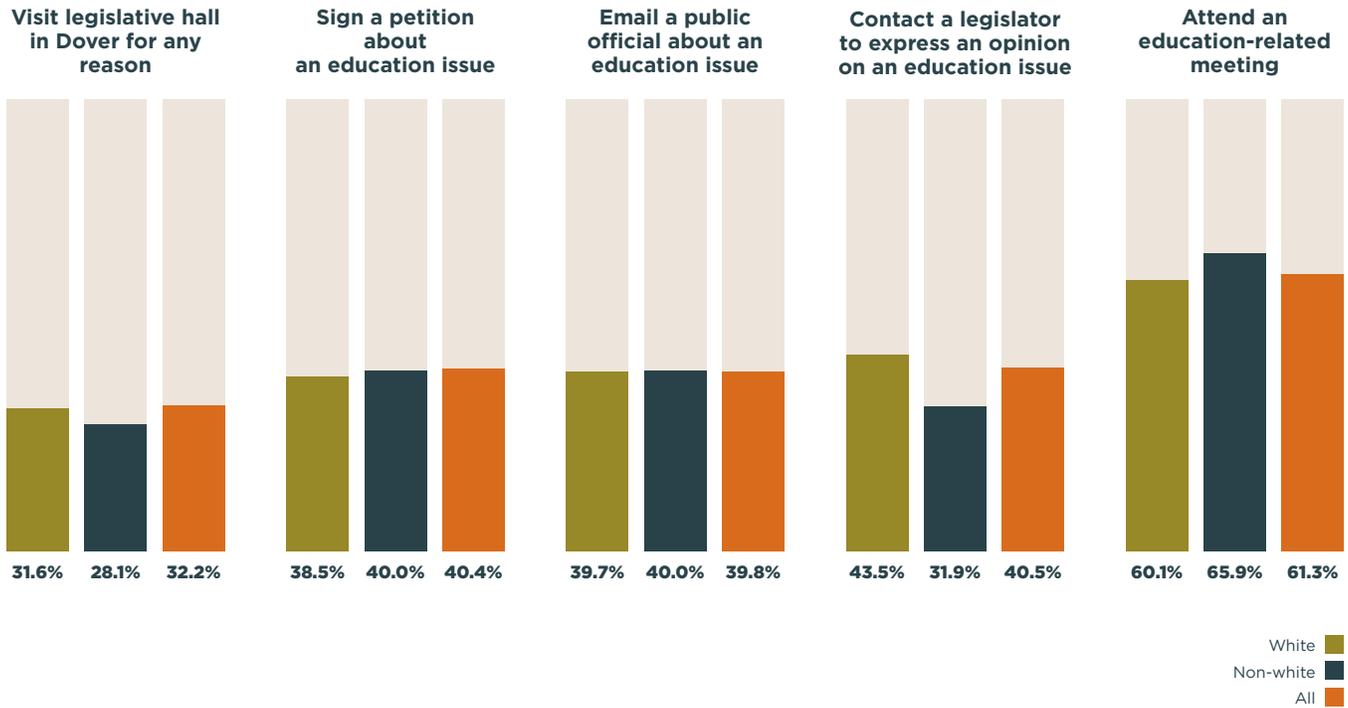
47.6%

Parents/guardians who stated they **were involved a good amount or extremely involved** with their neighborhood schools

52.4%

Parents/guardians who stated they were not involved a good amount or extremely involved with their neighborhood schools

FIGURE 5 TOP FIVE ACTIVITIES SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATED THEY PARTICIPATED IN DURING THE PAST YEAR





Advocate Spotlight

Diane Bogle

Diane Bogle is a parent of a student in the Capital School District. She first got involved in her neighborhood schools because she saw the school system label her daughter as early as age six. Through her deep involvement, she was later hired as a parent engagement coordinator for the school district. She now works at Delaware State University as an Academic Advisor and Retention Specialist, where she gets to see firsthand the challenges students face because of lack of preparation in the public school system.

Diane became a citizen advocate with DelawareCAN because she wants to help parents and community members become more involved in improving their education system. She also recognizes that schools and policymakers need to be ready to have parents involved. There have been too many instances of parents wanting to get involved and yet the schools were either unprepared, unreceptive or simply unable to engage with the parents.



Advocate Spotlight

Marsha Hinson

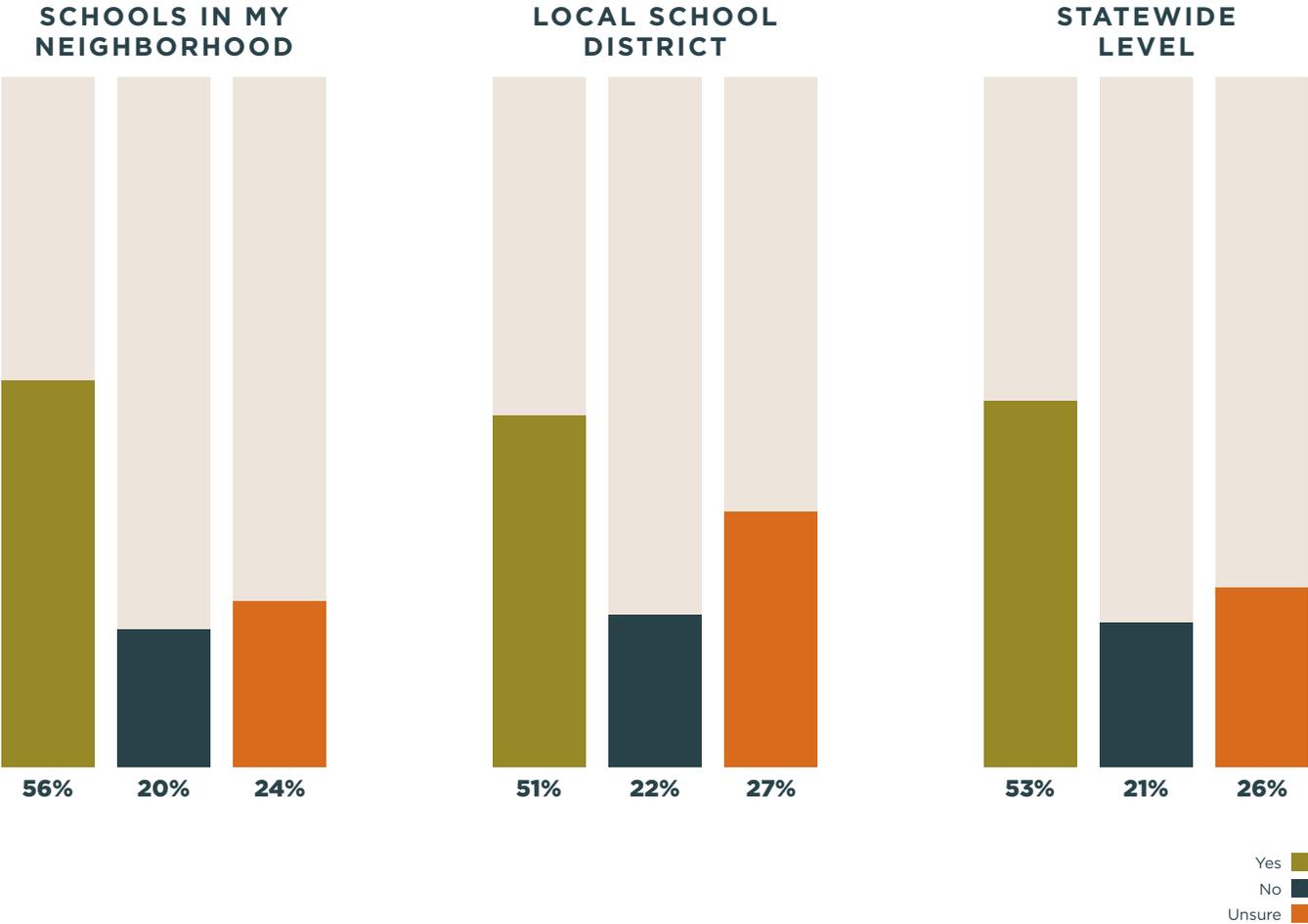
Marsha Hinson is the Education and Youth Committee Chair for the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League Young Professionals. As a child growing up in Delaware, Marsha's parents made a decision to send her to private school given the growing concern regarding the quality of education in local public schools. Marsha finds it alarming that so many years later schools in Delaware are still not providing the quality education that students deserve.

But she is not one to complain about the problems in the education system without working to create the change students need. Marsha

mobilizes young professionals to support Delaware's schools through her work with the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League Young Professionals group. She began supporting the efforts of DelawareCAN at critical policy meetings on the Every Student Succeeds Act state plan to remind decisionmakers to keep the bar high for student learning and that students need action.

FINDING 3: PEOPLE ARE NOT NEARLY AS ENGAGED WITH THE DELAWARE EDUCATION SYSTEM AS THEY WOULD LIKE TO BE.

FIGURE 6 WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE MORE INVOLVED WITH DELAWARE’S EDUCATION SYSTEM AT THE FOLLOWING LEVELS?





Advocate Spotlight

Lynne Rosa

Lynne Rosa moved to Delaware a few years ago. As a mother and grandmother who spent her professional career in education, she went to two of her neighborhood schools to volunteer for whatever was needed. She was promised a response, but none came. After three attempts, she gave up and turned to other volunteer opportunities. In conversations with friends, she learned that many had similar experiences in other districts: they wanted to work to improve the education system, but those in the education system were not prepared to take advantage of their support.

Lynne joined DelawareCAN for a trip to Dover to speak with legislators about education and the need for concerned citizens to be involved. She is a powerful advocate who would love to see schools be more responsive to community members who want to get involved as well as to reach out to parents and grandparents for input, ideas and contributions. She believes we all win when schools involve all of us to support students



Advocate Spotlight

Alejandra Villamares

Alejandra is a senior at Howard High School of Technology in Wilmington and is a member of DelawareCAN's Advisory Board. Alejandra has always been a strong student but was not aware of the many ways she could make her voice heard in the education system. That changed when she began to wonder why the level of expectation varies so much from school to school and why a 4.0 at her school still left her with academic gaps in important subject areas. She was invited to share her perspective on the use of assessments in K-12 education at the 2016 release of Northwest Evaluation Association and Gallup's Making Assessment Work for All Students report in Washington, D.C.

She has led workshops at her school to raise awareness among peers about their preparedness for college and has become an advocate for student voice in the policy process. She joined DelawareCAN's board because she believes the education system should prioritize students' needs and do a much better job at engaging students in policy conversations. She also supports DelawareCAN's work because she knows education can have a transformative impact on students. As a trailblazer at her school, she's seen this firsthand: Alejandra received a full scholarship to attend Wesleyan University in Connecticut beginning in the fall of 2017.

Taking Action

Participants at DelawareCAN's Black History Month event.



VISION: DELAWARECAN'S
COMMUNITY OF CITIZEN
ADVOCATES WILL BE HIGHLY
ENGAGED, ORGANIZED
FOR SUSTAINED PRESSURE,
HIGHLY VISIBLE IN POLICY
CONVERSATIONS, AND POISED
TO SECURE POLICY WINS.



Over the next year, DelawareCAN will:

Engage more than 600 Delawareans as DelawareCAN members with 100 member advocates who will take at least 5 advocacy actions and 30 who will be trained as core members.

Build action teams in each county who will mobilize members of their community to advocate for a high-quality education system.

Conduct at least 4 advocacy trainings to empower local advocates.

Partner with at least 10 community organizations to amplify their voice in the education policy process.

Secure at least 3 policy wins that move Delaware toward an excellent education system for all students.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”—Margaret Mead

Ready to take action?
Here's how you can
join the movement to
transform educational
opportunities in Delaware!

Policymakers

CONNECT WITH OUR MEMBERS:

Come speak with our member advocates to help demystify the policy process, get feedback and generate new ideas based on advocates' experiences for improving Delaware's schools.

JOIN FOR A NETWORK GATHERING OR SCHOOL VISIT: We meet with monthly with educators, students and community advocates. We also visit a school each week. Join us!

Funders and Partners

PARTNER ON EVENTS AND CAMPAIGNS: We cannot do this critical work alone. Give us a call or shoot us an email. We would love to share what DelawareCAN is up to and how we might be able to partner together.

VISIT A SCHOOL WITH US OR ATTEND ONE OF OUR EVENTS TO SEE OUR CAMPAIGNS IN ACTION.

LEARN ABOUT JOINING OUR BOARD OF LOCAL LEADERS.

Individuals

JOIN THE DELAWARECAN ACTION

TEAM: Action Team members receive training in advocacy, mobilize members of their community to advocate for an excellent education system and help DelawareCAN secure policy wins for students.

START THE CONVERSATION: Use technology to open the policy process to everyday Delawareans. Attend a policy meeting or public hearing and use Facebook Live or Twitter to ensure students are the priority and decisions are open to the public.

GET INVOLVED WITH OUR YOUTH ADVOCACY COUNCIL: This is a statewide forum for high school students to learn about education policy and lead their own campaigns to improve Delaware schools.

APPLY FOR A TRAINING PROGRAM: Get smart on policy and governance opportunities to increase the voice of everyday Delawareans. Reach out to learn more about advocacy and policy training opportunities with DelawareCAN.

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION: Give to DelawareCAN today at delawarecan.org to help bring more people to the policymaking table. We support these events, meet-ups and campaigns with donations big and small from advocates like you.