

## Q&A with Secretary of Education Susan Bunting



**The State released Return to School guidance in July that included three scenarios based on how the COVID-19 virus spreads this fall. With so much uncertainty around back to school, what are the greatest challenges you think teachers, students and parents will face?**

Teachers must be able to transition between in-person to remote learning while maintaining the integrity and quality of instruction. All students learn differently, and that includes remotely,

so we need to ensure students get the very best education no matter how they receive it. There are also challenges many don't think of when considering "education" such as sports, transportation of students, and extracurricular activities. Another challenge is the dilemma parents' face about who will care for their children if they are to attend school some days but not others. Of particular concern is how to provide complete learning experiences for young learners, those with special needs, and those in special programs such as immersion.

**Is training being provided to teachers and parents to help with virtual learning?**

The department has been working with districts and charters to provide support for remote learning and is offering a three-day virtual professional learning session for educators that will model the effective use of both asynchronous and synchronous tools to help teachers expand their the knowledge and skills. The State Board of Education, department, and United Way are sending a survey to Delaware nonprofits and community organizations to develop a guide for districts and charters for additional programs and supports available in a variety of areas across the state. The department has also allocated a portion of its CARES funding and additional money from the Governor's office to support teacher and family training and remote learning.

**Many parents are returning to work while their children are still learning from home. What impact has this had on child care?**

Our child care workforce has done an incredible job providing care in every way they can. We continue to work with providers to understand how they are able to help serve the needs of school-age children.

**With the movement towards online and distance learning, the need for broadband internet access has shined a brighter light on the digital divide. What is the department doing to tackle this issue?**

With DOE funding, the Department of Technology & Information (DTI) accelerated the Rural Wireless Broadband project to ensure broadband access to the unserved areas of Kent and Sussex counties. DTI requested Bloosurf LLC to have the wireless network completed by July and to increase their capacity for customer installations from 50 per month to 250. The original plan was to have all 15 towers available by the end of the year. DOE also allocated CARES funding and is collaborating with districts and charters to support qualifying families who were unable to pay to connect to the towers and subsidize initial internet service.

**There is a lot of conversation around employers hiring for skills versus degrees. What is the State doing to help prepare students to enter the workforce?**

We believe that the first step in a strong economic development strategy begins by investing in our young people and by providing a high-quality education for all students. Our college and career readiness efforts are focused on skill development, student competency, and are informed by employers. Last academic year, we enrolled more than 15,000 students in our Delaware Pathways initiative, spanning 25 career pathway programs—across 16 comprehensive districts, three technical school districts, and 10 charter schools.

**You recently launched a youth apprenticeship readiness program through a grant from the US Department of Labor. Can you tell us a little more about this program? What does this mean for Delaware's students?**

Youth Apprenticeship Delaware is a sector-based partnership to support the enrollment of in-school and out-of-school youth (i.e., those ages 16 to 24) in new and existing Registered Apprenticeship Programs. Registered Apprenticeship is a partnership between an employer, a postsecondary education and training provider, and an apprentice. These partners help the apprentice to develop skills and be successful in his/her field of study. The apprentice is a paid employee, who participates in related postsecondary education and training, and receives customized on-the-job training support from the employer. Apprenticeship is often referred to as an "earn and learn" model because the apprentice is paid very well and there is no cost for related postsecondary education that the apprentice assumes. Thus, no debt is incurred. ■