



A glimpse at last week's snow storms.

## Westward Ho for Vision Network Schools

Educators from eleven Vision Network schools traveled to Southern California to attend the [Focus on Results](#) Winter Institute. Focus on Results provides training to 25 [Vision Network schools](#) throughout Delaware. The Winter Institute was an added bonus for Network participants this year, designed to help schools sharpen their focus on leadership and student achievement.

Mike Boyd, a language arts teacher at Lake Forest High School in Felton, said, "It was amazingly powerful to see what the [Seven Areas of Focus](#) can do for changing a school....to watch 3000 kids move in unison, and to see teachers, administrators, and staff all working together to follow one, central focus was an incredibly powerful and, at least on a professional level, life-changing experience." Dr. Alina Columbus, head of Wilmington's Thomas Edison Charter School, stated, "After attending this year's conference we left with inspiration, motivation, and incentive to drive further and harder toward 'results' and our ability to clearly focus on them. Returning this year I feel far more confident

## The Heat is On

Despite the bitter winter weather, the federal *Race to the Top* competition is heating up. Fifty-eight [peer reviewers](#) are evaluating thousands of pages from the 41 applications submitted in the first round of the competition. These reviewers are convening in Washington, D.C. this month to discuss their reviews, challenge each other's thinking, and ensure that each application has received a deep and fair appraisal. Once all applications have been scored, the U.S. Department of Education will invite a select group of states back as finalists in early March. Final decisions on funding will be announced in early April. Read Delaware's [Race to the Top proposal](#).

## Two Superintendents Join Vision 2015 Leadership

Vision 2015 welcomes two superintendents to its "Implementation Team": Susan Bunting of the Indian River School District and Marcia Lyles of the Christina School District. The Implementation Team guides the activities of [Vision 2015](#), including the [Vision Network](#) of districts and schools, early childhood education initiatives, and efforts to improve the efficiency and equity of our public education funding system. Drs. Bunting and Lyles bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the [team](#), and will help direct Vision 2015, including the coalition's collaboration on Governor Markell's education agenda and Delaware's *Race to the Top* bid. Five Indian River schools and seven Christina schools are part of the Vision

that we will accomplish the goals of Vision 2015.”

## Best Practices

Earlier this week, Dr. Sondra Shippen, president of the [Delaware Charter Schools Network](#) and head of school at Kuumba Academy, announced the Network’s Charter School Principles and Quality Indicators initiative. Funded through a grant from the Delaware Business Roundtable Education Committee, the initiative identified a set of quality standards for new and existing charter schools in the state, based on national best practices. These four quality indicator areas are student achievement, fiscal responsibility, responsible governance, and community support. The initiative also developed measures for each of these indicators, emphasizing the importance of data and accountability in school decision-making.

“With this initiative, the Network and its member schools are sending a strong signal that we are committed to quality,” Dr. Shippen said. Indeed, these quality indicators could be useful to adapt for *all* public schools, not just charters, as a way to help guide school evaluation by parents, community members, and taxpayers in Delaware.

There are more than 9,000 students enrolled in Delaware’s 18 public charter schools statewide, including Vision Network Schools [Kummba Academy](#), [Thomas Edison Charter School](#), [MOT Charter School](#), and [Sussex Academy of Arts and Sciences](#). Three additional charter schools are scheduled to open in August 2010. Click [here](#) to learn more about the Charter School Principles and Quality Indicators initiative.

## Vision 2015 Celebrates Black History Month

This February many schools are integrating components of Black History Month into their curricula, and there are programs throughout the state recognizing its importance. One example is the celebration of Delaware’s first black attorney, Louis L. Redding, whose lawsuits forced the opening of Delaware’s all-white schools, including the University of Delaware, to black students. He fought “separate but equal” public schools and joined the landmark 1954 Supreme Court *Brown v Board of Education* case, that integrated schools nationally. His home in Wilmington has been restored and will be opened to the public at the end of the month. For more information on the Redding House, click [here](#).

Public libraries throughout Delaware are also hosting events in celebration of the contributions of

Network.

## Research

Even among the nation’s top-performing students, there are significant achievement gaps when gender, income, and language ability are measured, according to [a report](#) from the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University. Evidence suggests that the economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and historically underprivileged minorities represent a smaller proportion of students scoring at the highest levels of achievement. There is a gender gap, as well, with females performing better in reading and males performing better in math. Data from [Delaware](#) related to this “excellence gap” is consistent with the findings from other states.

While progress must be made in closing the “excellence gap,” we are proud that in last month’s [Education Trust report](#), the First State is noted as 1 of only 4 states that are making the most progress in *narrowing* gaps among student groups.

## VISION-aries

“What Vision Networkers observed at the FOR Winter Institute was not a silver bullet or a quick fix for schools; it was cultural change throughout the entire school. This shift of culture takes time, support and dedication by all, and is the heart of what schools and districts are learning through the Vision Network. It’s hard work, but I believe we can improve education for all students in Delaware.”

-- **Dr. Robert Rescigno, Vision Network Liaison**, regarding his experience at the Focus on Results Winter Institute earlier this month.

## Mark Your Calendars!

### February is National Parent Leadership Month

Celebrate the power of parents this month. National Parent Leadership Month highlights the many opportunities available for parents, professionals, policymakers and other community members to engage in partnerships with the goal of building and supporting strong, safe families. Click [here](#) for more information.

### The Black Heritage Educational Theater

The Black Heritage Education Theater Group presents Super Reader Floyd Stokes for readings at selected schools, community centers and libraries. Check your school or local library for

African-Americans to our nation's economy, culture, and identity. [Find out](#) what's happening in your area.

## Did You Know?

The Kentucky board of education voted unanimously to adopt the common standards developed by the Common Core Standards Initiative, making the Bluegrass State the first state to formally do so. See a draft of the K-12 common standards [here](#). The Common Core Standards Initiative is made up of 48 states—including Delaware—two territories and the District of Columbia that are working together to develop common standards. This collaborative approach will help Delaware save money and more easily benchmark our progress against other states.

## Coming Up

Next month, the U.S. Department of Education will announce which states are finalists for the first round of the federal *Race to the Top* competition. Stay tuned!

## Forward to a Friend

Click [here](#) to forward this Vision 2015 newsletter onto a friend.

dates and times.

### Charter First Fridays

The Delaware Charter Schools Network, with the support of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, has launched Charter First Fridays in Delaware. Charter First Fridays is an effort to share the best practices taking place in Delaware charter schools with other schools, parents and the community. A Delaware charter school will be showcased on the first Friday of every month; the next event will be Friday, March 5 -- visit the Delaware Charter Schools Network [website](#) for more details.

### Declining Significance of Race: Revisited and Revised

On Tuesday, April 6, Harvard University Professor William Julius Wilson will give a lecture given in honor of Littleton Mitchell, a civil rights pioneer who fought against racial discrimination in Delaware, and his wife, Jane, one of Delaware's first African American nurses, who served as the director of nursing at the Delaware State Hospital. The lecture will take place at 5:00 p.m. in the Multipurpose Room of the University of Delaware's Trabant Center and will be followed by a reception at 7:00 p.m. This event is free and open to the public; click [here](#) for more information.

To find more events or to add your community event to our webpage—visit the [Vision 2015 community events page](#)

## Contact us!

For more information on how to become involved with Vision 2015, please visit our web site, <http://www.vision2015delaware.org>, or e-mail us at [info@vision2015delaware.org](mailto:info@vision2015delaware.org).

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