

Great Ideas for Great Public Schools

DELAWARE

Union-district collaboration helps raise graduation rate to 97 percent

Historic Howard High School of Technology in Wilmington, Delaware, is one of four schools participating in the state's Partnership Zone program. The New Castle County Vocational Education Association, which represents the school's instructional staff, **revised its collective bargaining agreement to help advance proven reforms.** Vice President Joseph Biden highlighted the union's collaboration during a March 2011 visit to the school. Data show that Howard is on the right track—the school boasts a 97 percent graduation rate and a 95 percent daily attendance rate. More than 60 percent of the 860 students are low-income and more than half of those who enter as ninth graders have not previously met grade-level standards in math, reading, or both. Howard's student body is 74 percent African American, 14 percent white, and 1 percent Asian.

Background

- Howard was one of the five schools involved in the U.S. Supreme Court's historic 1954 decision, *Brown v. the Board of Education*.
- First opened in 1867, Howard was the only institution in the four-state area of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania to offer a complete high school education to black students.
- Today, the school offers a mixture of core academic subjects and vocational education in specialties ranging from medical assisting to computer network administration.

Creating a collaborative culture

- All teachers at Howard are asked to be on Partnership Zone committees, which are composed of educators, school and district administrators, and union and state representatives. The committees research high-achieving schools and analyze their own data, with the goal of making recommendations to the district for carrying out the Partnership Zone plan.

- Howard teachers have 90 minutes per week of collaborative planning time built into their schedules so they can share best practices and analyze student data. "I feel important at my school, as though the ideas I contribute matter," said English teacher Beth Kudlick.
- Howard is the first high school in the region to have computers networked throughout the building—students and faculty can access data and resources from any computer in any classroom.

Focusing on teacher quality

- Howard created an incentive program to attract highly-qualified teachers—in exchange for making a two-year commitment to the school, they receive bonuses of \$7,500 per year.
- Teachers can receive an annual \$7,500 bonus for serving on the school's leadership team, where they work as partners with administrators and develop action plans. Goals include improving instruction, facilitating collaboration, and improving the school's learning climate.

For more information:

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NEA web site: *Biden Visit Highlights Collaboration*,

<http://neaprioritieschools.org/2011/03/22/biden-visit-highlights-collaboration-in-delaware/>



Great Public Schools for Every Student