

# Case Study No.8

PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE EDUCATION GRANTMAKING

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## **Persistence and Agility:**

The Rodel Foundation of Delaware's Efforts to Transform Delaware's Education System

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PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE EDUCATION GRANTMAKING

Discipline & Focus	Knowledge	Resources Linked to Results	Effective Grantees	Engaged Partners	Leverage, Influence & Collaboration	Persistence	Innovation & Constant Learning
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## grantmakers<sup>for</sup>education

Grantmakers for Education's mission is to strengthen philanthropy's capacity to improve educational outcomes for all learners. We achieve this mission by:

1. Sharing successful strategies, effective practices and lessons that exemplify responsive and responsible grantmaking in education.
2. Creating venues for funders to build and share knowledge, debate strategies, develop leadership, collaborate and advocate for change.
3. Gathering and interpreting data to illustrate trends, highlight innovative or proven educational approaches and support informed grantmaking.

Grantmakers for Education developed its series of case studies on effective education grantmaking as reflection and discussion tools. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of successful or unsuccessful grantmaking. In addition, to help make the case a more effective learning tool, it is deliberately written from one foundation's point of view, even though other foundations may have been involved in similar activities or supported the same grantees.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## **FOREWORD**

### **A Roadmap for More Effective Education Philanthropy**

The mission of Grantmakers for Education, a diverse national network of more than 280 grantmaking organizations, is to strengthen philanthropy's capacity to improve educational outcomes for all students.

In June 2005, we announced eight education grantmaking practices—drawn from the experience and wisdom of our members—we think lead to results in education. These Principles for Effective Education Grantmaking seek to promote the wisdom, craft and knowledge education funders need in order to achieve maximum results.

As a complement to these principles, Grantmakers for Education is producing this series of case studies, which are designed to encourage foundation trustees, leaders and program staff to reflect more deeply on what the eight principles mean for their own grantmaking and how they might be integrated into their efforts.

With the help of a distinguished set of advisors from our field, we have chosen case studies we believe represent rich, thought-provoking examples of how funders might aspire to use these principles in their education grantmaking. Hindsight is always 20/20, and while we think these cases showcase exemplary efforts in education philanthropy, we also chose them because each sheds light on the careful work a funder must invest to make a grant effective, the challenges that crop up along the way and the messiness that is inherent in grantmaking—despite the best-laid plans.

In the end, we hope these principles—and the cases that help illuminate them—affirm a set of positive attitudes about the future: philanthropy, carried out wisely, can contribute solutions to the problems that prevent too many students from learning and achieving to their full capacity.

## **PERSISTENCE AND AGILITY**

### **The Rodel Foundation of Delaware's Efforts to Transform Delaware's Education System**

It was 8:45 a.m. on Monday, March 29, 2010, when Paul Herdman got the stunning news. Just two states had won first-round grants in the Race to the Top competition, the largest federal competition of its kind in American history, out of 40 state applicants. He had anticipated that Delaware would rank in the top ten, but for it to gain the #1 rating was an extraordinary achievement.

Herdman joined the Rodel Foundation of Delaware (Rodel) as President and CEO in 2004. The six years that followed were productive, exhilarating, draining and tumultuous for him and his team. From the start, he'd recognized that fulfilling the Foundation's mission of having "one of the finest public school systems in the nation by 2012" would be nearly impossible without a strategy that could shake up a lot of vested interests and modernize stagnant, entrenched policies and practices across the state. When he told the staff that morning about Delaware's "win," he cited their persistence as a key factor in their success, a trait that had helped them navigate six years of building coalitions, negotiating, and redesigning Rodel's strategy to address considerable obstacles through some high-risk, high-cost ventures. Some were quite successful, while others were not. But Herdman, bolstered by the continued support of his board of directors, built a comprehensive strategy to redesign public education statewide. Called Vision 2015, the plan detailed 45 recommendations in six critical policy areas; it was built on data examining Delaware's \$1.6 billion education system and crafted by a 28-member steering committee.

None of these approaches had been on the drawing board when Herdman became the second president of the Rodel Foundation in late 2004. His selection was an unorthodox one, in fact—he came with no prior foundation experience. Yet his ultimate vision echoed that of Rodel's founders, and Herdman's enterprising spirit matched what the board was seeking. The foundation was dedicated to helping Delaware build a world-class education system, and needed a leader who could manage the difficult work on the ground and in communities around the state while never losing sight of their overall goals.

William D. Budinger founded the Rodel Foundation in 1999 with proceeds from the sale of a global electronics-manufacturing firm. After spending a year mulling over how he and his family could have the most impact on helping the U.S. regain its international footing, Bill and his family, with counsel from *Good to Great* author Jim Collins, hatched an audacious plan to make deep investments in two states where the company had headquarters—Delaware and Arizona. Their hope was that these investments could lead the nation to educational excellence. Budinger structured the foundation as an operating foundation rather than as a private grantmaker, largely to give it the flexibility to initiate and staff programs, build partnerships, and catalyze the creation of new

organizations to help carry out its mission. (*Legally, the Rodel Foundation is a supporting organization of the Delaware Community Foundation.*)

Herdman brought an unusual mix of skills and experience to his new job. He had most recently worked for the entrepreneurial organization New American Schools, where he supported a range of national systemic change efforts, most notably laying the groundwork that would help Indianapolis's Bart Peterson become the first mayor in the country to authorize charter schools. Herdman had also served as a senior education policy analyst in the Governor's Office in Massachusetts during the statewide education overhaul of 1993, an effort that established new standards, assessments and funding. Earlier in his career, he had spent several years as a classroom teacher and as the co-founder of a school-within-a-school in New York City. Prior to Herdman's arrival at Rodel, the foundation's focus had been primarily on developing the charter school sector in Delaware, working to increase enrollment, and encouraging parental leadership to build demand for new and better schools. When he considered that just eight percent of schoolchildren in Delaware were then in charters, his question to the board was, "What's our strategy for improving educational outcomes for the other 90-plus percent?" Given the board's stated goal of becoming first in the nation, Herdman quickly won their assent to develop a strategy aimed at moving the whole state education system forward. Budinger's advice was that Herdman should think about the Foundation as "an activist with money," one that would "do whatever it takes to get the job done." Herdman seized the opportunity, observing, "Bill gave me and my team the encouragement to swing for the fences. He explained that his success as an entrepreneur was built on a series of failures and his fearlessness gave us license to make the best possible decision, even if we might fall on our face in the process."

"This kind of work," Herdman noted, "is far different from the traditional program or project funding of so many foundations. Our theory of action recognizes at the outset that all of our dollars and all of the private dollars that we leverage still represent less than one percent of the public dollars that fund our education system. Given that equation, the best possible chance we have is to carry out strategies that at their endpoint are aimed at changing the way those public dollars are invested. If we succeed, the return on investment is huge. The cost—in actual dollars and human resources—is considerable. Our board always encouraged us to be 'mission-focused' versus 'corpus-focused,' but when we decided to increase our spending several years ago from 5-7 percent up to 12 percent, there were nights when I couldn't sleep. But we had to do this, if only in the short term." He further reflected, "Whether we are getting smart people from the National Council on Teacher Quality to write a legislative brief to inform new regulations and statutes about how to bring new teachers into the classroom, or investing in a pilot student test to improve the quality of the data teachers receive about the kids they teach, or staffing the task force looking into school financing, or partnering with the Delaware Business Roundtable and Chamber to align education investments... these all aim at moving public dollars from places of inefficiency to investments that improve how kids learn and teachers teach."

### ***Defining the Problem: Opportunity Knocks***

Knowing that the development of a new strategy for the foundation would require solid data and a careful analysis of the current condition of education in Delaware, Herdman commissioned a comprehensive study that culminated in the report *Opportunity Knocks*. The report provided an honest snapshot of the condition of education in the state, including its evident assets (notably its financial resources and small size), as well as an unflinching look at the alarming racial gaps in educational achievement, relatively low high school graduation and college enrollment rates, and a growing mismatch between the workforce skills required to fuel Delaware's economic growth and the performance of the state's education system. Perhaps most illuminating (and no doubt striking to the state's taxpayers), was the report that Delaware ranked 8th in per pupil spending but only 27th in student achievement.

*Opportunity Knocks* created a compelling case for action, but was deliberately designed *without* recommendations. As Rodel Senior Vice-President Doris Jacobson noted, the report helped the foundation "define the nature of the problem and identify the potential levers for change, including teacher quality, leadership development, standards and accountability, school financing, school choice and family and community engagement." She also observed, "Its objectivity helped us avoid perceived bias toward specific solutions. It provided just what Delaware needed to galvanize both education and business communities around the need to transform our entire education system." Herdman added, "If we had included recommendations, the validity of the baseline data would have been dismissed due to disagreements around what to do."

As data for *Opportunity Knocks* was being collected, Herdman initiated a parallel strategic planning process to determine how the foundation was going to move forward. The new plan focused on funding one or two lead districts directly, with the intention of concentrating resources and best practices in a few districts that could light the way for the others. Once a draft of the strategic plan was complete in January 2005, Herdman convened a small, confidential meeting with board members, advisors and leading thinkers and reformers from around the country to solicit their feedback. Jacobson remembered, "They shredded the draft, with all due respect to our thinking, as being too narrow in approach and re-focused us on different ways to address the challenges for achieving transformational district change. It was clear we needed to tackle the complex roots of the problem present in the whole system and aim our investment strategy at changing the system that influences what happens in districts. Out of this meeting, Rodel shifted its strategy to *systems* change at the state level, and away from most programmatic investments at the district and local levels." The foundation also crystallized its multi-faceted role as catalyst, implementer, partner and investor—an organization providing "heat, hope and help" to ensure results.

By the time Herdman was preparing his comments for the public launch of the *Opportunity Knocks* report in July 2005, Rodel's board and staff were clear about the audacious scope of their goals. The release of the report received significant media coverage because Rodel had implemented thorough communications efforts prior to the launch. Herdman had also assembled a diverse group of leaders, including representatives from the Urban League, the Business Roundtable, the Department of Education and the Office of Economic Development. Following the launch, Rodel

convened a rigorous schedule of community conversations around the state to engage educators, the business community and the public in a dialogue about the data, the urgent need for systemic reform, and the scale of change required for Delaware's education system to become one in which each child could experience success.

Herdman also worked to formalize a collaborative process that would result in recommendations for statewide reform. "We did an analysis of influencers and our influence on those key stakeholders. Not surprisingly, the first set of stakeholders we reached out to was business leadership. The Chair of MBNA, one of the largest businesses in the state, came forward to host the initial dinner with business leaders, and Bill Budinger invited his business colleagues to talk about how to revitalize the business community's role. Out of those dinners, Skip Schoenhals, then Chairman and President of Wilmington Savings Fund Society and WSFS Financial Corp, emerged as a critical leader. He stepped forward to chair what became the Steering Committee for Vision 2015, the coalition we assembled to develop a plan to address the problems and challenges starkly laid out in *Opportunity Knocks*. This was the first of many steps to broaden the base of our coalition. In the months and years that followed, they continued actively building partnerships across geographic and ethnic boundaries."

Herdman knew they'd need more significant funding than Rodel could invest to implement the collaborative process with the kind of depth that was necessary. Furthermore, he wasn't sure the business community, which had just agreed to come back to the table after stepping away in frustration in the late 90s, would be ready to invest on a large scale so soon. He and his senior team were reviewing potential options when Herdman received a call from Kevin Hall, chief operating officer at The Broad Foundation. Hall was an old colleague whom Herdman knew from the charter management field and who had been an adviser to the *Opportunity Knocks* project. Hall wanted to know more about Rodel's plans for what might come next. A Delaware native, Hall was keenly aware of the political challenges in the state regarding education reform. After several conversations and a trip from Eli Broad to the state in October 2005, The Broad Foundation committed \$1.35 million to support what would become Vision 2015. Herdman recognized just how fortunate this critical partnership was for Rodel and for the process. Broad brought a national scope and network that would infuse expertise, input and resources. One of the most important contributions was one Herdman hadn't anticipated—Hall would join the Vision 2015 Steering Committee, providing invaluable insight and perspective. "Kevin is a great strategic thinker. Over the course of the process, he flew more LA to Wilmington 'red eyes' than he'd probably like to remember to spend two or three days at a clip to brainstorm each step. He pushed us harder and stronger than we would have been able to do on our own."

### ***Building the Plan: Vision 2015***

At the start of fall 2005, building on conversations Rodel had with state leaders in business, education and government, as well as from the foundation's community conversations, Rodel developed a list of 80 potential steering committee members. Schoenhals and a small group of other key business leaders worked with Herdman to narrow the list to 25 to 30 names, focusing on senior leaders from each of the critical sectors. "One key decision was whether or not we'd include the

teachers' union," Schoenhals remembered. "We had direct conversations with the union leadership and collectively decided it was better to include the union, work to keep them at the table, and to keep lines of communication open. We've been well served by that decision." Both the union president and its executive director joined the Steering Committee.

The stakes were high. Herdman sought professional facilitation services for the Steering Committee and eventually secured Cambridge Leadership Associates, a Boston-based consulting group. After meeting with Marty Linsky and his team, Herdman was confident they would bring the right set of skills to the work. In mid-September, he contracted with Linsky and one of his CLA colleagues, Ellen Meyer Shorb, to lead the process. "Marty did a lot of reconnaissance before the launch in November, researching the background and experiences of all 24 initial participants, interviewing each individually, assessing their expectations, concerns, potential contributions and positions on various education reform issues."

Schoenhals recalls that at the first meeting in November 2005, "we quickly decided that it was not enough to set our sights on the best schools in the nation. We needed to insist on the best school in the world for every Delaware child—no exceptions, no excuses." As with any group process involving multiple stakeholders and very high stakes, tensions and challenges arose. "Linsky did exactly what we needed him to do," Jacobson notes. "He forced each of us to confront our individual roles and biases. He said, 'Everyone in this room has been working together for years, and you still have the same problems, some worse than before, some a little better. I talked to each of you. I know you all want the same goal. What is getting in your way?' He began to pick apart the group and re-fashion a coalition helping members see new ground and mutually beneficial outcomes." Linsky's approach helped ensure everyone in the room understood a key truth for any coalition aiming to create fundamental change. In order to reach a much higher goal for the children of Delaware, each participant would have to disappoint some portion of his or her own constituency. Linsky pointed out that the collective reluctance to do so had caused a stalemate hindering statewide reform efforts in the past. Participants committed to reaching an agreement on 85 percent of the resulting agenda, realizing each party might resist about 15 percent. This agreement enabled diverse stakeholders to keep the process moving and focus on the goals and priorities they did share.

Despite progress with the Steering Committee, Rodel still needed solid research and business acumen to provide analytic capacity for the process. After interviewing several of the nation's top consulting firms, Herdman and several Vision 2015 colleagues settled on Boston Consulting Group and brought them on board in February 2006. Jacobson noted, "CLA and BCG brought different strengths to the process, and part of Rodel's role as staff to the Vision 2015 Steering Committee was to keep the teams aligned and working together in a very fast-paced process. In retrospect, our role in managing and facilitating these consulting relationships with our local community partners was essential. We also realized that many Steering Committee members were not used to assimilating presentations with 47-slide PowerPoint decks, lots of raw data and complex analyses, with an expectation for fast decision-making, especially on tough issues. Marty helped the group to process all that was coming at them, and facilitated how the conversations and decision-points got set up."

Throughout the process, BCG and CLA convened 80 specialists who served on four topical work groups, and they conducted in-depth sessions with hundreds of stakeholders throughout the state. More than 40 percent of Delaware principals attended meetings, and focus groups included a broad range of students from those pursuing advanced courses to those who were in prison—as well as teachers, parents and community leaders.

In May, Rodel convened the Steering Committee for an overnight retreat with the goal of reaching consensus on a set of comprehensive recommendations for the Vision 2015 plan. Although union leadership had been involved in the teacher performance discussions throughout, when their representatives saw the wording of the recommendations dealing with teacher evaluation and compensation they announced they could not support them without referring them to their membership for full consideration. They were ready to leave the table, threatening the outcome of the retreat and the coalition itself. After a protracted caucus, a sub-group of the Steering Committee that included union leaders reached an agreement. The final recommendations were unanimously endorsed at their final retreat in June 2006.

In October 2006, Rodel released the Vision 2015 plan with 45 recommendations at two separate public forums. One attracted a standing-room-only crowd of 600 business, education, and political leaders in Wilmington; the other drew several hundred to the new Caesar Rodney High School in Kent County. (*See Exhibit 2 for the full set of Vision 2015*) To capitalize on the public attention, momentum for change, and the need to act on the plan, nine members of the Steering Committee were appointed as an Implementation Team to guide the work ahead. Rodel also facilitated a “road show” of Steering Committee members in order to reach parents, teachers, school committee members, businesses and municipal leaders. They traveled from meeting halls to school auditoriums to share findings, recommendations and possible actions for change. Committed to their findings and to a clear communication process, Rodel staff launched a bi-weekly e-newsletter circulated to some 10,000 readers in Delaware and the nation, carefully balancing its own voice with that of Vision 2015 and the diverse coalition of stakeholders.

### ***Bumps on the Road: Learning the Politics of Implementation***

During the Steering Committee’s deliberations in 2006, Herdman built momentum for a key priority already shared by other members—strengthening school leadership. The strategy they developed would augment existing state programs, build a more robust pipeline, and better prepare school leaders to take the helm at high-need, failing and turnaround schools. In meetings with community members during the preparation and release of *Opportunity Knocks*, the Steering Committee heard strong demand from superintendents and educators around the state for a more comprehensive, stronger principal leadership program. Within the decade, more than 68 percent of Delaware’s current principals would retire. Herdman partnered with retired Indian River superintendent, Lois Hobbs, and Monique Burns Thompson, the co-founder and at the time the president and chief curriculum officer of New Leaders for New Schools in New York City. They developed a customized business plan for a New Leaders-inspired program in Delaware. The new model would be highly competitive, only accepting the top 10 percent of candidates, would require a two-year intensive

training and development effort, and would be expensive—\$100,000 per trained leader. However, Herdman thought the expense would yield a high return on investment. He reasoned: “If we trained 10 to 20 people a year, for five years, we’d have at least 50 great people. With the state’s 200 schools, we’d have highly qualified new leaders for 25 percent of our schools.” Hobbs visited 17 of the 19 districts in the state to talk with district leaders about the idea of this specialized principal leadership academy, returning time and again with strong support and offers to allocate some portion of district funds for the new academy.

Soon after the Vision 2015 announcement, Herdman, Hobbs and Burns Thompson finalized their leadership training proposal and were ready to meet with the state. In early November 2006, the three met with top education department leadership and staff and with faculty from the state’s principal leadership preparation program based at the University of Delaware. “We were confident this would be a meeting to talk about next steps, seeing that we were bringing to the table initial funding and that our proposed initiative wouldn’t compete with current programs, but would fill a gap on behalf of the state and high-need schools,” Herdman recalled. “Instead, the state department of education representative and her colleagues looked across the table and told us that they didn’t see the need and wouldn’t support it. This was quite a surprise, and a reminder that not everyone had bought into the need for fundamental change, especially when such change would affect the position of established providers.”

Herdman touched base with Hall and Schoenhals to revisit their strategy and consider their next step. Even though they’d had mixed success with moving ahead on some of the recommendations, Herdman knew that Vision 2015, like other major education reform efforts as complex and large in scope as this one, would die in the implementation phase if they didn’t also establish an underlying legal and budgetary framework to change education in Delaware. The three decided to initiate a high-risk, high-leverage implementation strategy and developed an omnibus piece of legislation and budget request that would include the full set of Vision 2015 recommendations. Herdman coordinated meetings of the BCG team with attorneys who were familiar with the state’s statutory and regulatory landscape to identify the panel of legislative changes that would be necessary to implement the most transformational Vision 2015 recommendations. The BCG team had already crunched the numbers and came up with a ballpark figure of \$100 million new dollars to implement the full set of recommendations. Herdman knew the most sustainable way of reaching that level of funding was to find ways to re-allocate current dollars while changing policies to invest in the more effective practices embodied in the recommendations.

Working tirelessly through evenings and weekends, BCG consultants spent the winter months of 2007 developing an omnibus bill and budget proposal in preparation for the spring 2007 legislative session. “We put together a piece of legislation that would institutionalize the recommendations agreed to in Vision 2015—everything from funding formula shifts, to teacher evaluations tied to student performance, to statewide early education. In January, Skip and I went to the implementation team and introduced [the entire package]. To our surprise, one by one, committee members rejected the whole idea out of hand. The union hadn’t done enough leg work around the evaluation piece, superintendents were not ready to give principals more autonomy, and the

Secretary of Education was not ready to change funding formulas. The proposal was dead before we even had a chance to submit it to the legislature.”

Not only was no legislation passed that year, the Vision 2015 budget submission of approximately \$35 million—less than half of what would be needed and only about two percent of the overall state education budget—was flatly rejected. Herdman reflected, “We’d put forward a comprehensive proposal and thoughtful budget, but we hadn’t worked the politics of it right.”

Herdman understood just how far many constituencies in Delaware were from being able to make tough choices, whether by making political choices in the voting booth, or supporting large scale, statewide systemic educational reform. This pattern had presented itself during the community outreach process for *Opportunity Knocks*. Undeterred, he began to take steps that would radically shift political support in the state by putting pressure on key leaders in the legislature and the governor’s office. He knew that Rodel would have to be involved in creating the political will necessary to effect sweeping changes that would positively impact classrooms statewide. In addition to building public will and leadership capacity, they would need to invest in strategic opportunities that would build the institutional capacity of key state players to work within their respective organizations and in collaboration with one another. But this would require new ways of working that were not supported by existing structures, systems and traditions.

### ***Recalibrating the Reform Strategy***

The foundation was at a crossroads. The Rodel team had identified and publicized the “problem” (*Opportunity Knocks*, 2005), had helped develop a plan and coalition (Vision 2015, 2006), but had inadequate funding and lacked political champions. Without political leadership to act on Vision 2015, The Broad Foundation declined to make further co-investment. Herdman recounted, “Broad was an incredible partner in the first phase of our work, and Kevin’s contributions were essential to our success. After Broad made its decision, we reshaped work to unbundle the reform recommendations, redouble our efforts to find the required financial resources and build partnerships with some true political leaders. Fortunately, while some boards might have said we needed to slow down, our board encouraged us to proceed full steam ahead.”

Herdman, with the full support of his board of directors, evaluated Rodel’s strategy and looked for cleaner, more efficient avenues of garnering support for Vision 2015. He felt that some of the statewide reform efforts—such as moving to a new computer adaptive, growth-model student assessment system and shifting to a new funding model—could be addressed through task forces, rather than legislation. He also felt that most of the work in classrooms didn’t require legislative changes, just some willing partners and funding.

The lack of political support for Vision 2015 ultimately allowed Herdman to retool his approach. Based on the outreach work of the past year, he knew that many districts and schools were willing to dig deep and change the status quo. Herdman said, “In reality, what some of us in the group wanted to do was take the system down to the studs and start over on things like teacher evaluation and compensation, but we couldn’t; there were 120,000 students to educate. So, we

came up with the creation of a network of district and charter schools—the Vision Network—that would be given more resources and greater flexibility to redesign the system from the inside out.” Rodel then staffed an effort to identify the districts and schools that wanted to lead the change effort.

In May 2007, the Implementation Team invited school districts and charter schools throughout Delaware to join the Vision Network—a group of schools committed to the principles of Vision 2015 and willing to embark on training, cross-district collaboration and innovation. A group of 10 schools were selected through a process that reviewed applicants based on their readiness, willingness and ability to change, as well as their commitment to the vision and goals for their performance. In fall 2007, the Network was launched with monthly trainings by local and national consultants, regular coaching by “thought partners,” and opportunities for school leaders to serve as critical friends during walk-through tours of other Vision Network schools. Rodel also offered grant opportunities for schools that were willing to be innovative in implementing the Vision 2015 principles, including extending learning time, experimenting with new teacher contracts, and other policy changes. After opportunities to see high-performing systems and participate in trainings with national experts, schools were willing and able to take on more focused issues, such as new assessments, training and curriculum that were aligned with their work in the Vision Network. By 2010, the Network had grown to 26 schools, serving as a connector and professional development resource for schools and district offices.

Given that new funding at the projected \$100 million mark was unlikely, the next logical step was to find the money in the current system. Over the previous 18 months, Rodel’s efforts to repackage the Vision 2015 recommendations in the form of targeted political objectives finally began to come together. In late June 2007, Governor Ruth Ann Minner announced Executive Order 98, establishing the Leadership for Education Achievement in Delaware (LEAD) Committee to make implementation recommendations on key elements of the Vision 2015 plan. The executive order and subsequent endorsement by the Delaware General Assembly through Senate Joint Resolution 7 resulted from yet another Rodel “investment.” That spring, Herdman had encouraged the Delaware Business Roundtable to allocate some of its lobbyist’s time to work directly with the Minner administration’s lobbyist to craft what would become Executive Order 98.

By the end of the summer, the LEAD committee had begun its work, staffed by Rodel’s policy officer, Madeleine Bayard. With Rodel’s support, the Business Roundtable invested \$1.5 million for a BCG team to do a cost-efficiency study, which was released the following January. They identified \$158 million that “could be saved and reallocated to the classroom,” well over 50 percent more than the estimated cost of implementing the full 2015 recommendations. While both LEAD Committee reports laid the groundwork for some significant legislative action in the 2008 session, neither the Democrats nor the Republicans were willing to lead. The hesitation by legislators in both parties provided yet another powerful lesson for Rodel: the foundation had to commit to navigating the complicated and unpredictable political landscape in order to sustain progress on their comprehensive reform agendas.

Rodel staff also understood they would need to evaluate Delaware's 60-year old student funding formula and initiate the process of changing it. Rodel commissioned Marguerite Roza at the University of Washington's Center for Reinventing Public Education, known for her thorough and cutting edge work on funding equity, to undertake the task. Roza recommended policies that would allow districts and schools more latitude and autonomy when allocating funds, including flexible funding and needs-based funding options that would significantly alter the existing formula. These recommendations would present new political obstacles and shape the ongoing work by Rodel and its staff.

### ***An Election Brings New Political Will for Education Reform***

In 2008, given its inability to get political traction in the legislature, the foundation set its sights on building ownership of Vision 2015's education reform agenda with Delaware's next governor and incoming legislators. In March 2008, while the statewide and national election season was in full swing, Herdman and his team convened Delaware's first-ever single topic political debate on education. The same month, Rodel released a public opinion poll that asked Delaware citizens to weigh the connection between public policies—such as property tax assessments, local school referenda and efficient education spending—and the quality of schools. The poll found that 81 percent of Delawareans wanted their governor, state legislators, and other elected officials to pay more attention to improving public education. Its crowning effort to elevate the issue of education in the election was a series of single-day leadership forums entitled *Delaware for a Global Economy: Making Vision 2015 Work*. Organized in partnership with the University of Delaware, the event drew 500 participants and included a keynote speech by Sir Michael Barber, head of McKinsey's Global Education Practice and former senior education advisor to British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

With the election of President Barack Obama, who campaigned on bringing education reform to Washington, and Governor Jack Markell, the former state treasurer who had served on Rodel's Advisory Committee, Rodel's aspirations for political support from Washington and the State House gained a significant boost. The governor, during his campaign, had issued a "blueprint" for education reform in Delaware reflecting the goals of both Rodel and Vision 2015. However, even with strong executive leadership, Herdman knew that implementing Vision 2015 would need the support of elected officials from across the state, many of whom had strong ties to the teachers union. As a result, Rodel and its business and community partners began to explore the creation of an education advocacy organization that could build and mobilize public will to support the hard work currently underway and the politically difficult decisions policy makers would have to make. Rodel staffed a Delaware affiliate of a national organization called Education Voters Institute, which launched publicly in February 2009.

When President Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan announced the Race to the Top (RTTT) competition in July 2009, Governor Markell pledged that he would do whatever was required for Delaware to be a strong competitor. When the public and private stakeholders involved in Delaware's reform efforts saw the criteria for the new federal competition, they knew

they were well positioned to be competitive, especially given the alignment between many Vision 2015 strategies and the four RTTT “assurances”<sup>1</sup> for school reform:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most
- Turning around the lowest-achieving schools

Herdman and his colleagues knew the opportunity for RTTT funding, alongside the political and legislative changes at the state level, was just the incentive the state and its reform advocates needed in order to implement real reform. “Just as the Governor pledged he would do, Rodel was going to pull out all the stops to win this race,” Herdman recalled. Governor Markell selected Michael Barber’s education group at McKinsey & Company to facilitate the application development. Although Rodel had invested heavily in BCG over the past three years and had primed its team for the role of writing the application, the foundation recognized the importance of providing a smooth transition into this new partnership with McKinsey. The business community and Rodel joined with the Governor’s office to support McKinsey’s costs, and Rodel ensured that the McKinsey team had access to all of the data and briefing materials that it and BCG had prepared over the past several years.

Rodel continued to play an active role behind the scenes throughout the RTTT development process. They scheduled consultants to inform the content of the application and organized a strategic briefing session with national experts for the Governor and his team before they made their case for RTTT support in Washington. When the Rodel team reviewed the state’s final plan and found 100 percent of the districts, charters, and teacher union representatives had signed on to the application, they felt optimistic about the strength of Delaware’s application. However, as Herdman remembered, “We were as stunned as the rest of the education world that only two states were selected to receive first-round funding from the RTTT program and that Delaware was one of them.”

### ***What Next?***

Shortly after the announcement, the state’s main newspaper, *The News Journal*, ran a feature article on the RTTT win: “Delaware education: Next step, bold reform.” The article suggested Delaware’s struggling schools were in for some “radical changes” and those making decisions about this reform, specifically Arne Duncan, the U.S. Secretary of Education and Delaware Governor Jack Markell, had a track record of making tough decisions. Markell had recently supported the Delaware State Board of Education’s decision to close a low-performing charter school and stated in his speech announcing the RTTT win: “What’s really important today is where we go from here,

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<sup>1</sup> From the United States Department of Education website.

whether we have the will to put our children first and move forward with reforms to improve our schools.” Delaware Education Secretary Lowery added, “We have a lot of hard work and tough decisions ahead of us as we make these reforms a reality.”

Rodel’s political will-building efforts had produced solid support from local schools, parent groups and state level stakeholders. Rodel had collaborated with the new Education Voters organization, many Vision 2015 partners and the Governor’s office to support months of presentations and meetings aimed at garnering support from the teachers union, administrators, legislators and community leaders for the RTTT application. However, Herdman knew that if he were to ask most teachers, parents and community members what the win would mean for the state, most wouldn’t fully understand its significant implications for changing the ways schools were run and how teachers did their work. In step with Rodel’s approach over the previous six years, Herdman considered these new challenges, stayed focused on the long-term implications for Delaware’s students, and evaluated the best possible use of foundation resources to maintain momentum, build capacity and sustain a dedicated effort to produce systemic change.

Herdman and his lean staff wondered if their efforts to bolster public awareness and effective coalitions would provide enough political will to prevent leaders from backsliding when the going got tough during the implementation process. Would those who had been focused on preserving the status quo impede or even reverse progress? Would the state have the political courage to do what was necessary? The state had adopted a sweeping, ambitious set of policy changes that reflected tremendous effort over several decades. What was the best method for keeping people focused on the right goals while addressing staggering capacity issues across the state—issues that could potentially derail the redesign process for many institutions? And for Rodel, what would be the most effective next steps for its determined staff to help keep momentum going?

## **Exhibit 1**

### **Education Reform in Delaware, 1997–2010**

*Adapted from the Delaware Education Reform Timeline, accessed online at the Delaware Department of Education and materials from the Rodel Foundation of Delaware.*

- 1997**      **Delaware State Testing Program** legislation passes, including a provision creating the position of Secretary of Education, shifting authority from a state board to the governor.
- 1998**      The **Education Accountability Act** passes, establishing the parameters for student, school, district, DOE and parent accountability.
- 2000**      Valerie Woodruff is sworn in as the first secretary of education.
- 2005**      The Rodel Foundation of Delaware (Rodel) releases **Opportunity Knocks**, a comprehensive analysis of the performance of the state’s public education system.
- In partnership with the business community, Rodel convenes the **Vision 2015 Steering Committee**, a coalition of education stakeholders, to make recommendations on the report.
- 2006**      Steering Committee releases **Vision 2015 plan** with 45 recommendations in six key policy areas.
- Rodel launches comprehensive, statewide communications strategy balancing its voice with that of its diverse coalition of stakeholders.
- 2007**      Legislative setback when omnibus legislation to fund Vision 2015 is defeated in committee.
- Governor Minner establishes **Leadership for Education Achievement in Delaware (LEAD) Committee** by executive order to make implementation recommendations on Vision 2015.
- Delaware General Assembly passes Senate Joint Resolution 7 supporting Vision 2015 and the LEAD committee and Delaware Early Childhood Council is written into law.
- Rodel forms the **Vision Network** to implement recommendations of Vision 2015.
- 2008**      The LEAD Committee releases (1) **Cost Efficiency Study** which identifies \$86-158 million of cost savings in the state’s \$1.65 billion education budget, and (2) **Report on Education Funding in Delaware**, calling for changes in the way funds are distributed for public education.
- 2009**      Dr. Lillian Lowery, superintendent of schools for Delaware’s largest district (Christina), appointed secretary of education.
- Education Voters** is launched to inform the public about pressing education issues.
- President Obama signs the federal Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 into law, which includes the \$4.35 billion **Race to the Top competition**.
- Delaware joins the **Common Core Standards Initiative**.
- Delaware General Assembly passes legislation enabling the Delaware DOE to implement a new assessment system—the **Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS)**—based on the recommendations of Vision 2015 and those issued by a legislative task force in 2006.

## **Exhibit 1**

### **Education Reform in Delaware, 1997–2010**

*Adapted from the Delaware Education Reform Timeline, accessed online at the Delaware Department of Education and materials from the Rodel Foundation of Delaware.*

**2010** Delaware State Board of Education approves crucial regulations to ensure greater flexibility and accountability in public schools, addressing key elements of the Race to the Top application.

**Delaware submits a \$107 million** application for federal **Race to the Top** funding.

In April, the U.S. Department of Education announces that **Delaware's application has the highest score** and, along with Tennessee, is a Round One winner with an award of **\$119 million**.

## **Exhibit 2**

### **Vision 2015 Recommendations**

Facilitated by the Rodel Foundation of Delaware, The Broad Foundation, and several Delaware business leaders, Vision 2015 was developed by a 28-person Steering Committee of senior public, private and civic leaders from throughout Delaware.

**(1) We must set our sights high, with challenging expectations for every child, coupled with high quality curriculum and additional instructional time to give students a good shot at meeting the higher standards.**

- Academic standards as challenging as the world's best
- A statewide research-based curriculum so that all Delaware students are learning at the same high standards
- Aligned model lessons, teaching tools, diagnostic assessments and classroom-based professional coaching to help teachers meet each student's learning needs
- Assessments that measure individual student gains over time
- State funding for an additional 140 school hours a year with guidance on how to use the time best
- Implementation of the state's stronger graduation requirements
- Expanded online distance learning to allow true 24/7 learning opportunities

**(2) We must invest in early childhood education, targeting more resources to high-need children.**

- Tuition subsidies for more low-income three and four year-olds
- Required participation in the Delaware Stars for Early Success Program, which sets high-quality program standards
- Annual license renewals for all early child care and education providers to ensure consistent high quality
- Additional professional development for providers so they have the knowledge and skills to serve our youngsters well
- Data systems to share information and follow educational progress of students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12
- Increased coordination across service agencies for children from birth to age three

**(3) We must develop and support great teachers in every classroom who are able to customize instruction to each and every child.**

- A new career path, with advanced positions such as mentor and master teacher
- Advancement based on skills and performance, not seniority, with student achievement as one measure of performance
- A negotiated statewide salary structure to reduce inequities across the state
- Incentives to attract teachers to high-need subjects, like math and science, and to low-performing, high-need schools
- Bonuses for schools that meet or exceed agreed-upon goals for improvements in student achievement
- A formal evaluation process that measures teacher progress against clear standards and provides specific and actionable feedback
- Professional development based on the state's academic standards and focused on in-classroom coaching and mentoring rather than on isolated workshops
- New professional development centers to encourage the sharing of information and best practices
- Creative approaches to recruit and train an expanded pool of new teachers, including those who want to change careers
- More supports to help new teachers succeed, such as realistic course loads, assignments and class sizes

## **Exhibit 2**

### **Vision 2015 Recommendations**

Facilitated by the Rodel Foundation of Delaware, The Broad Foundation, and several Delaware business leaders, Vision 2015 was developed by a 28-person Steering Committee of senior public, private and civic leaders from throughout Delaware.

#### **(4) We must empower principals to be great school leaders, with enough knowledge, authority and flexibility to get results.**

- Broader principal control of decision making related to people, resources and time
- Increased accountability for student achievement and school performance
- The flexibility to choose from among approved providers of educational services
- A statewide leadership academy for world-class principal recruitment, induction, retention and development
- A statewide base salary schedule, with significant bonuses tied to student achievement
- More easily accessible data on student performance, staffing and finances to help principals make better decisions

#### **(5) We must encourage instructional innovation and family involvement and require the accountability of all partners.**

- Multiple efforts to inform and involve parents and families, including leadership and advocacy training and an online Web portal to share school information
- A statewide Office of Innovation to share information on best practices and encourage new programs
- An “equity advocate” to ensure that the special needs of students are met with proper resources
- Stronger partnerships with community organizations and businesses to provide more support for students: from better health care to on-the-job internships that tie to coursework
- A common scorecard that shares information about student gains, family-school interactions, fiscal accountability, and the satisfaction of educators, parents and students
- A stronger accountability system that focuses on student achievement, not simply how well educators comply with federal and state rules
- On-site school reviews and school improvement teams that can rapidly improve underperforming schools
- A commitment to identify and replicate schools and programs that work

#### **(6) Finally, we must have a simple and fair funding system whereby resources follow individual students and are allocated based on their needs.**

- A weighted student funding formula that allows students who need more support (special education, low-income, gifted/talented, etc.) to get the support they need to reach the same high standards
- Funds distributed directly to districts and schools, giving principals flexibility for how funds are spent, along with the accountability for results
- State funding high enough so districts and schools do not need to rely on local referenda to meet Vision 2015 standards
- A negotiated statewide teacher salary schedule tied to the new career path
- Understandable budget information that is readily accessible to all, from principals to parents
- A common scorecard to hold schools and districts accountable for the academic results of their spending choices
- A careful analysis of how current education dollars could be spent more effectively

## PERSISTENCE AND AGILITY

### Lessons for Grantmakers

This case study examining the work of the Rodel Foundation of Delaware provides insight into the strategies and scope of involvement required for pursuing systemic educational reform at the state level. It also provides an in-depth look at the role Rodel and its staff played in bringing about change for Delaware, as well as the unique chain of events that led the state to develop the top-ranking proposal for RTTT funds, securing \$119 million for Delaware's reform efforts. The chronology of events and the supporting details tell a story of success made possible by persistence and agility. These traits, combined with leadership and resources, laid the groundwork for effective strategies over the course of six years. How did Rodel and its small team succeed in advancing its plan for statewide reform?

- **Focusing persistently on a large-scale vision over time**

*Opportunity Knocks* in 2005 gave Rodel the necessary data to build a clear vision for change that addressed the complexity of the state's education challenges in a comprehensive manner. Herdman built a lean, skilled team with the necessary depth of experience in multi-stakeholder change efforts. Together, with input from the board and leading thinkers and advisors from around the state and nationally—most notably through the Vision 2015 coalition formed in 2006—they built a state-level strategy aimed at not only catalyzing change, but ensuring *sustainable* change by focusing on long-term solutions rather than short-term fixes. Herdman recalled that “the board's support of this strategy gave us license to tackle the large, entrenched problems that have impeded lasting change in reform.”

- **Learning from failure**

In pursuing a high-risk change strategy, Rodel had a high tolerance for failure and used its setbacks to make course corrections. Herdman reflected that “[The board] expected that with our taking these bigger risks and pushing hard for the needed outcomes, we would sometimes fail along the way. These failures were critical lessons for our later successes.” The foundation used setbacks as teachable moments and held fast to its goals, even while adjusting its tactics.

- **Engaging in roles beyond grantmaking – doing whatever it takes**

To generate change in complex, multi-stakeholder systems, the foundation played several roles simultaneously—catalyst, convener, partner. As a *catalyst*, Rodel helped bring Teach For America to Delaware and helped establish the Delaware Leadership Project, creating a cadre of much-needed new teachers and leaders for some of the most troubled schools in the state. As the principal *convener* of Vision 2015, Rodel worked with influential leaders from various sectors in the state to develop a platform of recommendations for the state's education system. As a *partner*, the foundation supported the state in its preparation of the Race to the Top application by providing expert analysis, research and financial assistance. Rodel and its close partners remained nimble in their approach so they could shift directions, redirect resources and re-envision activities given

ongoing feedback from events in the field. “The staff and our partners put in an enormous amount of ‘sweat equity.’ When we saw something missing or going awry, we were able to step in. This wasn’t about just writing a check,” Herdman noted.

- **Building capacity for sustainable success**

The Rodel Foundation assessed the capacity of existing educational systems and organizations and realized they were built to comply with federal and state laws rather than being designed to excel. “We knew the education department lacked the resources and systems to implement systemic change,” Herdman reflected. “So we offered our assistance as a thought partner, funder and researcher to build the state’s capacity and to change policies where necessary.” To initiate change at the district and school level, Rodel and the Delaware Business Roundtable funded the launch of the Vision Network, supporting leaders and teachers in ten schools that were ready to innovate and change practices with the goal of rapidly accelerating student achievement. Now, the Network has more than doubled in size, has more public funding than private, and is positioned to become a strong, independent non-profit driver of reform.

- **Building a broad coalition for reform**

From the beginning, Rodel set out to build coalitions that would help them make informed decisions while staying focused on systemic, statewide change. Coalition-building efforts included helping assemble the 28-member Vision 2015 Steering Committee composed of diverse leaders from around the state. Rodel’s role as a catalyst, convener, implementer and investor allowed it to ask tough questions and apply the necessary external pressure to facilitate change and progress. Key consulting partners, Boston Consulting Group and Cambridge Leadership Associates, also conducted in-depth sessions with stakeholders around the state, including 40 percent of the state’s principals.

- **Developing a communications strategy that conveyed both hope and urgency**

The key to keeping the public engaged during this phase was Rodel’s execution of a public relations strategy aimed at involving people in the issues, increasing understanding of the problems and inspiring confidence in possible solutions. Herdman recalled, “What we are doing is a large-scale, change-management campaign, not producing press releases informing the public of a problem with the hope that others would figure it out.” The foundation produced communications designed to change the mindset of a broad set of stakeholders—especially educators and parents—about the need to focus on world-class expectations for kids. They helped develop the road map (Vision 2015) and demonstrate, for supporters and naysayers, how real change is possible (Vision Network).

### ***Reflections for the Field***

As funders think about investment strategies aimed at systemic education reform, Rodel’s experience holds important lessons about how philanthropic resources—including but not limited to funding—can play a transformative role in seeding and supporting large-scale change. Rodel maintained from the beginning that it was making a long-term commitment to this work, something that is not common in the funding community. “Persistence for Rodel is anything but patience,” Dori

Jacobson commented. “The way we work is far from a ‘wait and see’ approach. We practice persistence with a healthy sense of impatience. We keep at it with intention, always open to shifting things around, seeing new possibilities. We bring in new resources, new expertise, new people while staying deeply committed to those relationships and interventions that are producing the change we need.”

While this case study concentrates on the value of persistence, one of GFE’s eight *Principles for Effective Education Grantmaking*, the story of this work is about more than persistence. To understand the complexity that defined the education challenge in Delaware, the foundation reached out far and wide to see how others, internationally and around the country, were approaching education reform and how they determined success. It convened critical thought partners, many of whom held opposing positions and viewpoints, to consider Delaware’s specific challenges and critique possible strategies for intervention. This broad base of knowledge gave the foundation the credibility it needed to bolster the ambitious goals set forth in Vision 2015. Without such engaged partners, sustainable, systemic change is not possible.

Finally, this case examines the role that funders can play in leveraging influence at all levels of the education system (at federal, state and district levels) and across multiple constituencies. By assuming some bold and unusual roles, the foundation was able to achieve influence far beyond its investments.

## SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS

### Questions to consider while reading this case about effective education grantmaking:

1. How does the theme of persistence apply to the Rodel Foundation's involvement in the sequence of events that culminated in Delaware's successful Race to the Top application? How did the foundation balance its long-term goals with real-time tactical adjustments as conditions on the ground changed? How might the efforts presented in this case represent long-term versus short-term strategic thinking?
2. Rodel's founder, CEO and board of directors all demonstrated a high tolerance for risk. Which of the risks in this case were necessary to achieve results? Which risks backfired? What kinds of agreements between board and staff were necessary to pursue a high-visibility, high-risk agenda?
3. What were the foundation's successes in this case, and what were its failures? In what ways did Rodel use its failures to adjust its strategy?
4. The Rodel Foundation characterized its role as providing "heat, hope and help" to secure results. What examples does the case provide in terms of each of these roles? Which of these roles do grantmakers traditionally do well? And which roles might require grantmakers to stretch in order to fulfill them?
5. Over the span of this case study, the political landscape shifted frequently. What kinds of strategies did Rodel employ to adapt to these shifts?
6. As a supporting organization, the Rodel Foundation enjoys wider latitude with regard to the kinds of roles it can play in the political process. Were there actions that the foundation took that might not be permissible for other types of foundations? Which lessons from Rodel's political engagement had the most significance for how your grantmaking organization engages in policy work?
7. How does this case help illuminate some of the challenges associated with systemic change?
8. How did the inclusion of a broad base of stakeholders contribute to the development of and support for Vision 2015? In what ways was the broad participation a barrier? Would the foundation have been able to make more or less progress with a narrower coalition?
9. What do you anticipate will be the next steps for the Rodel Foundation as it grapples with the challenges of implementation? In what ways could the foundation have changed as a result of its intensive work on Vision 2015?
10. What specific lessons and insights did you gain from this case, and how might they apply to your grantmaking work in education?

## EPILOGUE

Delaware's first-round Race to the Top win provided a well-timed encouragement for leadership and staff at the state Department of Education and many of the foundation's key partners, especially the business community, to stay the course with Vision 2015's broad goals. Rodel's state-level strategy produced many of the outcomes Herdman and his colleagues had aimed to achieve. The progress had provided a strong base for the hardest work ahead—success in schools, classrooms and student learning. In order to achieve the goals set forth in Vision 2015 and the commitments made by Delaware as part of RTTT, the foundation would need to continue with its state-level strategy, investing in efforts that would drive sustainable change. At the same time, it would need to expand its investment strategy to support districts and charter schools with a persistent eye on change in classrooms.

Building on its successes, Rodel began to shift its strategy for the next phase of the work, starting in fiscal year 2012, to focus on the following three goals.

- **Building Understanding, Will, and Courage for Change**

The foundation's communications efforts and coalition building will deepen and expand as real changes begin to take effect. Rodel will concentrate on broadening support for those leading the change. While continuing to educate and inform the public about the need for change and what kind of change is possible, Rodel will direct communication efforts regarding specific larger scale changes that are going to be implemented by the state and districts—higher standards, greater accountability for performance, and development of strong new teachers and leaders. For these changes to be effective, many constituencies need to be willing to put aside old ways of doing business. One investment Rodel is making to support change processes on the ground is to incubate the emerging Voices 4 Delaware Education organization, a 501(c)(3) education advocacy organization. Other private sector partners will support the legally separate 501(c)(4) organization, Voices 4 Delaware Education Action Fund, as well as a functioning PAC. The investment in Voices is focused on bolstering broad public understanding of change needed in the state's education system and on providing public leaders and lawmakers with information and knowledge to make the right choices for Delaware kids. Herdman adds, "When teacher evaluation efforts start to have consequences attached to them, when school board elections are no longer controlled by the old power structure, and when we take on fiscal equity issues and the funding formula, we anticipate strong voices of dissent. Changing behavior and shifting resources is extremely challenging to the status quo. There must be an effective counterbalance, an equally strong set of voices saying we need to do the right thing for kids and to support the elected officials and school-level leaders who are going to be receiving most of the heat in this new environment."

- **Supporting the Building Blocks of Reform**

The foundation's investments in the next phase will be largely focused on ensuring that the major components of the first wave of major reform stick. Over the next few years, Rodel will support efforts to put systems in place that promote break-through performance: higher standards, better

data systems, stronger human resource strategies and deeper investments in innovation. Herdman anticipates that “when RTTT funding is expended in 2014, the building blocks will be in place, a new culture of excellence will have been built, and we will have made significant gains. We don’t expect to be internationally competitive yet. The goal of the next phase of the work will be to push for top-ten performance on PISA (the Program for International Student Assessment).”

- **Seeing Around the Corners**

Race to the Top reforms are yet another set of major changes for state and district leaders to manage on top of work already underway. The pace of RTTT implementation makes it even harder for these leaders to have the data and resources necessary in order to think strategically for the long term. This challenge is an excellent example of what Rodel frames as the opportunity for the foundation to be supportive in helping leaders and organizations “see around the corners.” With its research capacity, Rodel can do the deep financial and demographic analysis on student population trends, for example, to inform how leaders think about staging changes in the reform process, assessing what makes sense to do in the short-term to lay the groundwork for more significant changes down the road. “Seeing around the corners is an important value-add we can provide to support leaders in making smart organizational and systemic change,” Herdman notes. “We can do the analysis of what it would take financially and logistically to create a world-class online infrastructure so every child has access to the best curriculum on the planet. We can help inform what the school funding system could look like if the economy bottoms out and tough choices have to be made. We can help research the best teacher recruitment training and development programs in the world to support the state in building the first-in-the-country statewide strategy for recruitment, training and retention of our teachers.”

### ***Vision 2015 Continues to Shape State Strategies***

Rodel’s acclaimed work in establishing Vision 2015 as a framework for the future of Delaware’s educational system continues to pave the way for investments and strategic thinking. Early childhood education—one of the pillars of Vision 2015—has received increased attention since Delaware’s first Race to the Top win. Delaware Stars for Early Success (the state’s Quality Rating and Improvement System) has been supported by a mix of public and private investments since 2007, and these public-private partnerships have helped the state build capacity and develop momentum around systemic reform. During the 2010-2011 legislative session, Governor Markell won approval for a \$22 million annual investment in early childhood education (a 35 percent increase in state spending), with an emphasis on improving programs and services for high-needs children. This investment marked an important stage for Delaware’s strategic approach to reform, one that had been built on ambitious goals and a commitment to secure resources while working toward sustainable public funding. When the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services announced the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge competition in August 2011, Delaware was uniquely positioned to submit a competitive application. In December 2011, Delaware received an Early Learning Challenge grant for \$49.9 million. The award will directly support the recommendations made in Vision 2015 and complement Delaware’s first Race to the

Top award by focusing on the pre-K educational pipeline and increased collaboration between the early childhood and K-12 systems.

Rodel's founder, William Budinger, recently spoke about the challenge and possibility of Rodel's commitment to systemic, large scale education reform. "We see this work as being as complex as a moon shot...not a flash in the pan. We want the work to be the best in the world, and we want it to last. Like the moon launch, we see the importance of building the platform, the booster rockets. All the steps and stages necessary to get to launch need to be completed with quality and linked together seamlessly. The system is so large that one major misstep could set us back for years. Our work at Rodel in these initial stages has produced strong, viable outcomes so far, but we have a lot of work yet to do and not a lot of time in which to do it."

PRINCIPLES FOR

# Effective Education Grantmaking

- principle  
no. 1

## Discipline and Focus

In education, where public dollars dwarf private investments, a funder has greater impact when grantmaking is carefully planned and targeted.
- principle  
no. 2

## Knowledge

Information, ideas and advice from diverse sources, as well as openness to criticism and feedback, can help a funder make wise choices.
- principle  
no. 3

## Resources Linked to Results

A logic-driven “theory of change” helps a grantmaker think clearly about how specific actions will lead to desired outcomes, thus linking resources with results.
- principle  
no. 4

## Effective Grantees

A grantmaker is effective only when its grantees are effective. Especially in education, schools and systems lack capacity and grantees (both inside and outside the system) may require deeper support.
- principle  
no. 5

## Engaged Partners

A funder succeeds by actively engaging its partners—the individuals, institutions and communities connected with an issue—to ensure “ownership” of education problems and their solutions.
- principle  
no. 6

## Leverage, Influence and Collaboration

The depth and range of problems in education make it difficult to achieve meaningful change in isolation or by funding programs without changing public policies or opinions. A grantmaker is more effective when working with others to mobilize and deploy as many resources as possible in order to advance solutions.
- principle  
no. 7

## Persistence

The most important problems in education are often the most complex and intractable, and will take time to solve.
- principle  
no. 8

## Innovation and Constant Learning

Even while acting on the best available information—as in Principle #2—a grantmaker can create new knowledge about ways to promote educational success. Tracking outcomes, understanding costs and identifying what works—and what doesn’t—are essential to helping grantmakers and their partners achieve results.

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