

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Charter District Collaboration Committee
Community Education Building, Wilmington, DE
Meeting Minutes - November 10, 2016

Co-Chair Eve Buckley called the meeting to order at 5:11 p.m.

Co-Chair asked the members of the public to introduce themselves, followed by introductions from the Committee members.

Approval of Agenda

The Committee voted to approve the agenda for the November 10, 2016 meeting. The agenda was approved.

Approval of Minutes

The Committee voted to approve the minutes held on October 11, 2016. A motion was made and seconded; therefore, meeting minutes were approved.

Co-Chair Update

Status of Commission

Aretha Miller, co-chair of the Charter District Collaboration Committee highlighted key takeaways from the October 20, 2016 Commission meeting. The aim was to revisit the original intent of the Advisory Council and refocus the strategic direction moving forward, such as rebranding, and develop key components of short and long-term goals. She mentioned one takeaway from the Commission meeting was the goal to partner and collaborate with similar organizations throughout the state.

Eve Buckley, co-chair, discussed the Commission's goal to rebrand to clarify the Commission's intent and build broader alliances. She also mentioned the facilitated conversation to help focus and define the Commission's work. Other primary takeaways were to capitalize on state-wide initiatives, as well as ensuring a talent pipeline for high-quality teachers throughout the state. Lastly, the Commission discussed providing an overview of the work thus far, which will be provided in a status report.

Charter District Work

A. Miller discussed the need for an action plan and to formulate a strategic plan for the specific goals of the Charter District Collaboration.

Joint Meeting with Meeting the Needs

A. Miller discussed the importance of an integrative approach, including a joint meeting with the Meeting the Needs Committee, since there are some aspects of both groups' work that overlap.

The Committee agreed that the goal should be to coordinate rather than duplicate efforts.

Overview of Research

IPA Team presented National and Evidence-Based Proposals for charter district collaboration, to springboard discussion of actionable goals for the Charter District Committee. The collaboration models that were presented included a Charter Consortium, Professional Development to share best practices among schools, and a Charter District Compact as supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE). There were several examples of each collaboration model and a brief sketch of what a Delaware model might look like.

The presentation spurred the Committee into discussion, which included the following:

- Several committee members shared disinterest in another bureaucratic or governing layer.
 - A more feasible solution would be to propose an organization to provide structure and facilitation to improve relationships across schools and related organizations, rather than new governance over schools.
- Committee members acknowledged the difficulty in comparing examples because Wilmington is smaller than many other cities. The models are helpful to an extent.
- There was shared hope for utilizing existing organizations to gain traction on collaboration among charters. The discussion included the possibility of having an additional organization to provide assistance, support and to facilitate collaboration.
- Concerns were raised about strings attached to any financial support received from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for Charter District Compacts.
 - Further discussion suggested that the specificities of the Compacts are highly dependent on the unique attributes and needs of each city. The Foundation outlines some requirements, but funding has lateral flexibility to invest in the particular needs of each community.
- Members discussed the financial environment in existing Compact Cities, such as Cleveland's public and private partnership model.
 - There will be follow-up conversations to identify more details about this and its relevance to Delaware.
- There is a fundamental issue of the competitive rather than collaborative, lateral relationship between DE public schools (and policy structures that foster this). Since the late 1990s there has been a divide among charter and district schools and this problem will not be solved overnight. However, there are opportunities to foster new collaborations.
 - The recent election may impact the work of collaboration.
 - ESSA may have less emphasis on school ratings, which will decrease competition among schools.

A. Miller stated that rebranding all Massachusetts charter schools to include "public" within their name helped reinforce the mindset and perception that charters are public schools.

Immediate Action Items – Memorandum on Charter District Collaboration

E. Buckley asked the committee to brainstorm categories of desired outcomes, which are listed:

- Shared Responsibility

- Educators have a shared responsibility for students across all spectrums of learning and public schools
- Shared Goals and Resources
 - Work towards a Compact that would identify specific goals and a common purpose, bring in experts, identify a start and end date, and benefit all schools.
 - Based on a structure of facilitation rather than regulations or mandates.

The Committee revisited the importance of identified barriers, including accountability, competition, labels/perceptions, and demographic differences. Previous meetings have identified barriers, which will be reflected upon prior to next meeting.

The Committee then identified actionable steps to overcome barriers and reach desired outcomes. The opportunities and actionable goals are:

- a. Promote success across all schools
- b. Facilitate shared resources, goals, and responsibility
- c. Develop a framework and model for sustained collaboration

The committee then discussed action items to achieve goals. There was an emphasis on being community-focused and involving all stakeholders, from bottom-up and top-down. The process must garner trust and provide value to the educators, community leaders, and families. The committee also discussed the need to start small and build. There is a sense of urgency to fill an urgent need for educators, administrators, and parents. Collaborative professional development between schools could help address this.

A recommendation that the committee agreed to look further into was a School Compact between charters, districts, and Vo-Techs. This must be created among schools that share students from similar communities, and it has to fill the “urgent need” the committee discussed. The committee also mentioned that it should include all stakeholders. It is critical to involve school board members and to create an opportunity for shared discussions that include them.

The committee concluded by stating the next meeting will be held on December 8th, at the Community Education Building starting at 5 p.m.

A. Miller opened the meeting to public comment.

E. Buckley adjourned the meeting at 6:59 p.m.

Charter District Collaboration Committee
November 10, 2016
Meeting Attendance

Committee Members

Eve Buckley, Co-Chair
Aretha Miller, Co-Chair
Bill Doolittle
Equetta Jones
Margie Lopez-Waite
Harrie Ellen Minnehan
Byron Murphy
Yvonne Johnson
David Davis

IPA Support Staff

Kelly Sherretz
Kelsey Mensch
Taylor Hawk
Melissa Micek