

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission**

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REDISTRICTING IN THE CITY OF WILMINGTON  
AND NEW CASTLE COUNTY  
A TRANSITION, RESOURCE, AND  
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY TO INTERIM PLAN  
December 3, 2015

Submitted to  
**The Delaware State Board of Education**

## Executive Summary

Legislation approved in 2015 authorizes the State Board of Education to change or alter the boundaries of school districts in northern New Castle County in a manner consistent with some or all of the redistricting recommendations made in the final report of the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee, provided that the General Assembly passes, and the Governor signs, a Joint Resolution supporting the proposed changes. In its decision the State Board of Education shall adopt a transition, resource, and implementation plan developed by the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission. This plan fulfills that mandate.

### The Case for Redistricting

- Twenty-three separate governing units, including seventeen located in the City of Wilmington, now are responsible for delivering public education to 11,500 Wilmington children with no unified plan, little collaboration, and no requirements for coordination.
- The district arrangement imposed by court order in 1976 to improve the education of black students in Wilmington has failed to achieve its purpose.
- Accelerating learning for all students requires a coherent and responsive governance arrangement.

### The Action Agenda for Improved Wilmington Student Outcomes

Redistricting is part of a multi-part action agenda for improved outcomes depicted on the final page of the Executive Summary.

Three streams of action are required: Creating Responsive Governance, Funding Student Success and Meeting Wilmington Student Needs.

#### Creating Coherent and Responsive Governance of Wilmington Public Education

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Streamlining traditional districts responsible for Wilmington public education is a key part of the process needed to focus responsibility and leadership for the education of Wilmington students. It is not the only part, however. Collaboration among charters, among districts, and among charters and districts must be improved and sustained. A complementary part of the Commission's mandate is to actively promote and support such collaboration, so that the sum of the public education assets represented by the diversity of Wilmington schools can benefit more students in more ways than at any time in the past or present.

#### Funding Student Success

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Strengthening the overall education finance structure is of fundamental importance to public education across Delaware. While Delaware spends a great deal on public education, the expenditure of those funds must focus more effectively on meeting the needs of Wilmington students—and other students at risk throughout Delaware. Actions

are needed to ensure a sufficient and reliable revenue base at both the state and local levels and also to ensure that funds are allocated in ways that most directly and effectively address the diverse and often complex needs of students at risk.

### **Meeting the Needs of Wilmington Students, Most Especially Students in Poverty**

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Addressing the challenges of students in poverty requires a developmental approach that focuses on alignment of needed supports and services starting in early childhood and extending through entry into a career or higher education. This stream of action requires coordinated efforts from all sectors, including more effective integration of state services and the alignment and mobilization of cross-sector initiatives and partnerships. It also requires greater parent and community engagement in Wilmington schools and in support of the continuous improvement of Wilmington public education. The combination and synergy of all of these changes are essential to increasing in-school and out-of-school supports, from early childhood until the transition to work or higher education. A key dimension of meeting the needs of all Delaware students is an investment in culturally competent educators.

Progress on all three streams together is needed to improve student outcomes and the Commission's redistricting plan establishes a path for progress along each stream.

Under the enabling legislation, the State Board must act on the plan in its entirety, recognizing that implementation requires actions by many institutions over four years.

The implementation of redistricting should be contingent upon the provision of the resources needed to improve student outcomes.

### **Redistricting Recommendations**

- Effective July 1, 2018, the boundaries of the Christina School District should be altered so that it no longer serves the City of Wilmington, and should focus on serving the students in the western portion of the current district. The Christina Board of Education reviewed and approved by a vote of 5-1-1 the framework for planning developed by the Christina administrative staff in collaboration with the staff of the Red Clay Consolidated School District (Appendix B).
- Effective July 1, 2018, the boundaries of the Red Clay Consolidated School District should be altered to include that portion of the City of Wilmington now served by the Christina School District. The Red Clay Board of Education has voted 7-0 to support this change pending the allocation of funding needed for the effective education of its students, their continued engagement in the process, and an appropriate timeline for implementation. By a vote of 4-1, the Red Clay Board of Education approved the interim framework for planning to be part of the Commission's plan to be submitted to the State Board of Education. That plan and the transmittal letter accompanying it are included as Appendix C.

- Effective July 1, 2018, the schools and students currently served by Christina in the City of Wilmington should be assigned to the Red Clay Consolidated School District.
- All students can choose to remain in their current school as of the end of the 2017–2018 school year until their program is complete.
- The Christina and Red Clay districts will continue to collaborate on the interim frameworks for implementation already approved by each of their Boards of Education. This collaboration will ensure the smooth, minimally disruptive, transition of students, staff, and facilities.
- The Colonial Board of Education and the Brandywine Board of Education both voted to affirm their commitment to continue to serve students in the City of Wilmington within their current boundaries.
- The Colonial School District should expand collaborations and new programs that will strengthen opportunities and support for its Wilmington students. The district could become a leader of partnerships that take advantage of existing choice patterns for its Wilmington students and also provide families with information about the full range of options for meeting the needs of their children within the Colonial district and in other nearby districts and charters.

## Funding Student Success

The enabling legislation stipulates that the Commission's plan will identify the state, district and local resources that will be required to support the redistricting transition and provide for the effective ongoing education of all the affected students, and for the support of schools with high concentrations of low-income students and English language learners.

The Commission's recommendations address the key priorities identified in the final report of the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee, as summarized below.

1. An allocation formula for public school operating funds that responds to the added resource needs of schools with high percentages of low-income students, English Language Learners, and other students at risk.
2. An array of transition and capital resources needed to effectively implement the proposed district realignment.
3. A sufficient revenue base to support the overall rising costs of the public education system.
4. An allocation of funding for the additional programs and services, such as high-quality early childhood programs, required to meet the needs of students in poverty.

The Funding Student Success Committee considered these and other factors that are critical to the effectiveness of redistricting in strengthening student learning.

The Commission reaffirms the position of the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee, that redistricting must be accompanied by the resources needed to better serve students, and specifically the resources needed to fully address the needs of low-income students, English Language Learners and other students at risk.

The Commission also reaffirms the commitment that there should be no undue burden on tax payers in the affected districts as a result of the process of redistricting.

Pending approval during the next legislative session, the funding requirements to support redistricting must be implemented at each stage of the process, beginning with Fiscal Year 2017.

- Fiscal Year 2017 Detailed Program Planning
- Fiscal Year 2018 Transition of Responsibilities
- Fiscal Year 2019 First Year of Full Implementation

#### **Fiscal Year 2017: Planning Stage**

1. Establish weighted unit funding to address the needs of low-income and English language learners and other students at risk. This recurrent funding should begin with districts impacted by redistricting with the long-term goal of expanding statewide. Initial funding should be provided to schools in the Red Clay district and to Wilmington schools within the Christina school district.
2. A Wilmington Redistricting Transition Fund should be established with non-recurrent funds to support the planning and development of new models and proposals on facilities
3. Epilogue language or legislation should designate the ramps-up the initial pilot for low-income/ELL/special education over three years as described in the two fiscal years below, leading to eventual full statewide coverage.
4. Invest to sustain and accelerate improvements in early childhood education.
5. The Commission endorses House Bill 30 (see Appendix A) to target funding for basic special education units for grades K-3.

#### **Fiscal Year 2018: Transition Stage**

1. Recurrent funding of the low-income/ELL/special education unit is expanded to all Christina district schools and continued for all Red Clay district schools.
2. Additional non-recurrent funds will be needed in the Wilmington Redistricting Transition Fund to support continued planning and development of new educational and program models as well as facilities configurations. .

3. Capital funding for the reconfiguration of the Wilmington Rec Clay and Christina Wilmington schools and possible planning funds for a new Wilmington high school.
4. Initiation of review process for property tax reassessment.

#### **Fiscal Year 2019: Initial Implementation**

1. Recurrent funding of the low-income/ELL/special education unit expands beyond the Red Clay and Christina schools to include schools in other districts in New Castle, Kent and Sussex counties with expansion to all districts statewide based on funding availability in future years. Estimate to be provided.
2. Capital funding for new Wilmington high school or repurposed school configurations, to be determined during planning phase in FY2017.
3. Contingency funding for the adjustments needed in the New Castle County tax pool.
4. Authorization for impacted districts to make limited tax rate adjustments to meet operating expenses.

Longer-term recommendations focus on strengthening the revenue base supporting public education at both the state and local levels, including property reassessment, and adjustments in the public education allocation system to fully address the needs of low-income students, ELL and other students at risk.

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## **Mobilizing Cross-sector Resources**

The Commission is committed to the alignment of supports and services through a strong partnership between the community and its schools. All sectors of the community should be mobilized including community based partners, such as the Wilmington Urban League, FAME, One Village Alliance, Education Voices, Delaware Libraries, the Latin American Community Center, the Delaware Hispanic Commission, the Vision Coalition, the Interdenominational Minister's Action Council, and many others engaged directly with improvement of education. In addition, community institutions that provide significant opportunities and supports for students and families must be mobilized, including the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Clubs, providers of after-school and outside of school services for children and families as well as cultural and sports institutions.

The Commission's plan is aligned with key initiatives already underway, including:

- Delaware's early childhood education strategic plan and strategies
- Student Success 2025
- Education Funding Improvement Commission

- Wilmington Education Strategy Think Tank
- Statewide Review of Education Opportunities and Strategic Plan
- Access to Justice Commission

The Commission will mobilize cross-sector engagement and support including:

- More effective coordination of state programs and services
- Enhanced alignment of nonprofit and community support led by the United Way
- Wilmington Office of Education and Public Policy
- University of Delaware Partnership for Public Education
- Enhanced charter and district collaboration
- Increased parent, educator, and community engagement
- Active engagement with the full range of community institutions and partners from all sectors that support improved student learning.

### Red Clay and Christina Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan

The Commission, in collaboration with the districts has developed a transition, resource, and implementation plan that follows a four-year timeline for final implementation:

- January 2016 to June 2016      Approval and Confirmation
- July 2016 to June 2017      Detailed Program Planning
- July 2017 to June 2018      Transition of Responsibilities
- July 2018 to 2019      First Year of Full Implementation

The plan addresses the following considerations.

- Orderly and minimally disruptive reassignment of students affected by the boundary change and the reassignment of governance responsibilities
- Implications for educators, administrators, and other personnel that may lead to equitable adjustments to local collective bargaining agreements
- Distribution of capital assets
- Student transportation
- Engagement of educators, staff, parents, district personnel, and community members
- Plans for special schools and programs
- Choice options and policies
- Alignment of technology
- Child nutrition services

- Alignment of curricular materials

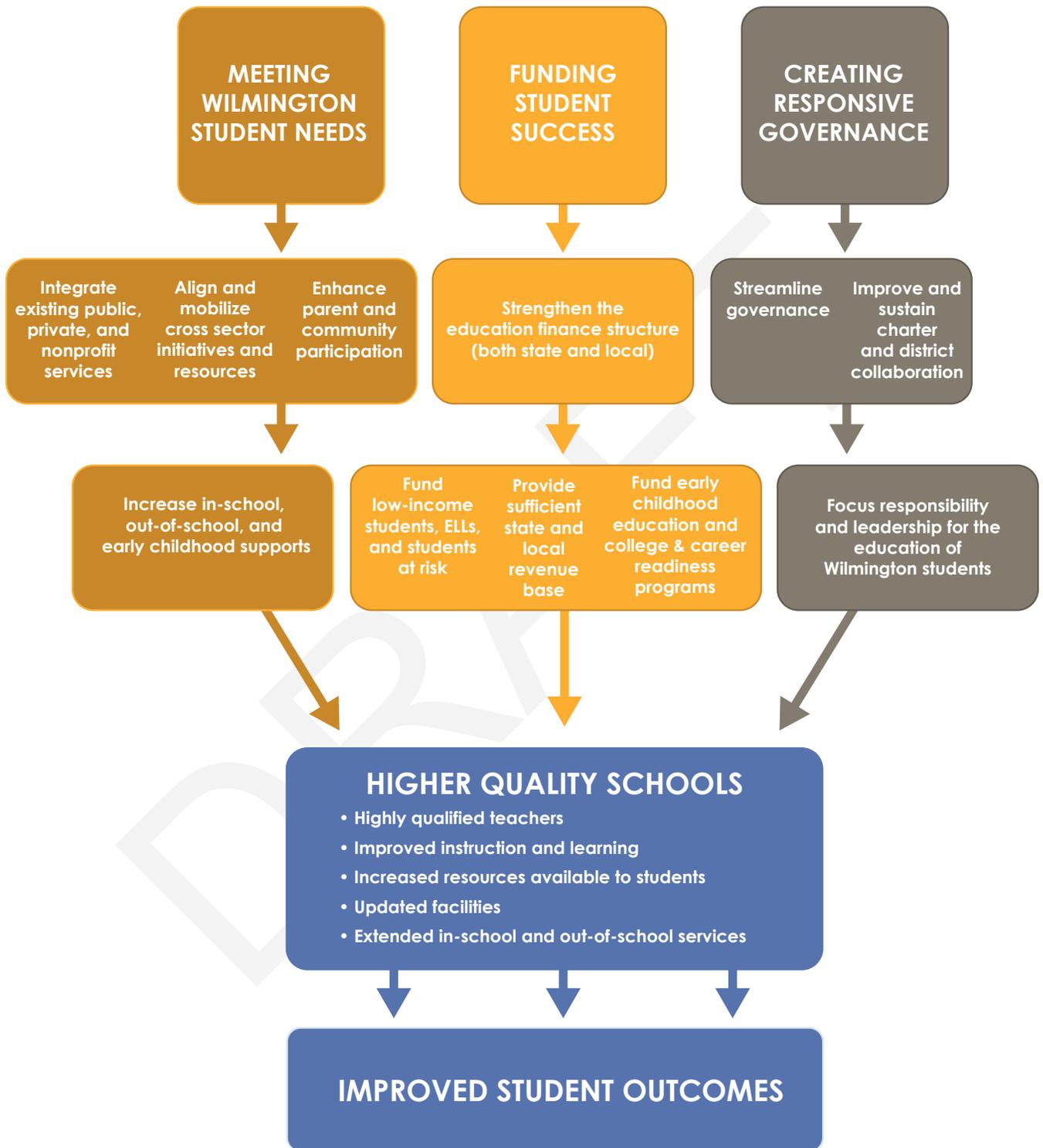
### **Confirming District Boundaries**

- The State Board should confirm the existing boundaries of New Castle County school districts as defined in Part VIII of this Plan.
- The State Board should confirm the altered boundaries of New Castle County school districts, effective July 1, 2018, as defined in Part VIII of this Plan.

### **Milestones and Measures of Success**

- The Commission will submit an annual evaluation of progress to the State Board, the Governor and General Assembly that will focus on milestones and measures of success for improved student outcomes.
- Interim outcomes include: increased attendance, persistence and engagement rates; reduced student trauma and disciplinary incident rates; and growing participation in high quality early childhood education programs and other in-school and out-of school programs that support enhanced developmental progress and learning.
- Long-term outcomes include: increased graduation rates; reduced achievement gaps in standardized tests; improved college and workforce readiness; reduced youth incarceration and recidivism rates; and greater access to opportunities that result in productive and rewarding lives.

## Action Agenda for Improved Wilmington Student Outcomes



## Redistricting Resolution

WHEREAS, 14 Del. C. § 1026(d) authorizes the Board of Education of the State of Delaware (the "Board of Education") to alter school district boundaries in New Castle County "in a manner consistent with some or all of the redistricting recommendations made by the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee in the report issued March 31, 2015 (the "Report")" and based on adoption of a transition, resource and implementation plan developed by the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission;

WHEREAS, the Commission's plan, herein submitted, addresses all provisions identified in the enabling legislation and also describes the ways in which redistricting combined with other actions will lead to higher quality schools and improved student outcomes;

WHEREAS, the Board of Education has reviewed the plan (the "Plan") of redistricting for the school districts located in New Castle County proposed by the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission, and provided comments and suggestions on the Plan;

WHEREAS, such public hearings regarding the Plan, as required by 14 Del. C. § 1026(d) (2) have been conducted;

WHEREAS, the Christina School District Board of Education has approved by a vote of 5-1-1 the framework for planning developed by the Christina administrative staff in collaboration with the staff of the Red Clay Consolidated School District

WHEREAS, the Red Clay Consolidated School District Board of Education voted 6-0 in April, 2015 to support this change pending the allocation of resources needed for the effective education of its students, their continued engagement in the process, and an appropriate timeline for implementation. This position was reaffirmed by a vote of 7-0 in October, 2015. By a vote of 4-1, the Red Clay Board of Education also approved the interim framework for planning to be part of the Commission's plan to be submitted to the State Board of Education.

WHEREAS, the Colonial School District Board of Education has voted 4-2 to affirm its commitment to continue to serve students in the City of Wilmington within its current boundaries.

WHEREAS, the Brandywine School District Board of Education has voted 5-2 to affirm its commitment to continue to serve students in the City of Wilmington within its current boundaries.

WHEREAS, the Board of Education has found that the Plan is in the best interests of the students served by the districts in New Castle County, and that the timetable for implementation and the proposed resources are consistent with the objective of improving student outcomes;

BE IT RESOLVED by the State Board of Education, after careful consideration that:

1. The full and complete Plan as specified in all sections of this document is hereby adopted. The full and complete Plan is attached hereto.
2. The boundaries of the school districts in New Castle County shall be confirmed as described in the Plan, with the approved changes being effective July 1, 2018.
3. Upon State Board approval the Plan shall be submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly for the passage of a joint resolution confirming the State Board's action.
4. Upon passage of the Joint Resolution by the Governor and the General Assembly, the Plan shall be carried out according to the timetable specified if the stipulated resources and related transition supports are provided, as confirmed by the Commission in consultation with the affected school districts. If the resources and transition supports are not provided in the timeframe proposed, then the Commission, in consultation with the affected districts, will ask the State Board for approval to suspend the timetable for implementation until the resources and supports are provided. .
5. The Commission will provide an annual evaluation of the progress on the implementation of redistricting to the State Board that will include an assessment of milestones and measures of success as specified in the Plan, particularly progress in achieving higher quality schools and improved student outcomes.
6. The Commission's annual evaluation to the State Board will be incorporated in the full annual report on the Commission's work presented to the Governor and General Assembly.