

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC)

Redistricting in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan Questions and Answers

When will the decision to change district boundaries be made?

- The State Board of Education will make that decision after it reviews the Commission's plan, which will be submitted on December 17, 2015. The State Board of Education is scheduled to act on the Commission's plan on January 21, 2016.
- The authority of the State Board of Education to act under the requirements of Senate Bill 122 ends on March 31, 2016.
- Before going into effect, the General Assembly must approve the plan, and the Governor must sign, a Joint Resolution from the general assembly supporting the proposed changes.

What changes in district boundaries is the Commission recommending?

- If the Commission's plan is approved, the boundaries of the Red Clay Consolidated School District will be redrawn to include that area of the City of Wilmington now served by the Christina School District.
- Effective July 1, 2018, the schools and students in the City of Wilmington that are now served by the Christina School District will be assigned to the Red Clay Consolidated School District.

When would the redistricting occur?

- If approved, the change in district boundaries and the reassignment of Christina School District students and Wilmington schools to the Red Clay Consolidated School District will begin at the start of the 2018–2019 school year. Below are the four stages of implementation.
 - December 17, 2015 to June 30, 2016 Approval Stage
 - July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017 Planning Stage
 - July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018 Transition Stage
 - July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019 Implementation Stage

Will the implementation plan recommended by WEIC be limited to redrawing boundaries?

- **No.** Simply redistricting will make little difference without comprehensive school reform.
- The Commission's plan includes the funding needed to support student success, and also proposes partnerships with institutions from all sectors to better meet the needs of Wilmington students and all low-income students, English Language Learners and special education students.
- The Commission's plan is being submitted as a comprehensive package that the State Board of Education must act on as a whole package. They may not approve pieces of the plan.

How have the affected districts been represented on WEIC?

- All four New Castle County traditional districts have been represented and involved in all stages of the process.
- Red Clay and Christina are represented on the Commission by the presidents of their boards of education as well as teachers and community members.
- All committees include additional Red Clay representatives: administrators, teachers, principals, parents, and community members beyond those represented on the Commission.

What have been the roles and responsibilities of Red Clay and Christina in developing the Commission's plan?

- Red Clay and Christina have each developed an interim framework for planning to guide the transition, resource, and implementation process.
- On November 2, 2015, the Red Clay Board of Education approved their interim framework for planning to be part of the Commission's plan to be submitted to the State Board of Education.
- On October 27, 2015, the Christina Board of Education approved their interim framework for planning to be part of the Commission's plan to be submitted to the State Board of Education.
- The Red Clay and Christina interim frameworks are included in the Commission's plan and the Commission's plan was developed to be consistent with most of the items in the Red Clay and Christina interim frameworks.

If redistricting occurs, who will determine school attendance and feeder patterns?

- The Red Clay Consolidated School District and the Christina School District will retain responsibility for school attendance and feeder patterns consistent with the same guidelines as now exist.
- Students enrolled in a school at the time of redistricting may continue in that school to complete their program.
- All facets of school choice now available will continue to be available.

How will redistricting be funded?

- Primary funding for redistricting must come from the State.
- The plan calls for the state to provide funding for planning and the transition of students and schools. No Delaware taxpayer should experience any undue tax burden because of redistricting.

What is the highest funding priority for supporting improved student outcomes?

- Our proposal is that the State should begin to provide the needed funding for low-income students, English language learners and special education students in the districts impacted by redistricting, specifically Christina & Red Clay, with the expectation that this funding would be expanded across the State and perhaps incorporated in a weighted student funding allocation system.
- Delaware is one of only 15 states that do not have a funding allocation for low-income students, even though more than 50 percent of Delaware's public school children are, in fact, low-income.
- Delaware is one of only five states that offer no funding allocation for English language learners, even though that segment of students is its fastest growing population.
- Long term, a thorough review of property reassessment, equalization, and the New Castle County tax pool are all critical to Delaware's overall economic health.
- Many Delaware homeowners are paying more than their fair share now and will continue to do so under the current system unless property reassessment is carried out. No reassessment has taken place in New Castle County since 1983, in Kent County since 1986 and in Sussex County since 1974.

Will redistricting be implemented even if the necessary funding is not provided?

- No. If the necessary funding is not provided, as confirmed by the Commission in consultation with the affected districts at each milestone, then the State Board shall suspend the timetable for implementation until the resources are provided.

Will redrawing district boundaries improve academic performance of all students?

- All students will benefit from the proposed reforms.
- Consolidating accountability for student outcomes is one part of the comprehensive strategy for improvement that also includes targeting more dollars to schools with high concentrations of poor students and/or English language learners. Non-city students will benefit from the resources freed up from targeted funding.
- Other elements of the strategy include improved early childhood education; culturally competent, highly qualified teachers; enhanced instruction and learning; increased resources available to teachers and students; updated facilities; extended in-school and out-of-school services; and enhanced college and career-readiness programming.

How will the student outcomes of redistricting be evaluated?

- 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.