

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission  
Charter District Collaboration Committee**

Meeting Minutes

April 26, 2017

Community Education Building

**Eve Buckley, co-chair, called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m.**

**Approval of Minutes & Agenda**

Quorum was not present to approve the minutes. The agenda was approved.

**Chairs' Update**

Aretha Miller, co-chair, provided an update on the Commission meeting on April 25, 2017. A. Miller also stated that the Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee presented on the impact of poverty on the public education system. One highlight from the presentation was kindergarten preparation and the issue of late registration. A. Miller noted that the MNSP committee's work demonstrated an opportunity for collaboration among the all committees, including the Charter District Committee.

A. Miller also highlighted the upcoming deliverables as prepared by the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA). Kelsey Mensch, University of Delaware's IPA, reviewed a list of upcoming Commission deliverables. The first was a series of policy briefs that will be focused on key items and recommendations of the Commission. For example, there will be one on Child Poverty and Policy that utilizes KIDS COUNT in Delaware research and data. Additional briefs will include an overview of the education funding structure in Delaware, national best practices for charter district collaboration, and best practices in parent and community engagement. Each of these items will link back to the Commission's action agenda.

Another deliverable will be a data report on Wilmington student performance for the 2015-16 school year. It was mentioned that this is an update from the data presented in the second half of the Commission's annual report and will include performance, graduation, and drop-out rates. A committee member asked if there was any way to dig into attendance data. K. Mensch noted that it could be done in future reports, but all depends on the data available and what IPA receives from the Department. Lastly, IPA is conducting an Asset Mapping project to understand what and where services and programs are in the City of Wilmington. It was noted that aspects of the project highlights the need for greater collaboration among services.

A. Miller stated there are a lot of moving parts and the Commission should work to clearly communicate the main goal of the Commission to the public. It was suggested that there should be ongoing lively discussions outside of the monthly Commission meeting. The Committee noted that the University of Delaware's IPA team is providing the research on best practices and the committees' responsibility is to recommend specific actions. The Committee discussed the importance of the next Commission meeting in terms of the release of deliverables. The Committee was informed that the next Commission meeting is May 23, 5-7pm at the Sharp Conference Room.

The Committee discussed the legislative priorities of the Commission. It was noted that there was an update from the Ad-Hoc Fiscal Impact Committee which will provide the fiscal impact report to the General Assembly. This report assesses the cost of the Commission's redistricting proposal. It was stated that this report fulfills the requirement by state law. It was also noted that the price tag for redistricting is quite high.

The Commission is awaiting the Governor's comprehensive plan on education; however, there are additional legislative priorities. The Commission's top priority remains equitable funding. Another legislative priority for the Commission is related to policies regarding transient students. The committee highlighted that the main concerns are attendance and chronic absenteeism.

The committee discussed the possibility of the Commission making a statement about the impact of state budget cuts on students. The committee agreed that a clear message on the importance of weighted funding could be beneficial—but any benefits from weighted funding could be outweighed by a significant reduction in state educational funding overall.

Lastly, the committee discussed the lack of a statewide needs assessment and the impact of the charter moratorium. It was noted that a needs assessment still must be done.

### **Committee Discussion**

B. Murphy stated that what it means to be a student living in poverty in the City of Wilmington is poorly understood, even among teachers and staff who work with those students. He stated that Dickinson is trying to become a trauma-informed school and the leadership team wanted more information about their students. A small survey of 80 students at Dickinson High School was distributed to understand with whom students live. He stated a surprising amount live with a single grandparent or "other" (that is, their living arrangements correspond to none of the many options provided in the survey). He noted that the survey underrepresents students in poverty because it gathered data from students in a senior social studies class; however, the poorest students do not make it to senior year.

The Committee stated that the results of this survey are fascinating and would be helpful for better understanding the circumstances and experience of students in poverty. The Committee speculated about whether surveys in other Wilmington schools would show similar results.

The committee shifted to discuss how, relative to a national Charter perspective, Delaware is not reaching its full potential to add diversity in the charter sector—such as schools serving adjudicated youth—because of the moratorium. A. Miller stated that other cities, such as Camden, New Jersey, are creating a portfolio for collaboration among charters and districts, and outside organizations are not interested in Delaware's reluctant political environment for charter sector innovation. It was noted that grassroots organizations are more equipped to address local problems. It was stated that a Charter District Compact could establish shared responsibilities, and if outside organizations approach and agree with the collaboration, then it can grow. It is both Charter and District schools' responsibility to ensure the best outcomes for students—there should be a two-way street of collaboration.

A. Miller provided an example of the national organization Youth Build USA, which enables at-risk youth to have experience in trade work and actually graduate with their union card. She stated that Delaware misses opportunities of this kind to help students.

### **Charter District Compact Discussion**

There was a suggestion to include a matrix for the committee to identify early wins and the committee's priorities for a proposed compact. It was noted that an early win could utilize existing organizational databases and share this information among stakeholders. The committee discussed several examples of how to collaborate for short-term wins:

- The committee discussed early learning and kindergarten registration, and ways to engage families of young children earlier in the school registration process:
  - Utilize existing databases of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch; identify how many other children are in that family and see when it would be time for those children to enroll in kindergarten.
  - Utilize the touchpoints with students who access summer food programs, community outreach programs, and others.
  - Host events or promote information on early education options during the summer before students have to enroll in kindergarten.
    - Educate families on the enrollment process for school choice. The Committee discussed that there should be more awareness of school lottery systems to tackle the misperception that poor students cannot gain admission to some schools.
  - Have a parent facilitator to assist with illiterate or non-English speaking parents
    - Hold a fundraiser to have a small stipend for the parent facilitator to help in their community.
- The idea of a bus depot system to collaborate on transportation issues and cost was discussed. An example was mentioned that years ago, the 4-6<sup>th</sup> grade students from suburban areas in NC Co. were bused to a central location and then bused to their respective schools. The committee discussed the feasibility of this as an early win and the concern with discipline.
- Collaboration regarding dual language and immersion to share experiences and knowledge with other schools was raised. The English Learners is one of the largest growing demographics in Delaware and there is a need to find skilled and trained teachers to meet this demand. Schools stretch expertise and there is not a large labor pool to draw from.

Committee members reminded each other that the compact is voluntary and that small, organic collaborations will build buy-in over time. The Committee also discussed there should be funding for hidden costs for outreach events, materials, etc. The Committee proposed the collaboration efforts eventually span across all of the Commission's committees' key recommendations.

M. Lopez Waite stated ASPIRA collaborated with other stakeholders to apply for a grant for dual language and immersion program in student teaching preparation. The committee agreed this is a

celebration as a short-term win for Charter District Collaboration. She also mentioned the groups of people working on similar initiatives across the state and how we should align with them.

### **Public Comment**

K. Mensch reminded participants that the Committee's next meeting is May 11<sup>th</sup> to finalize the document that will be shared with the Commission during the May meeting. All committee members were encouraged to send an email to K. Mensch, if there are any suggestions for a new co-chair, particularly one that will provide a national charter perspective.

Alexandra Angstadt noted that there were so many great ideas discussed during the committee meeting. She noted that as an outsider, she's had a certain perspective of what a charter school is supposed to do and how it differs from her personal experience of charters. She commended the work of the committee and noted how great it is that collaboration is being discussed.

**Meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.**

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**Attendance**

**Committee Members**

Eve Buckley, Co-Chair  
Aretha Miller, Co-Chair  
Eric Anderson  
Margie Lopez-Waite  
Byron Murphy  
Bill Doolittle  
David Davis

**Members of the Public**

Alexandra Angstadt

**IPA Support Staff**

Kelsey Mensch  
Melissa Micek