

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Charter District Collaboration Committee
Community Education Building, Wilmington, DE
Meeting Minutes – October 11, 2016

Co-Chair Eve Buckley called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

Aretha Miller remarked that the work being done by the Meeting the Needs Committee overlaps with work being done by this committee and stated that she is looking into setting up a joint meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Eve Buckley asked if there was a motion to approve meeting minutes from the previous meeting. A motion was made and seconded; therefore, meeting minutes from June 22, 2016 were approved.

Committee Chairs Report

E. Buckley remarked that the committee had been reconfigured based on functionality and who was able to attend meetings regularly. She added that there seems to be a general consensus that tangible outcomes and deliverables are a key objective of the committee's work.

A. Miller asked committee members if they were able to read the national example of charter district collaboration that was distributed prior to the meeting. She added that the Committee has an opportunity to engage in meaningful work but acknowledged concerns that this is not the first conversation surrounding charter district collaboration.

Commission Path Forward

Dan Rich provided an overview and updates on the work of the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission and outlined the path forward. He stressed that the work of the committee would be of critical importance, especially in the context of changes and lawsuits occurring in the state. He provided an overview of the commission's work the prior year and the deadlines imposed by SB122.

He outlined the legislative history of the commission's prior initiative and the two outcomes that were passed at the end of the legislative session, Senate Joint Resolution 17 and Senate Bill 300. D. Rich also explained that the commission will produce a fiscal analysis associated with the proposed redistricting plan. He added that Joe Pika will chair the ad-hoc committee and shared a list of the other individuals serving the committee as well as the date for the first meeting. He remarked that the analysis will be prepared in time for the commission in February. D. Rich remarked that the Commission does not need to return to the State Board of Education but has agreed to make a presentation to the board on an update on the Commission.

A. Miller asked D. Rich to clarify that the report will be completed in February 2017.

D. Rich responded that the report will be submitted to the Commission in February, so that it can be submitted to the General Assembly in a timely manner. He added that drafts of the report will be made available to all members.

D. Rich also provided updates on the commission's redistricting plan and related funding updates. He stated that the commission will present the fiscal analysis to the General Assembly and ask for a final joint resolution, confirming approval of the terms of SB122. He added that the commission also needs to approve some of the other priorities in the WEIC proposal, one of which could relate to the State Review of Educational Opportunities. D. Rich added that the commission recommended that schools should not be added, particularly in the city of Wilmington, without a plan. D. Rich noted that the commission issued a letter expressing concerns about the manner in which the educational opportunities analysis was taking place. Specifically, he remarked that the concern was that the analysis solely focused on an evaluation of demand. D. Rich added that he sent the Department of Education ideas and suggestions for conducting a needs analysis.

Margie Lopez Waite asked for clarification on the difference between a need and demand analysis. She stated that in business need is based on what businesses say they need, but demand is what the consumer wants.

D. Rich replied that in September 2010, there was a low demand for high quality early childhood education but there was a high need. He clarified that he did not mean that the state should not study demand, but it is not enough, especially regarding certain subgroups. Finally, he stated that the committee will focus on two major areas: more consistent analysis of best practices for charter/district collaboration and providing charter schools with more support. D. Rich also provided a brief history previous legislative attempts to facilitate charter district collaboration.

Vicki Gehrt and Yvonne Johnson shared past experiences serving on charter district collaboration committees. Committee members affirmed that they would focus the work of this committee on producing tangible outcomes.

The Co-Chairs emphasized that the present committee has the opportunity to conduct analysis in terms of the current political landscape and understand motivating factors and incentives. The committee should think critically about what works in the Delaware context.

D. Rich stated that the committee has the opportunity to take positive steps and highlighted that he believes there will be readiness in the next legislative session to make progress.

The committee discussed current animosity between specific charter schools and public schools in the state. Several committee members expressed concern that although charter schools are meant to work as incubators of innovation with districts, there is a pervasive "us" vs. "them" mentality in the state. Additionally, the team discussed the implications of active litigation in the state between districts and charters.

National Examples of Collaboration

A. Miller asked the committee to share thoughts on the best practices article that Kelsey Mensch distributed before the meeting.

The Committee shared conclusions from the article and engaged in a discussion about which parts of the article most resonated with them. Points of discussion included the following:

- Charters and districts should come together at a high level to accept responsibility for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status or race.
- Accountability systems for both districts and charter schools can both impede and promote collaboration. One dilemma regarding accountability framework is a top down approach, and the committee must look at strengthening the system, or it will not effectively serve students in that system.
- Several committee members shared that institutional and environmental competition can hinder collaboration. D. Rich stated that there is consistent evidence that educators in schools are collaborative and supportive and that institutional and environmental conditions may thwart those educational instincts.
- There was a discussion about superintendent support for charter schools. Committee members recognized the perception that charter schools do not receive a sufficient amount of support.
- Negative perceptions of charter and district leaders as well as school boards can hinder collaborative efforts.
- Trust between district and charter leaders is a critical factor.
- Every stakeholder must be at the table in order to cultivate real change.
- Replication models were discussed, specifically, how the committee can look at similar schools to identify effective practices.
- Committee members acknowledged that comparisons between schools can hinder collaboration. The committee discussed the implications and impact of the state's school rating system. Several committee members concluded that many parents make school choices based on these ratings, which label schools as either "red", "green", or "yellow". Also, the problem of comparing schools based on standardized test scores was raised.
- Collaboration cannot work effectively unless school districts themselves take ownership.

Tangible Goals and Timelines

E. Buckley mentioned that policy can either foster or discourage a collaborative environment. A. Miller added that there are two big buckets of opportunity present: policy and technical assistance.

The committee then engaged in a discussion pertaining to opportunities and action items that can be prioritized by the committee moving forward. The discussion of action items included the following:

- The committee proposed convening all districts in the state for discussion. Committee members also acknowledged the unlikelihood that all city charter schools have been called together to have conversations with districts.
- The possibility of taking an active role on the incoming governor's transition team was discussed.
- Committee members discussed the idea of breaking down committee work into small group work.

A Miller asked the committee to reread the article and planned to send new reading to committee members. She asked committee members to bring their comments and feedback to the next meeting.

The committee concluded by planning for the next meeting time, date, and location. Kelsey Mensch agreed to send out a poll to committee members to set a time and date.

A. Miller opened the meeting to public comment.

Public Comment

Kelley Wilson thanked the committee for their work and commented on the importance of stakeholder collaboration.

E. Buckley adjourned the meeting at 7:35 pm.

Charter District Collaboration Committee
October 11, 2016
Meeting Attendance

Committee Members

Eve Buckley, Co- Chair
Aretha Miller, Co-Chair
David Davis
Yvonne Johnson
Margie Lopez Waite
Harrie Ellen Minnehan
Byron Murphy
Vicki Seifred
Vicki Gehrt

IPA Support Staff

Dr. Dan Rich
Kelsey Mensch
Taylor Hawk
Chester Holland

Members of the Public

Kelley Wilson