

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

Community Education Building
Minutes – September 23, 2015

Meeting Objectives:

- Clarify the role and purpose of the committee;
- Identify burning issues and topics for the committee's work;
- Prioritize key areas for the work of the committee for the year;
- Lay the foundation for the research and data work that needs to happen to support the committee; and,
- Begin to develop the framework for measuring success at the end of Year 1 of the committee's work.

Co-chair Aretha Miller called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Aretha Miller welcomed everyone to the Community Education Building, where she is the Chief Executive Officer. Dr. Eve Buckley, Co-chair, introduced herself to the committee. The Co-chairs then had all those around the room introduce themselves.

The Co-chairs discussed the following items about committee operations:

- They were in the process of adding more members, which will be announced soon.
- It is important that conversation is candid but respectful, as the subject can be personal. Everyone should agree to work towards the greater good, to ensure that all children have access to high quality education. It is important that everyone is respectful of one another.
- The Guiding Principles of the Commission, which can be found at www.solutionsfordelawareschools.com
- It is important to consider charter schools, traditional schools, and vocational technical schools when discussing quality education.
- The Wilmington Education Advisory Committee action items that comprise the initial charge of the committee can be found on pages 36-37 in the WEAC final report.
- In order for good will to remain, it is important that the meetings are truly productive and accomplish the goals set. The meeting objectives were listed at the top of the agenda.
- It is important to prioritize the items necessary to accomplish; this process is a marathon, not a sprint. The timeline for this committee is five years, so it is important to break up the work along the way, and make sure that the recommendations that come out of the committee are judicious. It is also noted that the priorities of the committee might change over the five years.
- The group needs to be diligent about looking at the facts, putting aside these separate perspectives to find a middle ground for recommendations that are best for everyone.
- The Committee can discuss data sets that are needed and that the University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration staff engaged with this committee can help to make sure the committee has the data and information that they need.

A question was asked about the timeline that is regularly cited by the commission, and the fact that the plan is developed as a package. The question related to the committee's work within that timeline. The tight timeline is for the redistricting and associated recommendations (particularly funding considerations), but most of this committee's pieces can be developed over the longer timeframe.

A question was asked about working with other committees. As the committee develops and works through this work, it is important to remain diligent with sharing information across committees and the larger commission.

Someone asked a question about whether or not the charges laid out in the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee report were a framework or were they boundaries. The concern was whether the committee was obligated by legislation to stay within the confines of the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee recommendations. **Please see note attached to the minutes to answer this question.*

The Co-chairs announced that this would be a working meeting. They gave each committee member post-it notes to write the burning issues and topics that they wanted to discuss. These post-its were organized into six categories: Competition/Collaboration, Equity/Inclusion, Policy, Planning Process, Resources, and Talent/Staff/Students. All comments made can be found at the end of the minutes, as written.

The committee grouped the categories together in this way, as indicated above:

1. Equity and Inclusion with Competition/Collaboration
2. Policy with the Planning Process
3. Resources with Talent/Staff/Students

The Committee decided to begin with the Collaboration/Competition piece. The research needs were identified:

- School level demographic data
- Data on the admissions process of charter schools in Delaware, and how other states deal with the selective admissions process
- Identify the barriers to school choice, how other states overcome these barriers
- Transportation policies
- Relationship between test scores and demographics, the efficacy for children at risk
- The number of students that currently choice out of Wilmington Schools
- Are there states or places where collaboration is working, do they have the same demographic make-up?
- Current policies around disenrollment, why do students return to traditional schools?
- Presentation on the Charter and Choice law
- Acknowledgement of the push-out factor in both charter and district schools
- Average per student expenditures in schools

The Co-chairs opened up the discussion to the public.

A question was asked about what demographic data is being looked at. Is it each district and each charter school in the city?

A question was asked about the Committee's plan to take in family or community input. They felt as if there was not enough public input in the meeting. The Co-chairs explained that it was the first meeting, and they will work on making the process more conducive to public participation while still allowing for efficiency.

A question was asked about ratings to help parents make a decision on choice, and helping parents to know the questions to be asked.

A comment was made about looking at suspension and those students going into and coming out of juvenile detention centers, and how many children are on parole. This should be addressed.

A student from the Charter School of Wilmington described the sense of community at his school, and the concern that this committee might break up that community that is very important to the school.

A member of the public spoke to give some background into the creation of the Charter School of Wilmington. Students identified as Gifted and Talented are on the same continuum with the students identified with a Disability. Those students are also not having their needs met by a traditional school. He also explained that the original goal of charter schools was to improve all schools. The proliferation of charter schools was unintended. He also noted that since the Charter School of Wilmington opened, very few people or groups from other schools came in to see what they were doing.

A member of the public agreed that Gifted and Talented students are on the continuum of special needs. The problem is that there are schools that do not perform as well, but are judged upon the scores of the Charter School of Wilmington. He mentioned that there are great teachers that are getting great test scores in their current suburban schools who left the city schools because they were not supported the way they needed to be to be successful. These are some of the challenges that need to be faced.

A comment was made about the Charter and District Collaboration task force not releasing any report. It is important to find out why things are the way they are. There is a graph in Exceptional Delaware or Delaware Liberal that shows the highest performing schools and the level of poverty.

A comment was made about the civil rights concern with charter schools. There is a concern that the schools that need it most do not get the supports they need.

A comment was made that charter schools were made to be incubators of innovation, there are great models of that in charter and district schools. When thinking about collaboration, it is important to understand how we are informing what we want to promote. There are schools that exist that are successful with high needs student populations; we need to figure out what they are doing right. People gravitate towards things that work, and there are incredible examples. School climate is very important for both students and teachers, and the key question is whether or not needs are being met. It is important to find the lessons to apply elsewhere.

It is important to focus on exactly what we are trying to accomplish. We need to look at what makes a school perform, and show that kids can be successful in high poverty but we have not taken the discussion to why schools are not performing.

A commenter noted that among the students enrolled in 3 traditional, 2 magnets, and 2 charter high schools in the Red Clay Consolidated School District, more kids were in magnet and charter schools than in traditional districts. We need to work with what we have. The State Board must have a strategic plan. The recommendation in the WEAC report is on collaboration in the form of a consortium. It is important to focus time around that, and decide if a brand new consortium is necessary or if you should work with the existing Charter School Network and Innovative Schools. We need to embrace the existing options and use the organizations we have, and determine what target we are aiming at.

The Co-chairs thanked everyone for coming and participating.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Comments written during exercise:

Competition/Collaboration

- How do we address the sense of competition currently existing between the charter schools and traditional districts?
- Is collaboration best done by choice or mandate?
- Collaboration between charters, between districts and charters, this is supposed to be active sharing.
- Collaboration and Competition, how can these coexist?
- Is collaboration possible in an environment of test-based accountability?
- Structural incentives for collaboration across school sectors – are there any?
- Quality options
- Professional development, collaboration on best practices
- Collaboration in professional development
- Two-tier system of public schools
- Money talks and motivates action, grants to accelerate collaboration
- Where is vo-tech?
- We need to understand and acknowledge the role of Innovative Schools in the context of charter schools
- Sharing of resources to address the needs of the whole child

Equity/Inclusion

- Segregation
- Demographic differences between choice and feeder-pattern schools, barriers to collaboration, how to address this
- How do we know that all schools have all children?
- Parent access?
- More parent outreach in high needs schools
- Will the current choice system be impacted as a result of this work?

Policy

- Autonomy: schools (district/charters)
- Why is Red Clay the only district that authorized charter schools?
- What will the State Department of Education do to drive collaboration and the sharing of ideas?
- How to effectively use student assessment?
- Efficiency of this “choice” landscape for taxpayers – not redundancy (WEAC p. 33)
- Consider the role of autonomy (between charter, district, vo-tech)
- Privatization and profit
- Poverty – need to address formula
- Governance of suggested Wilmington Charter Consortium
- Regulation alone will not solve issues in public education

Planning Process

- Needs Assessment

- Wilmington Charter Consortium: where does Charter School Network fit in?
- Governance (high performing governance structure) – charter, districts
- When will state strategic plan for charter schools be ready?
- Validity of NACSA as a source of best practices?
- Research what are NACSA guidelines for best practices for developing charters, *other best practices
- School board representation in the redistricting plan
- City of Wilmington be involved in the process
- Comprehensive plan focused on children in need

Resources

- Building post-secondary options and support
- High need schools need lower class sizes
- Equitable accessible Plan, funding special supports
- More equitable funding for high needs
- How can district schools provide greater access and coordination of existing community resources
- Social workers needed, counselors need to be counseling not texting, high need schools need more counselors
- Budget has to be there for the school depending on their needs
- Equitable access and appropriate support services for student success
- Pre-School! High need
- How will funding be distributed among all schools (charter, non-charter, etc.)

Talent/Staff/Students

- How do we address school administration, teacher recruitment and retention issue?
- Working conditions, incentives (not necessarily monetary)
- How do you attract the “best” educators to schools of high needs?
- Student Voice

**Is the scope of the Committee limited to exactly what was stipulated in the WEAC final report?*

The Commission is responsible for facilitating the implementation of the recommendations in the WEAC final report but those recommendations define the baseline for the Commission, not the limit of its responsibilities. These are the guidelines as stipulated in the legislation establishing the Commission (HB148).

1. "The WEIC shall work with and across all governmental agencies, educational entities, and private and nonprofit institutions to promote and support the implementation of all recommended changes from the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee (WEAC)."
2. "The Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC) shall advise the Governor and General Assembly on the planning, recommending, and implementing improvements to the quality and availability of education for children in Pre-K through grade 12 in the City of Wilmington and for which such changes maybe be instructive for addressing needs of all schools within the State with high concentrations of children living in poverty, English language learners, or both."
3. "The WEIC also will monitor the progress of implementation and recommend policies and actions to the Governor and General Assembly to facilitate progress and to promote the continuous improvement of public education."
4. "The WEIC may form standing committees to develop recommendation for consideration by the full Commission including, but not limited to committees on: 1) redistricting; 2) charter schools; 3) serving low-income and English language learning students; and 4) funding."
5. WEIC also has a specific responsibility in regard to redistricting framed by HB148 and described in detail by SB122. "The WEIC shall develop a transition, resource and implementation plan, for presentation to and approval by the State Board of Education, for the provision of necessary services to schools and students affected by the implementation of the changes recommended by WEAC." The nature and scope of this responsibility is defined in detail in SB122, which authorizes the State Board to alter or change boundaries for districts in northern New Castle County in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the WEAC final report and based on a transition, resource and implementation plan developed by the Commission and submitted to the State Board by December 31, 2015. The components of such a plan are described in SB122.

This committee should consider the recommendations in the WEAC final report as the baseline for consideration but not the limit on what can and should be addressed concerning policies and practices to strengthen district/charter collaboration or to support a new vision of the role of charters in strengthening the overall capacity and performance of Delaware public education (as described in the WEAC report).

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Charter and District Collaboration Committee
Attendance at the 9/23 Meeting**

Committee Members

Eve Buckley
Ariadna Castaneda
David P. Davis
Bill Doolittle
Shannon Griffin

Margie López Waite
Aretha Miller
Byron Murphy
Cora Scott
Vicki Seifred

Members of the Public

Shawn Bellamy
Stephen Brady
Henry Clampitt
Mervin Daugherty
Lee Davis
Annette Fletcher
Melissa Froemming
Cheryl Heiks
Mike Kempinski
Kia Lawson
Kendall Massett

Mike Matthews
Daniel Mburu
Laura Nash
Ron Russo
Hanzef Salaam
Qaativah Salaam
Albert Tam
Alexander Tam
Arleen Vargas
Eugene Young

Institute for Public Administration Staff

Kelly Sherretz
Elizabeth Burland