

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission – Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement
Highlands Elementary School
2100 Gilpin Avenue
Wilmington, DE 19806
Minutes – October 13, 2015

Co-chairs Chandra Pitts and Yvonne Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Welcome and Meeting Introduction

The Co-chairs, Chandra Pitts and Yvonne Johnson, began the meeting by having all of those in attendance introduce themselves. They then discussed the past three committee meetings and the creation of a recommendations document. This document is meant to create a solid framework that captures the issues and solutions to parent, educator, and community engagement. By focusing on making the language of the plan explicit, they can put their recommendations into legislation.

After a clarification period on the Advisory Committee’s report guiding principles and action agendas in regards to the impact of legislation for City of Wilmington students, the Co-chairs asked those in attendance to discuss improvements to the recommendation framework draft.

Prior to the breakout dialogue, there was a roundtable discussion on the need for a strengthening of community schools in urban areas, national legislation regarding parent, educator, and community engagement, and the need to create a system and process for constant engagement and feedback.

Areas of Focus

The Co-chairs divided the committee into several groups for a “breakout dialogue” to discuss challenges and possible solutions in regards to parent engagement, educator engagement, and community engagement.

Definition of engagement:

Many of the groups discussed what “engagement” meant/ looked like prior to discussing challenges.

- It is a two-way street, a relationship that focuses on reciprocation. Therefore, all three aspects of engagement need each other.
- Engagement and the barriers regarding engagement have changed due to the change in relationship from parent to educator to community. Therefore, parents, educators, and the community create a “three-legged” school.
- In order to achieve engagement from parents, educators, and the community- there is a high need for **student engagement**.
- Delaware Readiness teams: currently defining what is engagement for common language
- Chandra Pitts described her definition of engagement as students succeeding.

Parent Engagement

- Transportation: parents cannot get to school activities
 - Solution: utilize city transportation or school buses
- Parent's need to be educated why engagement is important
 - Solution: **Parent engagement versus parent education**: teach parents why engagement and participation is important
- Parents may have had a negative educational experience that transcended to their children
 - Solution: Create a welcoming environment, have a parent resource person, ensure effective outreach to hard-to-reach parents
 - Solution: Aaron Selekman, Principal at H.B. DuPont said that in developing their parent engagement plan they needed to engage the community where they were and ask them in what ways they wanted to be engaged. The programs matched the parents' needs and wants.
- Parents may not have the time or opportunity to provide additional assistance
- There is a lack of knowledge on parenting (nutrition, sleep, etc.)
 - Solution: offer parent education class to address these knowledge gaps

Educator Engagement

- Need to be able to build relationships with parents
 - Solution: Trainings on how to engage parents
- Need to create a meaningful and high quality engagement with students (otherwise teachers face burnout)
 - Solution: Focus on community building and school culture
- Educators are not from communities they are serving
 - Solution: Train teachers so they have cultural competencies
- Educator burnout/ need for resources
 - Solution: need time and trained individuals to engage with children who might need more attention in and out of the classroom
 - Trained professionals/ psychologists
 - Additional magnet schools to attract students' passions
 - Have more experienced teachers influence other educators
 - Teach without having students realize they're learning
- Needed resources vary from school to school
- A need to encompass different teacher models
- Early educator collaboration in order to create a strong foundation of parent expectations in regards to engagement
 - Classroom visits

Community Engagement

- The community doesn't always buy into the school
 - Ensure school leadership has the competencies to market and build relationships
- Before and after school programming (especially for inner city schools)
- A need for extracurricular activities

- Community engagement is lacking
 - Town halls, meetings, social media

Overall, the discussion led to several key points: a need for a clear definition of what is engagement, a need for student engagement, parent engagement versus parent education, a need for a variety of additional resources, and plans to diversify community engagement.

Conclusion

The Co-chairs were excited by the diversity and the number of people who attended and who were sharing ideas. At the end of the exercise, there were many unique challenges presented as well as potential solutions to each problem. They realized and came to the conclusion that student engagement is a huge aspect of their goal and that parent, educator, and community engagement must be youth-led.

The next meeting for the committee was set for October 20th but is currently being rescheduled. The Co-chairs will be reaching out through their various channels with the new date, time and location. The Co-chairs hope that the next meeting is as well attended.*

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

**Update: The next meeting has since been set for October 13 from 5:30-7 p.m. at Highlands Elementary School.*

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee
Attendance at the 9/29 Meeting

Committee Members Attending

Chandra Pitts, Co-chair	Alexis Adrianopoulos
Yvonne Johnson, Co-chair	Nicole Williams
Donavon Alderman	The Honorable Trippi Congo
Daphne Evans	Meredith Griffin
Wendy Lapham	Aaron Selekman
Pati Nash	Ted Boyer

Members of the Public

Laura Nash	Kiatanna Lawson	Hope Bellamy
Steve Fackenthal	Mia Sanitsky	Mike Matthews
Brian Stephan	Zoe Getz	Mia Sanitsky
Deric Clinton	Claire Martinelli	Zoe Getz
Orrin White	Alex Posner	Michelle Suchyj
Nancy Williry	Sam Mitchell	Annette Fletcher
Susan Haberstroh	Allison Maron	Melissa Froemming
Bill Doolittle	Erin Meyer	Heather Townsend
Candice Brown	Allisson Knapp	Susan Connor

Institute for Public Administration Staff

Dr. Daniel Rich
Nicole Rodriguez- Hernandez