

Redistricting Committee
Agenda
December 3, 2015
Red Clay District Office, Board Room

1. Minutes from November 11 meeting
2. Updates on district conversations:
 - Brandywine
 - Colonial
 - Christina/Red Clay
3. Update on Public Hearings
4. Discussion of Draft Plan released for public comment
 - Committee member questions/responses to draft Redistricting Resolution (6-7) (attached)
 - Equitable Adjustments for Educators (117) (attached)
 - Expanded discussion of choice (122-125) (attached)
5. Beyond Fragmentation – Building Collaboration
 - Possible agenda for joint meeting of committees
 - Choice/Charter Possible Issues to explore:
 - Sharing successful strategies: East Side, Dela College Prep, Kuumba, Edison successes
 - Transportation: Universal choice provides students the opportunity to apply to any school, but if admitted, transportation options to many schools are limited.
 - Information: Parents, particularly those in disadvantaged communities, lack access to information not just about available options, but about the integrity of those options in terms of resource inputs and practices available in schools.
 - Choice Enrollment Process: While it has been streamlined in recent years through a common choice application portal, the process of enrollment at high-demand schools, particularly those with standards for demonstration of a special interest, has become increasingly selective, yet not particularly transparent.
 - Support Services: Schools of all kinds struggle to consistently provide the support services necessary to successfully educate the full range of public school student needs.
 - More Selective Schools: avoid enrolling challenging students, disenroll students rather than work to meet needs,
 - Disappearance of Community Schools: with a surplus of options, local schools are no longer the heart of communities
6. Next Meeting **CANCELLED**:
 - December 17 meeting pre-empted by State Board of Education presentation

Redistricting Resolution

WHEREAS, 14 Del. C. § 1026(d) authorizes the Board of Education of the State of Delaware (the “Board of Education”) to alter school district boundaries in New Castle County “in a manner consistent with some or all of the redistricting recommendations made by the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee in the report issued March 31, 2015 (the “Report”)” and based on adoption of a transition, resource and implementation plan developed by the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission;

WHEREAS, the Commission’s plan, herein submitted, addresses all provisions identified in the enabling legislation and also describes the ways in which redistricting combined with other actions will lead to higher quality schools and improved student outcomes;

WHEREAS, the Board of Education has reviewed the plan (the “Plan”) of redistricting for the school districts located in New Castle County proposed by the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission, and provided comments and suggestions on the Plan;

WHEREAS, such public hearings regarding the Plan, as required by 14 Del. C. § 1026(d) (2) have been conducted;

WHEREAS, the Christina School District Board of Education has approved by a vote of 5-1-1 the framework for planning developed by the Christina administrative staff in collaboration with the staff of the Red Clay Consolidated School District

WHEREAS, the Red Clay Consolidated School District Board of Education voted 6-0 in April, 2015 to support this change pending the allocation of resources needed for the effective education of its students, their continued engagement in the process, and an appropriate timeline for implementation. This position was reaffirmed by a vote of 7-0 in October, 2015. By a vote of 4-1, the Red Clay Board of Education also approved the interim framework for planning to be part of the Commission’s plan to be submitted to the State Board of Education.

WHEREAS, the Colonial School District Board of Education has voted 4-2 to affirm its commitment to continue to serve students in the City of Wilmington within its current boundaries.

WHEREAS, the Brandywine School District Board of Education has voted 5-2 to affirm its commitment to continue to serve students in the City of Wilmington within its current boundaries.

WHEREAS, the Board of Education has found that the Plan is in the best interests of the students served by the districts in New Castle County, and that the timetable for implementation and the proposed resources are consistent with the objective of improving student outcomes;

BE IT RESOLVED by the State Board of Education, after careful consideration that:

1. The full and complete Plan as specified in all sections of this document is hereby adopted. The full and complete Plan is attached hereto.
2. The boundaries of the school districts in New Castle County shall be confirmed as described in the Plan, with the approved changes being effective July 1, 2018.

3. Upon State Board approval the Plan shall be submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly for the passage of a joint resolution confirming the State Board's action.
4. Upon passage of the Joint Resolution by the Governor and the General Assembly, the Plan shall be carried out according to the timetable specified if the stipulated resources and related transition supports are provided, as confirmed by the Commission in consultation with the affected school districts. If the resources and transition supports are not provided in the timeframe proposed, then the Commission, in consultation with the affected districts, will ask the State Board for approval to suspend the timetable for implementation until the resources and supports are provided. .
5. The Commission will provide an annual evaluation of the progress on the implementation of redistricting to the State Board that will include an assessment of milestones and measures of success as specified in the Plan, particularly progress in achieving higher quality schools and improved student outcomes.
6. The Commission's annual evaluation to the State Board will be incorporated in the full annual report on the Commission's work presented to the Governor and General Assembly.

Equitable Adjustments for Educators, Administrators and Other Personnel

The enabling legislation for redistricting, SB 122, stipulates that the redistricting plan must address the implications for educators, administrators, and other personnel that may lead to equitable adjustments in collective bargaining arrangements. A corresponding expectation is that the implementation of redistricting shall take place with as little disruption as possible to all those who will be impacted, including educators and other personnel. The multi-year process of implementation makes it possible for the Christina and Red Clay to anticipate the adjustments that will be necessary to allow for equitable and minimally disruptive personnel decisions. The goal should be for the districts to address the vast majority of adjustments before the actual transfer of schools and the initial change in student enrollment in fall 2018. Further, since the change in student enrollment will occur over a number of years, the adjustments for educators, administrators and other personnel will continue until the process is complete. These factors are the baseline from which the Commission's guiding principles are derived and on which the Commission's action plans are formulated.

The Christina and Red Clay frameworks for planning included as appendices to this plan present the initial district proposals for addressing reassignment and other adjustments for personnel impacted by redistricting; the Christina framework is in Appendix B and the Red Clay framework is in Appendix C. The Commission expects that, as the process of implementation proceeds, these frameworks must be further developed and pursued in a collaborative manner not only between the districts but also with those who represent the interests of the educators and other personnel impacted. Both districts have confirmed their intentions to do so.

The Commission recognizes that the process of adjustment and prospective reassignment for educators and other personnel must balance the legitimate rights and priorities of the district administrations as well as the educators and other personnel. We have not approached the issue of balance as a matter of choosing sides. Rather, our objective is to ensure that the process results in **positive outcomes for the students** who are served and for those dedicated and qualified educators and staff who serve them. Our intention is that the process will be supported and affirmed as fair, equitable, and effective by all parties.

The guiding principles and proposed actions below are intended to supplement the proposals from the districts and suggest pathways for effective collaborations in achieving equitable and effective outcomes that minimize disruptions.

Guiding Principles

- All staff should be treated fairly and equitably throughout the process.
- Current jobs within both school districts may change as a result of the development of new configurations and program initiatives to better serve the needs of students.
- No qualified employee should be left without employment options because of redistricting.

- All decisions must be made in a manner that is in accord with existing collective bargaining agreements, and with any future collective bargaining agreements during the period of transition and implementation.
- All decisions must be fair and equitable as judged by consistency with the prevailing and mutually accepted policies and practices of the school districts as well as collective bargaining agreements.
- To the greatest extent possible, decisions on appointments or reappointments of educators, administrators, and other personnel impacted by redistricting must be taken in a manner that offers options and the opportunity for choice to individuals at the earliest practical time, and at appropriate intervals throughout the transition and implementation process. Early options, choices, and planning, can greatly facilitate equitable adjustments for educators, administrators, and other personnel.
- The redistricting process does not suspend any facets of the prevailing and mutually accepted processes and practices for evaluation and assignment of personnel consistent with collective bargaining agreements.
- Red Clay, Christina, Red Clay Education Association (RCEA), Christina Education Association (CSEA), Delaware State Education Association (DSEA), and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) share responsibility to work collaboratively to ensure a transition that puts students first and also recognizes outstanding personnel and their experience and seniority. The Commission is responsible for facilitating this collaboration.
- Staff in the Christina schools in the City of Wilmington must be able to maintain focus on serving student needs and avoid paralysis from fear for their continued employment.

Central Issues

- The primary issues are the process that Red Clay will use to staff buildings and programs affected by redistricting, the recognition of seniority of transferred staff, the financial impact to the employees and Red Clay, and the training of new staff in order to ensure consistent delivery of Red Clay curricula to students.
- Christina also will need to develop a process for staff adjustments as a result of prospective changes in the configuration of its remaining buildings and programs and the need to offer current staff serving Wilmington students and schools options for employment throughout the district.
- Because both districts share the goal of ensuring fair and equitable treatment of staff throughout the implementation of redistricting, the process used by the two districts needs to be aligned and mutually reinforcing such that efforts are coordinated and so that qualified educators and other personnel have the maximum possible opportunities for the consideration of options and the exercise of choice consistent with district obligations.

Action Plan/Designated Responsibilities

- Red Clay, Christina, DSEA, CSEA, RCEA, and AFSCME should work collaboratively to establish a multi-year process and joint plan for the staffing needs for the Christina schools that will be transferred to Red Clay and for other employment options in both districts for qualified educators and other personnel.
- The process and joint plan must recognize that the staffing needs of the Red Clay district may depend upon a new configuration of schools and new programs. The Red Clay plan should be completed by the spring of the 2016–2017 year.
- The process and joint plan must recognize that the staffing needs of the Christina district may depend upon changes in the configuration of schools and new programs as a result of the changes in enrollment due to redistricting. The Christina plan should be completed by the spring of the 2016–2107 year.
- Options for employment for educators and other personnel should be identified as early as possible after the development of the districts’ planned configuration of schools and programs, and no later than the spring of 2017. Impacted Christina educators and other personnel should be given the opportunity to indicate their desire to transition to Red Clay or to remain in the Christina district. As the process moves forward, the key to equitable, effective, and mutually beneficial outcomes is providing current employees with early choice and with additional options from which to choose. Both districts should seek to accommodate the choice of personnel through planning and interim adjustment well before the change in district boundaries formally takes effect. While employees should be given the maximum opportunity to exercise choice, districts must retain the right to choose the personnel they believe are best able to meet the needs of students.
- By the end of 2016, the districts and representatives of personnel should agree upon a process for addressing cases of all qualified employees that could not be resolved through early choice and planning and subsequent adjustments through the multi-year process of implementation.
- Memorandums of understanding between the districts and the representatives of employees about the overall planning, choice, and decision process should be completed by the end of 2016.
- Both districts should provide professional development opportunities and related support services to employees to enhance their capabilities to assume new responsibilities associated with changes in positions and expectations.

Choice Options and Policies

School choice is an important dimension of public education throughout Delaware but especially in New Castle County and particularly in the City of Wilmington. Compared to the rest of the state, there are many more school choices available in northern New Castle County, and the public education choice options in Wilmington include the state's heaviest concentration of charter schools, combined with traditional district options, magnet schools, and a vo-tech district. School choice will continue to operate under current policies after redistricting.

The impact of school choice on redistricting is significant. More than half of students, (approximately 2,500 of a total of about 4,500) living in the Wilmington portion of the Christina School District now exercise choice to attend a school outside of the district; about 1,300 attend charter schools and about 1,200 attend a traditional district school (including 68 which choice to a Red Clay school) or special purpose district school. It is expected that these choice options would continue after redistricting and the Red Clay School district would then become responsible for the transfer of payments for students who choice out of the district's new zone within the City of Wilmington (see Appendix C for details).

School choice is a key facet of public education impacting all districts and charter schools in Wilmington. As noted earlier, for example, the majority of Wilmington students living in the Colonial School district exercise choice to non-Colonial schools. The growth of charter enrollments has also meant transitions and mobility across charter, magnet and traditional school options and the already approved growth in Wilmington charter enrollment over the next five years means that this process of student movement across parts of the public education system will continue in parallel with the implementation of redistricting.

Beyond direct enrollment and fiscal impacts, there are important implications of the exercise of choice for the overall improvement of public education in Wilmington. These implications go beyond the Christina and Red Clay School Districts and include all public education options operating in the City of Wilmington. Indeed, more effective fulfillment of the purposes of school choice could represent a significant step forward in transforming the fragmentation of governance into a positive feature that more effectively aligns the variety of school (and program) options with the diversity of student needs. For this reason, the remainder of this section deals with the larger issues of school choice in Wilmington and how that may be pursued in ways that strengthen overall public education.

School Choice and Charter Schools were introduced to the Delaware landscape through legislation in 1995, with the intention "to increase access to educational opportunity for all children throughout the State regardless of where they may live. It is therefore the intent of the General Assembly that this chapter be construed broadly to maximize parental choice in obtaining access to educational opportunities for their children" (Choice Law) and "to improve student learning; encourage the use of different and innovative or proven school environments and teaching and learning methods; provide parents and students with measures of improved school and student performance and

greater opportunities in choosing public schools within and outside their school districts; and to provide for a well-educated community” (Charter Law). (cite)

The opportunities for choice are greatest for Wilmington students and families because of the proximity of a wide range of school options. However, the actual access to these opportunities is also constrained for many low income, African American and Latino students, and those with disabilities. One factor relates to limits on access to some high performing schools, whether district, magnet, charter or vocational-technical. A recent complaint filed by the ACLU of Delaware highlights the discrepancy in enrollment of such student populations in high-performing schools. (cite). More generally, many low-income, African American and Latino students and families and those students with disabilities have limited information about choice options and at times are typically less engaged in seeking out such information.

Redistricting could be accompanied by enhanced choice options for students and families in all parts of the City of Wilmington. Achieving this, however, requires addressing a number of central issues of particular significance to the equitable exercise of choice.

Central Issues

Transportation: Universal choice provides students the opportunity to apply to any school, but if admitted, transportation options to many schools are limited. Students are expected to be transported to the nearest district bus stop, in most cases. This creates a disincentive for certain communities to explore and exercise the full scope of school choice, effectively limiting choice for certain populations, but not others. While magnet schools do receive state funding (cite) to provide transportation for students throughout their home district, these schools disproportionately do not serve the disadvantaged student populations who most rely upon district-provided transportation. Charter schools are able to offer transportation service to broader geographic areas as they choose and can afford.

Information: Parents, particularly those in disadvantaged communities, lack access to information not just about available options, but about the integrity of those options in terms of resource inputs and practices available in schools. Information provided generally focuses on school demographics, assessment and disciplinary outcomes. This may paint a skewed portrait of school climate and fails to encourage thorough research of school options through an educational lens.

Choice Enrollment Process: While it has been streamlined in recent years through a common choice application portal, the process of enrollment at high-demand schools, particularly those with standards for demonstration of a special interest, has become increasingly selective, yet not particularly transparent. In addition to the common application, magnets and some charters require additional materials, projects or assessment processes (such as interviews and auditions) to demonstrate interest and earn eligibility for the legally required lottery for potentially over-subscribed schools. This may also occur in instances of magnet programs that are co-located in district schools, rather than as standalone schools. This creates an environment in which ability, and therefore prior exposure to opportunities to develop that ability, are advantaged, leaving traditionally underserved student populations at risk of being further underserved, regardless of their interests.

Support Services: Schools of all kinds struggle to consistently provide the support services necessary to successfully educate the full range of public school student needs. For more selective schools, this creates a disincentive on the school level to serve those students, either by avoiding admitting them, disenrolling them once admitted, or encouraging disenrollment, against the choices that students and families might prefer.

Action Plan/Designated Responsibilities

Through collaboration that helps parents and students recognize and exercise choice options that best match their needs, Wilmington districts and charter schools could make the promise of school choice available to all and likely improve the public education landscape. The Commission is committed to supporting districts and charter schools in their efforts to do so.

Enhanced School Options: Districts – prioritizing those serving higher-needs students at the lower grade levels – should analyze existing schools for opportunities to implement needed and desired programmatic models and specializations to better meet the needs and demands of their communities as reflected through the current performance gaps and utilization of choice.

Transportation Reform: Districts should analyze their ability to better realize the potential of choice by analyzing and reforming their approach to student transportation service, collaboratively, and seek more efficient and universal models of transportation that would enable more students to take advantage of the full range of school options available to them, and to prioritize the needs of students for whom district-provided transportation is a necessity.

School Resource Reporting & Outreach: To aid parents in the existing choice process, better information must be provided. This requires the adoption of a better system to organize available information, such as an Opportunity Dashboard (cite), which reflects resources and programming inputs on the school level as well as outcomes and other conditions. This also requires stronger coordination and support for district, school and community-based efforts, such as Parent Information Centers (cite), to reach traditionally difficult to reach families where they live. The Commission is committed to supporting this outcome.

Choice Equity Standards: Districts who wish to serve all students equitably must hold all schools to high standards of equitable service to all students. Districts should consider the necessity of formally establishing such standards and a process through which to allow transparency and continual audit of the means and outcomes of selective program/school applications, enrollments/disenrollments and support service provision. This would be to ensure that all schools are receiving the supports they need to serve all students equitably, and are adequately pursuing that goal.

Partnerships: The Commission's overall action agenda for improving student outcomes requires greater collaboration among all parts of Wilmington public education. This should lead to new partnerships among districts, among charters and between districts and charters. Some of this already is underway. More of it is needed. The Commission believes that redistricting is an occasion to identify and support these new partnerships not only for the districts directly impacted but for all districts and charters operating in the City of Wilmington.