

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Charter and District Collaboration Committee
Community Education Building, Wilmington, DE
Meeting Minutes - March 23, 2016

Co-chairs Eve Buckley and Aretha Miller called the meeting to order at 5:36pm and attendees were asked to introduce themselves.

Committee did not reach quorum, minutes from previous meetings could not be approved.

Co-Chairs' Update:

- An update was given on the WEIC Redistricting Plan: both the Commission and the State Board of Education had approved it. There were questions surrounding the funding and suspension of the plan, a point of contention between WEIC and the State Board of Education.
- Kelly Sherretz, Institute for Public Administration, explained the resolution that was passed by the Commission that defined suspension of the WEIC Plan timeline as it pertains to funding.
- Due to the recent emphasis on redistricting, other committees of the commission are less clear about their role in advancing the WEIC agenda.
- Kelly Sherretz said that now that the redistricting plan has passed the State Board, the staff would be focused on the other committees, helping to develop goals and timelines for each of the committees.
- A concern was raised about legislator support of funding elements. Another concern was that simply moving children around would not resolve the issues facing the city's education system; adding that legislators need to be part of the collaboration.
 - Bill Doolittle noted that he was working on creating clear outline of funding patterns and needs so that legislators understand that funding the plan is doable. He added that money to finance the changes WEIC recommends is starting to become available, but he is not sure how it will be disbursed.
- The co-chairs confirmed that now that the redistricting issue is resolved, the work of other committees can take precedence on the WEIC agenda. At some point the Charter and District Collaboration Committee will meet with the Redistricting Committee to clarify the role of charter schools in elements of the plan to bolster student success. The committee should consider working to find challenges that transcend school types to bridge the divide between public and charter schools and encourage collaboration.

Discussion of the Goals of the Committee

Leadership of both charter and district schools have to speak honestly about their respective biases against the group thought to be counter to their interests.

A concern raised was that the decisions of WEIC committees were being made without consideration of charter schools in Wilmington. This segmentation was attributed to the fragmented nature of information available to each committee, which can perpetuate

misconceptions and result in decisions based on incomplete information., Due to biases and the fragmentation of information, different committees may be undermining each other's work.

A committee member mentioned that WEIC's Meeting the Needs of Children in Poverty Committee lacks any charter school perspective and input.

The co-chairs noted the following:

- Dr. Liz Farley-Ripple, University of Delaware, would be working with this committee to analyze data and collate information to better serve the needs of all committees.
- Quorum issues within the committee need to be addressed in order to get things done.
- Discussions are underway with Drs. Dan Rich and Tony Allen to guide considerations of committee size and structure, in relation to quorum and work processes.
- The committee needs to determine what its work would look like for the next six months, and whether it should meet during the summer months.

A committee member recommended that this committee keep their momentum by working through the summer.

Another member recommended that the committee take July off and pick up at the beginning of August

A suggestion was made that 'other committees' were looking at short-term 'wins' that could show committee effectiveness.

After discussion by the committee, members confirmed that the committee would meet on the following dates:

- April 27
- May 25
- June 22
- August 10

Discussion Points:

- District and charter compacts:
 - These require rigorous accountability, and streamline enrollment processes for all children, establishing four tiers arranged by socioeconomic status (SES), with students of Tier 1 being the lowest SES and those of Tier 4 the most affluent. Under this selection model, participating schools enroll 25% from each tier, thereby increasing diversity, and unite students under a common goal.
 - The Gates Foundation sponsored this approach in other cities that are dealing with similar challenges, and Wilmington can potentially learn from them.
- Political will is essential to create the environment necessary for such a compact to work. In the state of Delaware, creating such an environment requires building relationships and managing strong personalities with conflicting perspectives.
- Animosity is a real problem in the state, and the conversation needs to be changed to focus on what can be done to best serve children with greatest need. Stakeholders need to

come to the table for the purpose of reaching common ground. Leaders of some school districts were unaware of facts related to all of the city's charter schools and harbored misconceptions due to generalizing from a few anomalous cases.

- Lewis Elementary School and Las Américas ASPIRA Academy already met to discuss approaches to improving education and services, fostering collaboration.
- A committee member noted that if teachers had the support they needed in the form of better pay and reasonable class sizes, then they would consider taking on more children from at-risk communities.

Committee Goals:

- School leaders (especially those enrolling high numbers of at-risk youth) can be brought together to discuss common issues and goals.
 - School leadership needs to guard against perceptions of charter schools that are based on “suburban” examples.
- Schools everywhere need to ask whether they adequately support students who need help, especially children of low-income families, and how schools facing similar challenges can collaborate.
- The committee would be better served in the short term by focusing on Title I schools in the city, which could be leveraged as a criterion for forming charter-district partnerships based on common issues surrounding meeting student needs.
 - It was also asked what incentive the committee could offer schools to get them to meet and participate in collaborative partnerships.
- One recommendation: get schools together to talk about trauma-informed instruction and school leadership.
 - A number of programs exist regarding traumas experienced by students, which could be used to foster collaboration around responding to and resolving trauma in students' lives.
 - Getting leaders together to discuss common goals could create relationships in an organic way. This was identified as a potential “early win” for the committee to focus on going forward.
 - A committee member noted that both teachers and students require trauma support and that teacher burnout drives quality teachers away from high needs schools.
- The committee could leverage shared resources on Restorative Justice to expand support for this disciplinary strategy to all schools.
- Some legislators that could serve as allies include (there are likely others as well): Rep. Kim Williams, Sen. Townsend, Rep. Joe Miro, Rep. John Kowalko, Rep. Dave Sokola.
- A committee member mentioned the joint meeting with the Redistricting Committee. The committee will invite Kim Williams to speak about the enrollment preferences task force at another time.
- Proposal to invite the American Civil Liberties Union to talk about Restorative Justice
- Would the committee be open to engaging State Board of Education President Dr. Terri Q. Gray about collaboration funding?
- How do we use charter and district collaboration and messaging to decrease misinformation and spread positive information about school successes?

- Public relations would be important, especially consistent publicity about good work.
- The committee could attend city council meetings, or invite council members to our meetings to express relevant concerns.
- A committee member suggested that charter and district schools are tired of divisions over funding the movement of children between schools, adding that the committee should work on a compromise proposal to address this issue.
- Are some schools using “de-choicing” to move challenging students to other schools? This is a concern that leads to fragmentation, and clear data regarding this issue would be helpful.

The co-chairs closed the discussion. They noted that the committee will take a few minutes at the beginning of the next meeting to approve the minutes of prior meetings.

There were no members of the public present, thus no public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 7:03pm

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Charter and District Collaboration Committee
Attendance: March 23, 2016
Community Education Building**

Committee Members

Aretha Miller
Eve Buckley
Bill Doolittle
Margie Lopez Waite
Byron Murphy
Jennifer Nagourney
Cora Scott
Vicki Seifred

Institute for Public Administration Staff

Elizabeth Burland
Chester Holland
Kelly Sherretz