

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
January 23, 2018
Delaware State University, Wilmington Campus
Meeting Minutes**

Chair, Dr. Tony Allen called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m.

Dr. Allen stated there were several items he would like to discuss with the Commission. First, he stated there has been continued discourse between the Christina School District and the Governor. Second, the Commission will hear about the ongoing ACLU lawsuit and that the lawsuit is rooted and referenced in WEIC's original ideas for education reform. He stated that WEIC's work was not produced in vain and we should continue to fight for equitable funding.

Dr. Dan Rich reminded Commission members that the Commission sunsets in 2021 and there are several years to get substantive work done. He stated the Commission's work is resonating with community members and setting the basis of other discussions such as the MOU and ALCU lawsuit.

Dr. Allen welcomed Tom Ogden as the representative from the city of Wilmington and opened the floor to Delaware Attorney General, Matthew Denn.

Current Proposal and Extra Revenue, Attorney General Matt Denn

Attorney General Matthew Denn thanked the Commission for allowing him to discuss the proposal of the Coalition for Delaware Kids. The proposal is a coalition, in its truest sense, because numerous organizations, including the Delaware Chapter of the NAACP and over four hundred individuals are a part of the coalition. The state has been short of funds for a long time and Delaware working to remedy that situation. Denn believed the resources should be targeted at the kids that have lacked resources.

Attorney General Denn explained that the state is expecting to receive \$55 million more in revenue than projected. He suggested that this money not be spent all at once, as compared to previous years where all the money is funneled into one area. He stated that their suggestion is to spread the money out over four years, focus on students in robust ways, and to help children from birth through adulthood.

He reviewed the aspects of the proposal. First, the proposal will boost the significant Nurse Family Partnership, which is a national gold standard targeted for infants and toddlers. He stated Delaware was ranked top in the nation for this program and has sunk in ratings due to lack of federal funds and state funding cuts.

Second, Denn promoted the plan to enroll more children from low-income families in pre-kindergarten and early childhood education programs. He stated the current resources have not been enough and Delaware enrollment numbers are behind the rest of the country and the state should increase resources for early childhood education.

Third, Attorney General Denn stated the plan promotes helping children in high poverty elementary schools. He stated there are different challenges facing schools that have 30 to 60 percent of children that live in poverty. Recounting his six years as Attorney General, Denn stated the number one thing that teachers say they need are extra hands. Therefore, he stated the plan provides extra funds to the ten elementary schools that have seventy percent of their students living in households below the poverty line. He stated nine of the schools are in Wilmington.

Fourth, Attorney General Denn stated the plan promotes expanding the after-school and summer programs for children living in low-income neighborhoods. He cited studies say we all know these programs are great for kids and there is a need to keep it up over the summer. He stated the state has a competitive grant program for after-school programs, but it has gotten smaller over time and this plan proposes to allow more resources for high-quality after-school programs.

Fifth, Attorney General Denn stated the plan promotes to improve the re-entry programs for students coming out of juvenile detention facilities. He stated there is an unacceptable number of students that are returning to the same circumstances. He noted the state has not been able to invest in the individualized attention. He cited national models have been proved successful when students are out of level five facilities. He stated we all want these students to do well.

Sixth, Attorney General Denn cited the plan promotes creating a recovery high school for students battling substance abuse. He stated Red Clay Consolidated School District has offered a building and the state could offer operational costs available for students. He cited there are successful models in Philadelphia to use as a model for Delaware.

Seventh, Attorney General Denn stated the plan will promote the one-time financing for linked administrative computer program recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) report. He stated this will target to help students.

Attorney General Denn stated there have been other proposals, such as one bill has been proposed for tax relief for gaming tax credits. He stated that all areas are important and there should be discussion about setting priorities. He stated another issue that will come up is that this is one-time money. He stated in a perfect world there would not be one-time money for programming; however, this proposal spreads the money over four years. He stated this is better than nothing and the hope is that we see these things working we can adjust funds to support those programs. He also stated this is only four-tenths of one percent of the state budget and that the state should prioritize the students.

Andrea Swan, point person for the proposal, stated there are one-pagers available that outline in detail the information the Attorney General presented.

Attorney General Denn stated the Governor will propose his recommendation then the decision will be in the Joint Finance Committee hands.

Yvonne Johnson, Commission member, stated that the importance of coalitions are to identify the Joint Finance Committee members and put pressure them to make tough decisions.

Dr. Rich pointed out that more than half of the items proposed by the Attorney General are explicitly recommended by this Commission and previous Commissions. Legislators are spending a lot of money, but this spending does not seem to improve outcomes. Attorney General Denn agreed that the state has not spent money consistently on these areas of concern. The Attorney General does not think the state has consistently invested in these things over time to see the pay off.

Attorney General Denn mentioned a concern with the advocacy portion of this effort. There will be full-time lobbyists resisting the efforts of the proposal. The focus is on the members of Joint Finance Committee and the leadership of the respective caucus because they have the biggest roles in shaping the budget.

Chandra Pitts asked if it would be best to focus pressure on individuals or groups.

Attorney General Denn responded with the sentiment that we (citizens) should put pressure on both the individual legislator, and the collective body. He said that many legislators do not hear from people on these issues; they more frequently hear about routine issues such as road maintenance. Denn visited several schools to get teachers to talk to their legislators and the AG office is trying to get those who are more hands-on to give their legislators a real, life sense of the reality within their communities.

Dr. Allen invited other questions or thoughts regarding the proposal. He then asked the Attorney General to share what other institutions are in support of this proposal. Attorney General Denn listed the State PTA, State NCAPP, State Nurses Association, DE chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics, and Attack Addiction, which a substance abuse advocacy organization, among others.

Yvonne Johnson asked if there are school districts on board. Denn answered that no specific school boards had been directly contacted, but noted that the Colonial and Red Clay superintendents have been amazing to work with. Districts have not been asked explicitly for their support. The AG office is trying to be sensitive of the fact that the people we've been talking with are part of larger organizations.

Dr. Allen asked if was a motion to vote on the Commission's official support of the Attorney General's proposal.

Commission member Yvonne Johnson motioned, followed by a second from Commission member Frederika Jenner. One Committee member voted to abstain, and all other present Committee members voted to support the proposal.

Attorney General Denn explained that his team intends to have people travel during the Joint Finance Committee hearing days to advocate for this proposal. Denn confirmed that Andrea would be a liaison to ensure the Commission advocates appropriately.

Dr. Allen introduced Kathy MacRae, executive director of the ACLU of Delaware. She came to the meeting to clear up any questions the Commission may have regarding the ACLU lawsuit against the state of Delaware.

Executive Director MacRae explained that on January 16th, the ACLU filed suit against Governor Carney, the Department of Education, and others regarding school funding. MacRae stated that their research shows that low income, English Language learners, and special education students in K-3 are not getting the support they need to succeed, which is guaranteed in the Delaware State Constitution. The organizations involved are the Delawareans for Educational Opportunity and The Delaware NAACP. MacRae explained that the full complaint is 50 pages and other materials are available on the ACLU site (ACLU-DE.org) and has been published and covered through various media mediums.

Dr. Allen affirmed that the primary complaint in the suit (lack of equal funding) is the backbone and the primary recommendation that the Commission has advocated for.

MacRae went on to explain that in the complaint, specific action to the court is not recommended. Historically, there have been upwards of 40 of these complaints filed across the country over many years. Typically, the court will find actions to be constitutional, but look to the legislative and executive branch to fix the problem. The ACLU is not in the position to tell the State of Delaware how to fix the funding inequalities that exist. MacRae explained typically, that role is for the legislators and the Governor's office, and the Department of Education. If the suit moves forward and there is a favorable ruling, a remedy won't immediately be specified. However, if the problem persists, the court might take different action, but there is no specific action recommended at this time.

Yvonne Johnson expressed concern with the fact that the ACLU is not calling for a specific remedy of the defendants.

MacRae affirmed that every child in Delaware deserves a chance to succeed. In order to do that, they need the resources in the school building that meet the needs of that particular population. Many states will provide additional funds to schools that have certain populations of low income students. Delaware does not provide those additional funds, especially to ELL students, and this is a huge burden on the school districts. The bottom line is, every child in Delaware, according to the constitution, deserves an opportunity to succeed.

MacRae continued to say that over time, the legislature will propose a fix, and it will be implemented and evaluated. If the fix is not working, the ACLU will return to ensure a new solution is proposed.

MacRae ended her visit by offering that if anyone wants more information they can contact her or Delaware ACLU legal director, Ryan Todd Cooper. Their contact information can be found on the website [ACLU-DE.org]. Public information sessions will be offered, which will include the lawyers working on the case. There is one tomorrow night [January 24th, 2018] at the Christina Cultural Arts Center at 6pm.

The Commission thanked Executive Director Kathy MacRae for her time.

Commission Member Chandra Pitts asked to address the Commission. She is offering her formal resignation from the Commission.

Chandra shared that in October she had prepared a draft letter notifying the Commission of her resignation as a commissioner. She stated it has been a pleasure to work with all members and she will continue to work with members outside of the Commission. In 2014, she was honored to be selected as a member and remains honored today. She explained that all members share passion for the work that we do and wanted to share the message in person.

Chandra evoked a message from the Commission's original book, *Solutions for Delaware Schools*, Vol. 1, *Redistricting in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan*. The first words of Dr. Tony Allen's six-page forward are "waiting is no longer an option." The last words are, "the time to act is now." There's radical action happening and stated she will continue to participate and advocate as a community member. When it comes time for radical action she said the Commission you can lean on her to do work.

Chandra looks forward to coordinating efforts to commit to putting children, families, and parents at the center of the conversation. She offered the idea to hold meetings in the city of Wilmington to make it easier for individuals to participate. She said remember that "the time to act is now."

Dr. Allen said all members agree that Chandra is not a silent warrior, and thanked her for her leadership, persistence, and commitment.

Dr. Allen moved on to updates from the Christina School District (CSD) at 5:54 pm.

Commission and Christina School Board member Harrie Ellen Minnehan outlined two major endeavors of CSD right now; the partnership with the State and the ongoing creation and negotiations of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and developing a strategic plan.

Commission and Christina School Board member Meredith Griffin continued to update the Commission. Not much has changed substantially from the last Commission meeting update (November 28th, 2017). The dialogue between Christina and the state is moving forward; every CSD board member is still positive and funding is the main source of gridlock, as there are a lot of issues about funding in the MOU concerning reconfiguration, the dual generation center, and how those items will unfold and work. The governor's office has offered different sources of one-time and recurring funding and after speaking to the Governor last week, it is all still a positive process. The collaboration has a deadline of February 28th to come to a decision and approve the MOU.

Dr. Allen asked what happens if the board does not meet the deadline. Dr. Griffin responded that the MOU dies if the deadline is not met.

H.E. Minnehan offered that a lot of this MOU collaboration comes out of WEIC. Efforts and concerns are surrounded on center city schools and the issues brought up by WEIC are the same issues that the MOU focuses on.

H.E. Minnehan moved on to the topic of the Christina School District's Strategic Plan. Every three years a new strategic plan is written. Superintendent Rick Gregg has hired a consultant from the Rodel Foundation. The planning process includes seven community groups; (1) Teaching and learning (2) school climate culture (3) professional development (4) district support service (5) facilities, (6) communications, marketing, and branding (7) and special education services. Breaking down the strategic planning process in this manner has not been done before. These seven groups started meeting in December, and things seem to be going very well.

Dr. Rich asked what the expected timeline is. Dr. Griffin answered that Superintendent Rick Gregg will present the final product in March.

Dr. Allen invited Dr. Dorrell Green, from the Office of Innovation and Improvement, to offer input. Dr. Green told the Commission that the Office will continue to meet with CSD.

Vice Chair Lockman asked if there was a time limit for the reoccurring \$1.5 million programmatic funding included in the MOU.

Jon Sheehan, Education Director for the Governor's Office, stated that the funding will remain for each year of the MOU, until 2023. That \$1.5 million grows 2% each year in that time.

H.E. Minnehan added that as the MOU gets approved, the strategic plan will be adjusted. Dr. Griffin acknowledged that it is certainly part of the strategic planning process to keep in mind what the MOU entails but that coinciding deadlines make that difficult.

Dr. Green gave insight that the strategic planning process does not give detail to inform the MOU process. It was made clear in September by CSD that the strategic planning process would not get to the level of detail that would help guide the MOU drafting.

Eve Buckley asked how many iterations of the MOU have been made. Dr. Griffin answered that every week the document is changing, but three have been published in the News Journal.

Eve Buckley wondered how the public would access the latest information. Dr. Griffin said that the most substantive changes are being reported on. Buckley stated that collaborating with the Citizens Budget Oversight Committee may be useful as well.

Karen Eller acknowledged that the DDOE has been in the city schools for the past three years. She wants to know the level of conversation and feedback about that support. She wondered if there have been conversations about what that support will look like moving forward with the MOU.

Dr. Green assured that from his standpoint, the DDOE is committed to supporting the schools regardless of the MOU. This support could be through trauma-informed work, work with programming, or scheduling. The Office has embedded those supports in those schools and the ultimate goal is build capacity and a level of sustainability so DDOE does not have to constantly remain in the building.

H.E. Minnehan pointed out that the principals are all highly involved in the collaboration process with the state, which is different than previous collaborations.

Dr. Green added that, for instance, the K-8 reconfiguration is a recommendation that came directly from building administration and the District.

Tizzy Lockman noticed that the CSD budget has not yet been passed and wondered if there is a special meeting to address this issue. Dr. Griffin informed the Commission that there is a meeting Thursday, January 25th 2018 concerning the CSD budget.

Chair Updates 6:14pm

Charter District Collaboration Committee

Committee co-chair Eve Buckley presented on the charge of the Charter District Collaboration committee and what the committee has been working on. She explained that the committee has worked to promote the shared capacity and collaboration among district, charter, and vo-tech schools within the state through a collaborative Compact. This compact focuses on achievement for all students. Conversations with district, charter, vo-tech, and community leaders highlighted areas of collaboration including transportation, professional development, and trauma-informed practices. There was also focus on shared best practices, language immersion programs, food and nutrition services, substitutes, and strengthening the hiring pool.

Committee Chair Margie Lopez-Waite added that there is another round of meetings in the next month to meet with more school and community leaders. One of the next steps is to set a date and venue for a professional development or collaboration-based event.

As a Committee member and head of Las Americas ASPIRA Academy, Margie Lopez Waite has collaborated with Superintendent Dr. Dusty Blakey of Colonial School District. Waite and Blakey plan to establish a high school program between Las Americas ASPIRA Academy, a K-8 Charter School, and William Penn High School, a district high school that supports a biliteracy pathway for students through 12th grade.

M. Lopez Waite explained that Dr. Blakey expressed to her that Colonial is committed to their own immersion program, which runs up through second grade. As that program grows, the capacity needs to be built through 12th grade. Discussions took place that concentrated on how both groups could achieve desired results in the best interest of the children.

M. Lopez Waite explained that starting an ASPIRA International Studies program at William Penn High School is their next project. As opposed to ASPIRA branching out and opening their own high school, which is one option that was explored, it makes more sense for the community

to collaborate and create this pathway within William Penn. She stated that this will not only help ASPIRA students with their biliteracy pathway, but will offer that pathway to future Colonial students. She stated you must build trust to form a collaboration the groups must share a common passion for public education.

Dr. Blakey explained that this collaboration will provide opportunity for Colonial and ASPIRA students to continue to evolve, as they already have a set of graduates with dual language certificates. Colonial has a large population of Hispanic students that are taking advantage of the opportunities the district already has, this program just adds another piece to it. This collaboration also gives Colonial the opportunity to learn from ASPIRA and analyze and improve the practices of their own primary immersion program. Dr. Blakey stated that agreeing to this collaboration was a no brainer and they are in the process of planning and making sure all leaders are moving forward together.

Dr. Allen asked if there was talk of partnering with higher education institutions. D. Blakey said that there is not, but anything to help the kids is welcome.

Dr. Rich followed up with asking if there is current conversations with school boards. D. Blakey explained that the team has not talked to other school boards at this point. They have gotten green light from both boards, ASPIRA and Colonial and students have been brought to each other's schools to observe the pathways.

Dr. Rich offered congratulations to the team. The committee has been working for three years, and Dr. Rich commended them for their hard work.

Eve Buckley asked, when you're envisioning the program at William Penn, will this program have ASPIRA students and Colonial students? M. Lopez Waite explained that this is a Colonial program.

Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee

Committee Chair Tizzy Lockman reminded the Commission of the charge of her committee. The Parent Information Project was newly implemented this school year to help parents with school choice. The Parent Information Project offers clear steps and a timeline for how to navigate school choice. A Public Alley is sharing that information and is in contact with community members. The parent survey is ongoing.

There is a new short window for the choice process, as it straddles the holiday season. 500 information sheets had been distributed, approximately 50 workshop participants, and four families were assisted one-on-one in completing and following through on choice applications. The program is using data on outreach, process, and partnerships. The committee is looking to hold some choice fairs in the spring with community partners. The Parent Survey Project yielded 100 surveys filled out, with 40 questions per survey. Kelly Sherretz, Institute for Public Administration (IPA), stated that there will be an email to follow with the survey information for Commissioners to distribute.

Lockman shared that the joint work between the Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty and Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee co-chairs have been meeting for the past three months to determine how they can join forces in certain areas. There is draft plan to create a pilot project to move the needle on literacy.

Commission Next Steps and Policy Priorities

Dr. Allen outlined next steps and policy priorities for the future.

1. **Transient students in the City of Wilmington** - There is opportunity for sponsorship of legislation to address this issue.
2. **Investments in early childhood education.**
3. **State and local services for low income children and families.** The Governor included in his State of the State address, “as goes the city of Wilmington goes the state.” This is not an easy push for him, but this notion aides in aligning Family Services for those populations.
4. **Compact among districts and charters** - The previous presentation by the Charter District Collaboration Committee showed traction in this effort.
5. **Funding for low-income students**
6. **Revenue base supporting public education**
7. **Re-emergence and re-engagement of the P-20 Council** - Dr. Dan Rich explained that the provosts of all the higher education institutions met with the Delaware State Board of Education concerning the P-20 Council. The Commission was given a direct charge to be more involved in growing the P-20 Council.

Commission member Frederika Jenner offered insight, as she attended P-20 Council meetings for the last six years. Problematic things that occurred was that the participating institutions sent inconsistent representatives to each council meeting, showing a lack of commitment. The mission of the council got lost.

Dr. Rich attributed the decline of the council to decision-makers no longer attending or investing in the P-20. When decision-makers, such as school presidents and provosts, are not part of the process decisions do not get made. At the same time, these folks are not being utilized to make decisions, they will not show up.

IPA Updates

Kelly Sherretz provided IPA updates to the Commission. A draft of Community Resources and Asset Mapping brief was provided to the commissioners. This brief looks at all the resources and services available to students and families in the City of Wilmington. The research indicates that some areas have access to resources, while other areas in Wilmington have gaps in services and high-quality services that are integral to success in life.

Dr. Allen directed the commissioners to look at the key findings of the brief. He pointed out that Wilmington has 548 public and nonprofit agencies delivering 1,095 programs to a city of 71,000 people.

Dr. Rich told the commission that this brief is a piece of a larger effort to create a database of all information regarding resources available to the city of Wilmington. He highlighted the fact that areas where children in poverty are concentrated, assets are not as available.

Public Comment

Wali Rushdan shared with the commission that he is honored to be the Governors nominee and represent the city of Wilmington on the state board of education. He has been following the WEIC work as a citizen and stated he plans to continue to be involved. Rushdan also stated that he intends to be a fully active participant on the board in order to make sound decisions. Dr. Rich thanked Rushdan for his comments.

Erin Golder, a community advocate, is working with kids at Boys and Girls Club. Per her own experiences, Ms. Golder urged the commission try to be innovative when addressing the problems that affect education and the City of Wilmington. Ms. Golder stressed the importance of trauma-informed care and practice and stated that creativity is a part of trauma informed care.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Tuesday, January 23, 2018

Commission Members:

Tony Allen, Chair
Elizabeth Lockman Co-Chair
Ralph Ackerman
Eve Buckley
Adriana Bohm
Karen Eller
Margie Lopez Waite
Joe Pika
Mike Matthews
Meredith Griffin
Tom Ogden
Frederika Jenner
Yvonne Johnson
Harrie Ellen Minnehan

Members of the Public:

Matthew Denn, Attorney General
Dusty Blakey
Vicki Gehrt
Whitney Williams
Mark Holodick
Chandra Pitts
Andrea Swan
Jeff Taschner
Gwen Angalet
Dorrell Green
Kathleen MacRae
Valerie Dinkins
Wali Rushdan
Jon Sheehan
Merv Daugherty

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