

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission  
April 24, 2018  
Delaware State University, Wilmington Campus  
Meeting Minutes

## **Welcome**

Tony Allen, Chair, greeted everyone and called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. There was not quorum, therefore; previous meeting minutes were not approved.

## **Update – Office of Innovation and Improvement**

T. Allen informed Commission members that there have been conversations with Dorrell Green, the Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII), about the Commission's work in Wilmington and how it can dovetail with OII work. Green will attend the May Commission meeting and give some work suggestions for the Commission.

## **P-20 Overview**

Dan Rich, Institute for Public Administration (IPA), discussed the P-20 brief prepared by IPA: *Refocusing Delaware's P-20 Council: Assessment and Recommendations*. This brief was distributed and presented at the Campus Compact Mid-Atlantic (CCMA) conference on April 18<sup>th</sup>. This conference focused on how higher education institutions can be more involved in primary and secondary school efforts to enhance college, career, and community readiness.

Rich explained that Joe Pika helped create the P-20 Council as president of the State Board of Education. The Council assisted in important analysis such as the Commitment to Delawareans and the Council also made it possible for Delaware schools to collect data in order to better assess college readiness.

Joe Pika, Commission Member, shared that data sharing was an important accomplishment of the P-20. The Data Compact was a robust system and was the foundation for the Race to the Top grant that Delaware received in 2009-2010.

D. Rich explained that the overall improvement of P-20 is a prerogative of CCMA and all seven higher education institutions of Delaware committed to join CCMA. Rich also outline the four recommendations from the P-20 brief:

1. Improving the alignment of the education system for children birth through third grade.
2. Reduce the need for remedial education for Delaware's high school students once they reach post-secondary education or career training.
3. Meet the workforce needs of quality teachers.
4. Strengthen pathway programs by providing access to education opportunities and programming for every Delaware high school graduate to ensure they are prepared for college and career.

## **WEIC Data Report**

The IPA research team, Kelly Sherretz and Chester Holland, created a presentation on student achievement data to help analyze the state of education in Wilmington.

The team found that proficiency rates for Wilmington students were significantly lower compared to their non-Wilmington counterparts. As students make their way through primary and secondary grades, math proficiency for low income students steadily trends downward. Wilmington students score approximately 60 points lower than their non-Wilmington counterparts on the SAT.

Several Commission members were interested in how these numbers compare to other states. Mike Mathews, Commission member, clarified that Delaware is the only state to administer the SAT to every high school student; which makes Delaware numbers not comparable to other states.

Some Commission members mentioned that other indicators are worth looking at to explain the climate of Wilmington education:

- Suspension rates
- Truancy
- Employment
- Absenteeism
- Class size
- Teacher transfers
- School climate
- Forced out teachers
- Teachers of color

D. Rich expressed that work on truancy is critical because there is a relationship between truancy and the education system. Better data needs to be accessible in order to measure these indicators properly. High rates of transience of students and teachers is also a concern. This transience creates a lapse in the relationship that needs to exist between students and teachers for student's to be successful.

T. Allen included that it is worth pointing out that the state of Delaware as a whole is not doing well on these indicators. D. Rich added that the state used to collect data by community, which can be more telling than by district. Functionally, Delaware, and the country, has two education systems. One education system benefits kids with moderate and high income levels and these kids typically perform well. However, the picture for low-income kids is completely different.

Joe Pika stated this is the fourth year the Commission has documented the same phenomenon. Pika stated that nothing is changing and another strategy is necessary for shocking the system into action. Compelling arguments about why Wilmington kids continue to struggle and what can be done about it need to be made. This is a crisis that is no less important than the public safety crisis that occurred 50 years ago.

T. Allen added that other counties and cities have similar issues. Dover and Seaford Delaware are also requesting that the Commission get more involved in statewide efforts.

Whitney Williams, co-chair of the Commissions' Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee (PEaCE), added that "the family" as a unit is a main factor that contributes to student achievement and well-being. The Commission should incorporate home and family support in any initiatives they work on. Williams explained that the Christina School District looks at levels

of engagement and compares them to suspensions and other measures of performance to determine if there is a relationship.

M. Mathews stated it is clear the education policies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not culturally relevant and that bad policy has guided education for the past 17 years at all layers—federal, national, and local. Mathews stated that the people who want to do better (teachers) are not given the freedom to do what is right.

Joe Pika turned attention to the ongoing court case, *Delawareans for Equal Opportunity v Carney*. Eve Buckley, Commission member, asked if the Commission has taken a firm position on the case. T. Allen explained that the Commission has not made an official statement. D. Rich stated that Chief Justice Leo Strine, through the Access to Justice Commission, has laid out some of these systemic challenges.

Tom Ogden, Commission member, thanked the Commission for expressing an understanding of today's education problems. Ogden concurred that teachers need a stronger voice.

### **Committee Updates**

Margie Lopez-Waite, Commission member, provided updates from the Charter and District Collaboration Committee. M. Waite reported that the Committee has completed all meetings with charter, district, and vo-tech leaders in Wilmington. Waite also shared that the fall Vision Coalition conference will focus on collaboration, propelled by the work of the Charter District Committee. The Committee is also working on collaborative professional development events over the summer and ASPIRA will participate in the Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL) Policy and Practice Institute conference in June.

Eve Buckley, Commission member, stated it is a challenge to bring teachers together because it is hard to coordinate school calendars. Buckley added that the professional development events will focus on language immersion and math pedagogy. Having these events over the summer is one way to combat the scheduling problem, because school is out for the summer.

Tizzy Lockman, Co-chair, reported that the City of Wilmington is going to aid in amplifying the PEaCE Parent Survey.

### **Public Comment**

Bill Doolittle stated that he appreciates the comments made about shocking the system and that incrementalism needs attention too in terms of making substantial change in education.

The meeting adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission  
Tuesday, April 24, 2018

**Commission Members:**

Tony Allen, Chair  
Elizabeth Lockman Co-Chair  
Eve Buckley  
Adriana Bohm  
Karen Eller  
Margie Lopez-Waite  
Mike Matthews  
Tom Ogden  
Joe Pika

**Members of the Public:**

Bill Doolittle  
Tom Driscoll  
Bob Martin  
Whitney Williams

**IPA Staff Members:**

Dan Rich  
Kelly Sherretz  
Haley Qaissaunee  
Chester Holland  
Stephanie Becker  
Cimone Philpotts