

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
October 11, 2017
Delaware State University, Wilmington Campus, Wilmington, DE
Meeting Minutes

Vice-Chair, Tizzy Lockman called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Vice-Chair Lockman asked the members of the Commission to introduce themselves, followed by introductions from members of the public.

Dr. Allen greeted everyone and started the meeting off applauding the healthy dialogue that continues to take place around Delaware education. He noted that we are now moving forward with our legislative agenda, which was previously stalled due to unanticipated circumstances. Dr. Allen re-introduced Governor Carney and his team; Education Secretary Dr. Susan Bunting, and Director of Innovation and Improvement Dr. Dorrell Green.

Governor Carney provided updates on efforts to improve Wilmington education 5:10 p.m.

Governor Carney shared his vision for Wilmington Education with the Commission and meeting attendees. Governor Carney stated that he wants a more productive educational experience for the City's students. The Governor would work to improve outcomes by igniting a partnership between the State, Christina School District (CSD), and the Christina Education Association (CEA). There are five schools in the City of Wilmington that are served by Christina School District, many efforts will be focused there.

The Governor stated he believes, "as goes the City as goes the success of Delaware." The success of the City is essential to a prosperous state, and improving education is essential to improving the city of itself. Since being sworn in, Governor Carney asked Secretary Bunting to visit the City's schools. During these visits the Secretary, the Governor, and their teams witnessed subpar schools. Carney has come to the conclusion that it is our moral responsibility to improve these conditions and we can do so by making the Education Department about service and not about regulation.

The Governor noted some projects the State has launched to accomplish this task. The Opportunity Grants Program offers \$1 million to low-income students, students chronically exposed to stress and trauma, and English language learners. "Basic needs" closets can be found in high need schools. The Governor has also established the Family Services Cabinet Council to coordinate public and private services for Delaware families in need. But he does note that we need to do more; we need to address violence and poverty. The Governor reminds us that "We didn't get here overnight we don't expect to solve this program overnight."

The Governor and his team recently visited the City of Springfield, Massachusetts to learn about the model they use to improve schools. Governor Carney notes that we're not going to find a cookie cutter solution anywhere and want to create their own model of success. He outlined five

main points of urgent need to be addressed by his proposed partnership between the state, CSD, and CEA:

1. Principles need more control over key decisions in their schools. Governor Carney wants to give them tools to Delaware with staffing, hiring, school schedules, and program planning. Dr. Green and the Office of Innovation and Improvement would provide principals with coaching and support for educational leaders.
2. Teachers in high-need schools need more say in how resources are used. Teacher Leader Teams are to partner with Administration to solve problems relating to working conditions, resource use, and school culture.
3. CSD Wilmington schools are among the lowest performing in the state. The Governor plans to provide additional learning time for these students. Building use is part of this. Too many school buildings are operating at almost half capacity, this spreads out resources too thin.
4. Opportunity Grants: It is the intention of the state to address significant trauma that Wilmington students experience outside the classroom.
5. Build enduring systems to create meaningful change. A multi-generation network to support infants, toddlers, and adults will aid in breaking the cycle of poverty.

Let's partner to improve the outcomes in the classroom. Competition is greater than ever and we do these students no favors by not giving the tools to succeed. This proposal shouldn't be controversial, but it will be because it's different and will involve moving more quickly than some would like. By the end of Dec 2018 the Governor would like a memorandum of understanding between state and CSD to give families of Delaware what they deserve. Governor Carney is asking for support for this partnership for this approach.

Dr. Allen invited Commission members to ask Governor Carney questions 5:28 p.m.

Adriana shared her concern for institutionalized racism and classism and how that affects schools. From curriculum to disciplinary policies, Adriana shared her belief that we can't have race neutral policies if we want to actually address racism in schools. She stressed that the intersection of race and class is a determinant factor in Wilmington education.

Governor Carney responded by restating the value of his five objectives. By including teachers in more decision-making processes, concerns with institutionalized racism may be part of the growing process.

Ralph Ackerman believed that the new Christina School District Superintendent, Rick Gregg, will do a great job. Ackerman wondered if the Governor's agenda is aligned with Superintendent Gregg's.

Governor Carney stated that the ideas Superintendent Gregg had published are consistent with his own ideas. The Governor stressed that the key is in the partnership and defining the partnership. Governor Carney explained that some schools are operating at half capacity so there is an important discussion over utilization of these buildings. The Dual Generation Center may be in one of those existing buildings, which would address issues outside the classroom. The

Governor also mentioned that the Springfield Massachusetts Superintendent had been superintendent for a long time, whereas Superintendent Gregg is new. This may hinder the implementation of some of his visions.

Dr. Green brought up that Superintendent Gregg has a plan as well as the Governor Carney and that the partnership has the bandwidth to accomplish this. He introduced to the conversation the impact of trauma on students and teachers. How are we equipping staff to address students in high needs schools and take care of themselves? The naysayers are out and about and vocal. Dr. Green asserted that the shootings in Wilmington are a result of a failure or breakdown in the city. We need to be action oriented to deal with these problems in a comprehensive way.

Secretary Bunting offered that Superintendent's passion "is there." Bunting stated that it is our moral responsibility to get these students proficient. We are passionate about intervening. She reintroduced the Dual Generation Center and its alignment with preschool readiness.

Governor Carney expressed that our mission and responsibility goes past the classroom. The Governor alluded to the recent CDC report on violence and trauma in the city. The CDC's the biggest set of recommendations are around safe and positive experiences after school. The Governor assured that the Family Services Council is focusing on this.

Dr. Green discussed the financial feasibility of using schools as an extension of safe havens from trauma with tactics such as offer additional tutoring hours.

Michelle Taylor expressed her concern with leveraging resources for change management.

Governor Carney assured that The Family Services Center would focus on "where we can get the biggest bang for our buck?" Teachers and principals will provide that information to the Center. Where there is the greatest need is CSD. Yes, there's still room for improvement in other districts. But this is where we need to put our resources. First we need a partnership, defining those terms will be difficult. We need to implement the least disruptive option for our kids.

Michelle Taylor was concerned with the number of the kids that are behind. Is the state thinking about additional resources you're willing to put in for quality programming. She asked where that funding would come from.

Governor Carney stated that the key is extra time and to use the resources you have more efficiently. The Governor believed that Educational Opportunity Grants will help with efficient resource use.

Secretary Bunting claimed that you have to rethink how to best use the monies you have.

Meredith Griffin stated that he does claim to speak for CSD, and that he is one member of seven. The sentiment he heard is that we have a unique opportunity to do something that is absolutely necessary and that represents the WEIC mandate. Griffin explained that it has been rightly characterized that the heavy lifting will be on front end as we distill what this partnership means. He claimed we should pursue this kind of partnership because of what is at stake. He understood that there is a sense of urgency and stated he is also impatient. Griffin explained that he does not want WEIC to be in such a hurry to get something in front of the children for the sake of change

and that there needs to be substantive change. He claimed he has confidence in Rick Gregg and there is a great level of new energy surrounding these initiatives. This kind of collaboration is appropriate for the time and the heavy lifting will come between now and the end of the year.

Governor Carney agreed that this is all hard work but it is worth it, but believed the brunt of the work will come later down the road. The Governor stated he is impatient too but we need to do this in a thoughtful way.

Chandra Pitts wondered if there was any collaboration in the planning.

Governor Carney assured the Commission that Superintendent Gregg and his office were having conversations while they made their plans. The priorities between the state and CSD are not inconsistent.

Ackerman raised another concern. He said that we should let children stay in the school they started in. Children that frequently move have problem associated with moving. If a family moves across the street in Wilmington, the lines are drawn so that the children must change schools. Ackerman explained that movement is disruptive.

Governor Carney added that truancy is a problem as well and that educational leaders were concerned with kids coming to school on time.

Secretary Bunting added that this is especially a problem because the time students miss when this happens is time spent on reading.

A commission member raised concerns that the Springfield Empowerment Zone Project is still very young. There isn't a lot of data to support this decision. *** also continued on to say that in Springfield, they also focus a lot in middle schools... we are going to focusing on elementary schools.

Governor Carney went on to give further details about the Springfield project. He stated they have a regime in Massachusetts (MA) that followed the No Child Left Behind Act. In MA, the "level" of a school is based on its performance outcomes. For instance, a level 5 school essentially gave up all rights to teacher contracts etc., to the state. This transference of rights occurred because, in Springfield, schools went into this partnership failing and under duress. Governor Carney reassured the room that his administration will not "copy and paste" the practices from Massachusetts. Governor Carney stated they plan to create their own model.

Dr. Dorrell Green explained Lawrence, Ma where most models failed. The elementary schools were doing well actually. He wants to "humanize" this. If there was one thing I could take back what would it be? TTO, teach the one. It meets me where I am. We need to practice distributive leadership.

Secretary Bunting pointed out that teachers [in Massachusetts] were extremely in tune with what their students needed, they would not wait on data. Secretary Bunting stated that new data will be available on October 16, 2017.

The commission member inquired if that same effort to pull teacher input will be used in Wilmington

Dr. Green assured that that effort will take place.

Dr. Allen asked if Dr. Green could explain the governing structure of Springfield's Empowerment Zones.

Dr. Green presented several points. Springfield Empowerment Zones are made up of a partnership between the nonprofit 501c3 Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership (SEZP), Springfield Public Schools (SPS), the Springfield Education Association (SEA), and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE). This partnership has a Board of Directors made up of state and local leaders, including the mayor and representatives from the Department of Education. Schools are "empowered to establish and implement its own curricula, professional development, and school schedules, as well as hire school staff and manage the local school budget" (from the SEZP website).

Dr. Green also discussed the existence of an advisory board in addition to the Board of Directors. The advisory board ensures that 85% of funds go directly to the school.

Tony Allen opened questions to the public:

Gwen Angelet expressed that the program sounds amazing. She asked how Springfield engaged community partners and how they may support services that aren't wholly academic. She inquired if community partners were involved.

Dr. Green and Governor Carney responded explaining that the nonprofit sector was extremely involved in the Empowerment Zones. The nonprofits took on administrative roles in the schools to make necessary items, such as Human Resources, more efficient.

Shannon Griffin asked if parental involvement was significant in Springfield.

Dr. Green asserted that we have to "go beyond the bake sale." Parent involvement is essential to this project.

Secretary Bunting reminded that parents were involved as they made these changes to the Empowerment Zones.

Bill Doolittle expressed appreciation for the focus and energy the Commission has put into reform efforts. He went on to state that everything that the Governor has highlighted is foundational work and claims made so far amount to t 15% of the project. He stated it is imperative to have a sense of the whole project. Mr. Doolittle explained that Delaware needs extended learning opportunities and individual learning support and some students need a different structure to learn. He claimed we have failed to adequately fund children in poverty and have to be realistic in the long term of how to fund them successfully. He asked if this type of thought process is being evaluated.

Governor Carney responded explaining that he has “a different view of a unit count as opposed to appropriations. I’d like to put multimillion into this. If we can’t push down healthcare costs so we can make investments here that’s no good.”

Dr. Allen offered a closing thought to Governor Carney. The Commission will work on the model; and provide next steps for the partnership between the state and CSD.

Governor Carney clarified that the next step is a letter of intent among CSD and the State. The Governor

Karen Eller asked if any districts other than Springfield Public School District had been visited on the Governor’s trip.

Governor Carney said that he was invited to visit other district, like Lawrence, Ma. He explained that Lawrence was “a really steep take over,” so the visit wasn’t as valuable. He explained that there are examples elsewhere but “I’d rather be here working.” He was satisfied with his trip, “There are systems in place that I was impressed with in MA that I’d like to implement here.”

Secretary Bunting discussed the value of research. We may research other programs, so trips are not always necessary.

Karen Eller made a new point that the schools are overwhelmed with poverty but we have other schools in the suburbs that have some of these same problems.

Governor Carney discussed other schools that implemented teacher-leader teams. The governor said that Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington and Rev. Brown were all doing well. Governor Carney was impressed by Harlem, another school reform zone. The governor is convinced that when change and input is comes from the bottom up, that model seems to work best. It’s that essence that the Governor would like to duplicate in Dr. Green’s team.

John Sheehan reminded everyone that Delaware also had levels and feels that this new model will be less of a punitive mindset. He is also looking forward to the evidence based aspect of this partnership. John also suggested that starting middle and high schools later on in the morning would not be an expensive option and good for the students.

Dr. Allen and attendees thanked the Governor for coming to the meeting and said goodbye.

Governor Carney and those from his administration left.

Dr. Allen offered his satisfaction with the meeting progress and stated, “that was the conversation we’ve been waiting for since February. It is a vision. CSD also has a similar vision. I’ve asked Dr. Dan Rich at the Institute for Public Administration to research both visions.”

Vice-Chair Tizzy Lockman asked if that was an official endorsement by the Commission of the plan.

Dr. Allen replied that it is not because our work focuses on more than one school district.

Dr. Dan Rich asked “How does what is being proposed connect and intersect with what we propose as necessary for Wilmington public education?” He then agreed that our work does

focus on more than one school district. This is because Wilmington students are governed by 22 other (other than CSD) governing bodies.

Tony Allen provides Commission updates 6:15 p.m.

PEACE Committee Updates

Tizzy Lockman

Tizzy Lockman provided an update for Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement (PEaCE) Committee. She stated that one project was to move from assumptions to data about what an involved parents looks like. The Parent Info Pilot Project will offer put this information out into the community as an immediate way to start engaging folks and taking advantage of the education system.

Tizzy Lockman continued to say that a Public Ally, Devin Brown, would be hired. Devin Brown is hired to help families gain a better understanding of how school choice works. He will offer workshops primarily in CSD schools. Efforts by Mr. Brown will aid in getting a better sense of what barriers exist to choice.

Tony Allen stated the compact has made significant progress.

Margie Lopez and Eve Buckley explained that they looked at collaboration across districts. They stated they want to get around fragmentation and disincentives to work together. The element we want to invest our energy in is a compact across public and charter schools.

Margie and Eve explained that a collaborative compact is a voluntary and inclusive agreement between all schools that serve City of Wilmington students with the idea that they should have a shared responsibility to effectively educate all students. The compact would explicitly state goals and share resources between schools to accomplish those goals. The Committee holds that there is real benefit to be had by individual schools and students when these schools are working together. Building on successes, sharing challenges and resources are all aspects of the compact. The Committee sees a possible culture shift toward more community. The Committee will build the network of allies from which the compact will be generated.

Margie Lopez adds that ASPIRA is in discussion with Colonial School District for a prospective pact. This pact is about doing what's in the best interest of students. Margie Lopez stressed the importance of voluntary involvement.

Margie is hoping to pursue a pact with Dr. Mark Holodick, Superintendent of Brandywine. Immersion programs to create a pipeline of teachers from University of Delaware is a viable aspect to this pact.

Ron Russo stated he was the former principal of St. Marks in Wilmington, DE. Mr. Russo explained that all the Catholic and independent schools belonged to "DEIS," a collaborative partnership. He expressed that they would rotate the chairmen position and sites of the meeting and collaborated across schools. He believed that if any one of us failed it was a very poor reflection on everybody. He stated that the collaboration was not necessarily interested in replicating what other schools do but we were interested in doing better than the other school. He

stated that he wants to encourage WEIC and the compact to do a good job because what they are trying to do is possible.

Dr. Dan Rich added that some private school leaders have talked about building connections as well.

Research Updates

Kelly Sherretz told the Commission that the Institute of Public Administration is busy and hard at work for the Commission.

Haley Qaissaanee provided updates on the Asset Mapping Report. Haley shared that the report will be completed in November. The report used research and survey responses to gather data to understand and map out where services are in Wilmington. Then, researchers compared this data to where low income families live. There are tons of services in Wilmington, but these services are not located where the people who need them most live.

Dr. Rich expressed, that in order to mobilize community assets, it is essential that we should recognize the range of those assets.

Kelly Sherretz shared with attendees the reports and briefs that will be available next. PEACE committee report, WEIC annual report, survey of Wilmington parents and barriers to engagement, spring policy briefs, and a Wilmington Student Data report.

Tony Allen applauded the work of the Commission. He reminded attendees that had there not been a Commission, tracking the full performance of Wilmington students may not have occurred. Dr. Allen expressed the need to find a way to utilize and disseminate more broadly. The next meeting a have a robust discussion around support for CSD will be had.

Public Comment 6:35 p.m.

With no further public comment, the meeting adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

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Meeting Attendance

Commission Members

Tony Allen, Chair
Tizzy Lockman, Vice-Chair
Eve Buckley
Margie López Waite
Sen. Dave Sokola
Chandra Pitts
Harrie Ellen Minnehan
Michelle Taylor
Meredith Griffin
Karen Eller
Tim Foxx
Adriana Bohm
Jeff Taschner for Mike Matthews

Governor and Staff

Governor John Carney
Secretary of Education Susan Bunting
Dorrell Green
Jon Sheehan

Members of the Public

Edward Freel
Thomas Driscoll
Henry Harper
Leah Davis
Teri Lawler
Monique Taylor-Gibbs
Gwen Angalet
Shannon Griffin
Merv Daugherty
Valerie Dinkins
Hadey Salem
Nicholas Brock
Chandlee Kuhn
John Young
Liz Farley-Ripple

Meghan Wallace
Catherine Lindroth
Ron Russo
Devon Brown
Liane Sorenson
Boyd Sorenson
Bill Doolittle
Dorrell Green
Jacqueline Bryk
Tryone Jones
Katrina Cooper
Ryan Cooper
Ariana Minella
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