

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission

Community Education Building

Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2016

Chairman Tony Allen called the meeting to order at 4:40p.m.

Chairman Allen asked the members of the public to introduce themselves, followed by introductions from each of the Commission members.

Chairman Allen reminded the group that there are multiple pieces to the Commission's work.

Chairman Allen stated that the previous focus of the Commission was on the redistricting legislation; however, there are and have been multiple aspects to Commission work. There is a programmatic piece, specifically proposed activities in the Charter District, Meeting the Needs and Parent, Educator and Community Engagement Committees and a strategy piece that the entire Commission will address during this retreat meeting. Lastly, the legislative piece will be something that looking forward next year. There were also some barriers to the legislative aspect of the Commission work, but redistricting was only one aspect and there are positive steps for other aspects of the Commission work.

The Commission voted to approve minutes from the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC) meetings held on April 26th, July 26th, and September 27th, 2016.

Chairman Allen asked for updates from each committee.

Chairman Elizabeth (Tizzy) Lockman provided an update from the Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement (PEaCE) Committee. The committee took further steps at the October meeting discussing research and formulating a timeline for proposals. Moving forward, a subcommittee has been formed to focus on outreach to better serve the target population.

Aretha Miller and Dr. Eve Buckley, co-chairs of the Charter and District Collaboration Committee, provided an update from their committee. The committee met for the first time on October 11th. There was a discussion about national best practices of collaboration across different school sectors, how to identify best practices and how to apply those practices in Delaware. There was collective energy from the committee to produce tangible goals for the upcoming year, with both programmatic and policy goals. It was acknowledged the work of the Charter and District Collaboration Committee is facing challenges with the recent lawsuit between one district and several charter schools, but this does not diminish trying to move forward.

One proposal of the committee was a shared professional development event. Another proposal is to produce a brief policy memo to serve the interest of the incoming administration to articulate the importance of collaboration and achievable measures of collaboration.

Michelle Taylor, co-chair of Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee provided an update that the Committee will be meeting the first Wednesday of every month. The objectives were discussed to have early wins and tangible, meaningful goals. The areas of focus include better integration of pre-K through grade 5 work, positively build mental behavior health services, more emphasis on cultural competency, trauma-informed practice, and the impact of poverty, and lastly, build better integration of parent and family engagement. The last focus overlaps with the PEaCE Committee and are planning a joint meeting in December.

M. Taylor also mentioned the “My Very Own Library” Program at United Way assists families to build home libraries and WEIC is a partner this year. This is an opportunity to maximize exposure, through promotional banners to be present all nine traditional elementary schools in Wilmington, as well as 2 elementary schools in Colonial. Furthermore, WEIC could capitalize the opportunity at book fairs to engage with individuals, families, parents. There is also importance to receive feedback through existing vehicles.

Joe Pika, chair of the ad-hoc Fiscal Impact Committee stated the first meeting will be October 21st, 2-4 p.m.. At the first meeting they will establish a working plan and organize future meetings. There is a lot of work to be done within this committee in a small amount of time; therefore, there will be multiple meetings in the upcoming months.

Kelly Sherretz and Kelsey Mensch, Institute for Public Administration, presented the Draft Wilmington Education Improvement Commission’s Annual Report.

The Annual Report summarized the Commission work that was done from July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016 and provided updated data from the 2014-15 School Year. The first section of the Annual Report reviewed the mandate, Commission framework, the Redistricting plan, the work of the 5 committees, and the legislative and public engagement process that took place. The second section provided baseline data, such as demographics, enrollment, short and long term outcomes of both Wilmington and Non-Wilmington students. It was emphasized that this data is just a baseline as it will be updated in future reports to show improvement overtime. Commission members received a copy of the Annual Report and will provide feedback from this presentation.

At 5:11 p.m. the Commission took a break and reconvened at 5:20 p.m.

Leann Moore, Assistant Policy Scientist for the Conflict Resolution Program at Institute for Public Administration, facilitated discussion on the Commission Priorities.

Chairman Allen asked what are the priorities and goals moving forward, while Leann facilitated the overview of the conversation. The priorities and goals discussed are listed below:

- Refocus priorities and change the narrative of WEIC’s work
 - Rebranding WEIC to have clear message among public
 - Recommit to the agenda set forth
- Coordinate more programmatic efforts that would not require initial legislative action or funding
- Clear up the confusion and misunderstanding about the importance and purpose of redistricting

- Understand the political environment’s impact on goals, especially with incoming administration
- Actively build broader and balanced alliances in order to broaden the support and proposals
 - Similar populations in other urban areas with a high concentration of low-income students (Dover, Smyrna, Milford, Seaford)
- Recognize the structural problem of funding education, regarding type of revenues to fund education
 - Desire for bipartisan agreement for structurally sound tax revenues/credits
 - The possibility to achieve the goal to use current resources more efficiently
- Change the mentality that this work is focused to truly benefit the students
 - Priority to increase number of talented educators and specialty wrap around services for special education, bilingual students
 - Could be an opportunity for collaboration and a possible legislative priority
- WEIC can capitalize on the impact of ESSA
 - Communicate WEIC’s position on ESSA, such as an open letter.
- Measures of success, including non-academic measures

The Commission reviewed the Action Agenda for Improved Student Outcomes framework, on page 10 of the “Solutions for Delaware Schools.” Within the context of WIEC’s previous work, there was a guided conversation to configure tangible and strategic goals to work towards best serve the needs of children for this upcoming year.

The Commission voted upon the core priorities on the action agenda. The commitments that received the top votes are listed below:

1. Weigh in on the large state-wide policies; (including ESSA, Special Education, Strategic Plan for Allocating Resources, and Teacher Deficit)
2. Establish state-wide alliances and broader set of partnerships
3. Build a programmatic platform for the direct services (including in-school services for trauma and language)

The other priorities included rebranding, recommit to priorities, and establish an internal progress report system.

Tony Allen opened up the floor for public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Attendance at the 10/20/2016 Meeting**

Commission Members

Tony Allen, Chair
Tizzy Lockman, Vice-Chair
Ralph Ackerman
Eve Buckley
Frederika Jenner
Yvonne Johnson
Margie Lopez-Waite
Aretha Miller

Harrie Ellen Minnehan
Johnny Means
Joe Pika
Chandra Pitts
Kenny Rivera
The Honorable David Sokola
Michelle Taylor

Members of the Public

Meghan Wallace
Dusty Blakey
Lauren Mancini
Jacqueline Jenkins

Institute for Public Administration Staff

Dan Rich
Kelly Sherretz
Taylor Hawk
Chester Holland
Kelsey Mensch
Melissa Micek
Leann Moore