

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Tuesday, November 22, 2016, 5pm-7pm
Red Clay Consolidated School District Board Room
Meeting Minutes

Chairman Tony Allen called the meeting to order at 5:05pm.

Tony Allen, Chair, thanked commission members and attendees for their work and for coming to the meeting. He provided an overview of the meeting and stated that the path forward will be discussed. He also mentioned that Governor Markell would make an appearance at the meeting to speak to the committee.

Committee Updates

Parent, Educator and Community Engagement Committee

The PEaCE committee had met the previous week. During the meeting, they formed into two subcommittees: outreach and research. The research group will hone in on definitions of guiding terms, and the outreach committee will gather more information from the general public on obstacles to engagement. Tizzy Lockman discussed the committee's evolving partnership with the United Way's My Very Own Library Project. The committee will also have a joint meeting with the Meeting the Needs committee in December. At the previous meeting, the committee also listened to a presentation from UD Professor Lauren Bailes on the possibility of adding capacity support through a new research project. Professor Bailes is doing original research on political efficacy of parents and democratic participation in school systems. The study has not been done before, so it would be a completely original piece of research.

Charter District Collaboration Committee

The committee met on November 10th. During the meeting, the Chairs, Eve Buckley and Aretha Miller, provided an update on the retreat. University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration support staff also presented on charter district models of collaboration, focusing on cities that are comparable in size to Wilmington. The committee has mainly been looking to establish some type of compact between districts and charters, focusing on shared responsibilities of students and outcomes. After the presentation and to conclude their committee meeting, the committee brainstormed ideas for a brief memo that they plan to put together for Governor Carney's administration on where they would like to see collaboration go.

Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee

Gwen Angalet and Kelly Sherretz provided an update on the committee based on their "early wins." The committee met earlier this month and continued to develop several "early wins" aimed at improving the integration of services and meeting student needs. The committee addressed working with schools to put early education centers on school forms, campaigning to have students enroll in school early, and 5th to 6th grade transitions. The committee also identified early interventions, including helping schools foster connections with the Division of Family Services, increasing family engagement, and increasing trauma-informed and culturally

competent practices. The committee is also looking at developmental screenings and creating more transparency in information sharing with parents and during transitions.

Fiscal Impact

Joe Pika, chair of the Fiscal Impact Ad Hoc Committee provided an update. The fiscal impact committee had met once as an entire group, and at the meeting reviewed a list of topics that need to be addressed in the analysis. This discussion included what kinds of data have already been collected and how to update that data. The committee then broke into three working groups focused on broad groupings of topics to be addressed, including capital and building contents transferred from one district to another, federal and state impacts of redistricting, and local impacts of redistricting. All of the working groups have either met face to face or on conference call. The Fiscal Impact Committee is aiming to have materials submitted to the General Assembly no sooner than the beginning of March with a progress report in late January detailing preliminary findings. The timeline of this analysis was discussed, and Senator Sokola added that the governor will put out a proposed budget in late January, which should be considered in the time line. Dr. Rich commented that progress of the work could be shared as completed. Committee members discussed how the committee would conduct an analysis in the presence of multiple unknowns, such as estimating the cost of a brand new high school. Joe Pika replied that the committee is essentially providing a snapshot of what is currently known about the fiscal impacts.

Comments from Governor Jack Markell

Tony Allen introduced Governor Jack Markell and thanked him for his leadership support of the Commission's work.

Governor Markell thanked the Commission for their work and persistence. He remarked that the Commission has brought attention to all children and the promise that each of them offer, regardless of their socioeconomic status or background. He thanked Tony Allen, Tizzy Lockman, Dan Rich, and the entire commission for their work and devotion. Governor Markell also remarked on the difficulties facing disenfranchised parents and families.

Governor Markell was thanked for his support of the Latino community.

Governor Markell commented that Delaware and Connecticut are the first two states to facilitate DREAMERS where their state policies make it possible for those individuals to attend higher education institutions. He shared his experience traveling to Dover to meet with those students and emphasized how seamlessly they have integrated into this country.

Ralph Ackerman commented on the transient nature of the school population in Wilmington. He asked if something could be done so that students in the city of Wilmington would not need to immediately change schools if moving.

Governor Markell replied that was an interesting suggestion, and if it's the view of WEIC, it should be included in the transition materials for the next administration. Governor Markell remarked that the governor elect has identified a transition team, and that his staff has been putting transition documents together. He also commented that he is putting together a proposed

budget and briefing for the new governor but added that the governor will likely make some changes. He again thanked the Commission for its work and wished all in attendance a happy holiday.

Commission Status Report Presentation

Dr. Dan Rich and Kelsey Mensch, University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration, provided a refresher on recommendations that have been made by the Commission and the progress that had been made. They provided an overview of the status report, which include priorities from the WEAC report, the WEIC report, action taken, and responsibility. The action agenda outlines the transition from WEAC to WEIC. The purpose is to understand what action has been taken on the recommendations over the past year. The agenda includes three streams: meeting Wilmington student needs, funding student success, and creative responsive governance.

Creating Responsive Governance

First, creating responsive governance was discussed, including redistricting, new vision for charter district collaboration, and strengthening the role of the Wilmington community. Commission members discussed the formal approval authority for the comprehensive plan for all public schools. The proposal to create a charter compact or consortium was also discussed, emphasizing that it should foster collaboration and sharing of best practices rather than provide more mandates. The importance of including representation outside of Wilmington city government in an Office of Education and Public Policy was also noted.

Margie Lopez Waite commented that the current wording of the priorities appears to be slanted towards charters. She emphasized that all failing schools need to be prioritized not just charter schools.

Nnamdi Chukwuocha commented that although there has not been formal movement on the Office of Education and Public Policy piece, there have been discussions about presenting this information to the incoming city council president and mayor-elect. Senator Sokola added that this priority should be altered, so that the office could include more than just city employees. Tony Allen added that he would take that on personally, so that members of county government could be involved.

Funding Student Success

Second, funding student success was discussed, including funding units for low-income, English language learners, and basic special education students. The Commission discussed the path forward for equitable funding units, including a discussion of whether that means weighted student or weighted unit. Commission members highlighted that equitable funding does not necessarily require a weighted unit funding scheme. Commission Chair Tony Allen emphasized that the Commission's stance on equitable funding has not changed. Dr. Rich noted that the Commission's assessment is rooted in the funding that Delaware is one of fifteen states that has no direct allocation for low-income students or English language learners. The presentation also covered additional funding for early childhood programs. The Commission discussed whether additional funding for low-income, English language learners, and special education would be

prioritized over the other. Several Commission members affirmed that low-income funding was the top priority.

Senator Sokola emphasized that the state shouldn't have to wait for weighted student funding to be enacted, which will likely take a long time, before demanding equitable funding.

Kenny Rivera asked the Commission to add more specific language to clarify what is meant by weighted and equitable funding.

Eve Buckley stated that as a member of the public, people might think strengthening funding means raising funding when it actually should be "rationalizing" funding. Dr. Rich replied that strengthening involves both raising and rationalizing.

Senator Sokola highlighted that this year's total student enrollment has increased, but the number of funded units have not increased accordingly. He also emphasized that the number of low-income, ELL, and special education students are increasing at an even higher rate. Jeff Taschner added that the unit count drives state funding, which is mandatory, but then the question becomes how to increase this funding at the local level.

Meeting Wilmington Student Needs

Next, the Commission discussed strengthening services to meet the needs of Wilmington students, emphasizing the strengthening and alignment of services. The commission emphasized that services should follow students throughout their development. The Commission emphasized that a comprehensive plan for improving services for low-income children, including partnerships with private and nonprofit institutions, should be developed. Currently, the Commission is working on an asset map and policy inventory to assess what services currently assist students in poverty. The presentation also covered a comprehensive early childhood education plan for Wilmington Children and increasing in-school and out-of-school supports for students experiencing trauma. Currently, there have not been any meaningful steps towards improving trauma-related services. The Commission discussed strengthening the existing Delaware P-20 Council to promote interagency resource management and a birth through college and workforce continuum.

Dr. Rich mentioned that in previous years the P-20 council was actively working on the integration of services, but the WEIC findings suggest that capacity has been lost in that area. Senator Sokola added that strengthening the P-20 council would be the best strategy for strengthening the alignment of services and recommended engaging the governor on this work.

Priorities

Finally, priorities and the outcome of the October retreat were discussed, including funding, consolidating governance, and meeting the needs priorities and the implementation of the action agenda. The Commission discussed that multiple objectives can be accomplished without

significant resources and with or without legislation. Commission members also returned to the discussion of the fiscal analysis and the final approval of the redistricting plan.

Senator Sokola commented that if the Commission would have to prioritize either low-income, ELL, or special education funding, it should focus on low-income students. Margie Lopez Waite echoed that low-income students should be prioritized as well.

Rosa Colon-Kolacko stressed that serving ELL students required more than just additional funding; policy changes are required as well. She also added that the Commission should reframe the issue because currently the state is not currently meeting minimum standards for serving low-income students.

Kenny Rivera expressed disapproval over splitting up the three funding priorities. He also added that it would be fiscally irresponsible to ask for final approval of the redistricting plan this year as a priority.

Tony Allen reaffirmed that the Commission will submit a fiscal analysis of the redistricting plan to the General Assembly as required by law and emphasized that the final decision is in the hands of the Red Clay and Christina School Districts.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Tony Allen proposed an approval of meeting minutes. Senator Sokola motioned to approve the minutes, and Margie Lopez Waite seconded the motion. The meeting minutes from the 10/20/16 Commission Meeting were approved.

Public Comment

Tony Allen opened the meeting up for public comment.

Bill Doolittle commented that there needs to be clarity on the meaning of needs-based funding as several different mechanisms for doing so exist. He also commented that the Commission should abandon its redistricting priorities.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00pm

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission

Attendance at the 11/22/2016 Meeting

Commission Members

Tony Allen, Chair
Tizzy Lockman, Vice-Chair
Ralph Ackerman
Eve Buckley
Margie Lopez-Waite
Harrie Ellen Minnehan
Joe Pika
The Honorable David Sokola
The Honorable Nnamdi Chukwuocha
Rosa Colon-Kolacko
Kenny Rivera
Karen Eller
Aretha Miller
Jeff Taschner – (in lieu of Frederika Jenner)
Johnny Means

Members of the Public

Ted Ammann
Bill Doolittle
Kevin Dolan
Lauren Mancini
David Davis
Meghan Wallace
Vicki Gehrt
Gwen Angalet
Tom Driscoll

Institute for Public Administration Staff

Dan Rich
Kelly Sherretz
Kelsey Mensch
Chester Holland
Arianna Minella
Melissa Micek
Taylor Hawk