

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission

ANNUAL REPORT, JULY 1, 2017 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2018

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (the Commission) was mandated by legislation to advise the Governor and General Assembly on how to improve the quality of public education for children within the city of Wilmington and address the needs of all Delaware schools that have high concentrations of students in poverty, English language learners (ELLs), and other students at risk. The Commission is charged to carry out the action agenda developed by the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee. The Commission's framework for change focuses on three areas of critical importance for an improved education system and student outcomes: (1) creating responsive governance, (2) funding student success, and (3) meeting the needs of students in poverty.

In 2015, the Delaware General Assembly passed and Governor Markell signed two relevant pieces of legislation. Senate Bill 122 and House Bill 148 created the Commission and gave Delawareans the opportunity to build a coalition to improve Delaware public schools. The Commission continues to work under Governor Carney's administration to strengthen Wilmington education and enhance the lives of Delaware students.

As required by law, the Commission must submit an annual report each year until the Commission sunsets in 2021. This report serves as the third annual report that tracks the progress of the Commission's work through June 2018, and informs Delaware citizens and leaders on the actions necessary to address the challenges that face public education in the city of Wilmington and throughout the state. The report outlines the progress of the Commission, details the current status of education in Delaware, and presents the milestones for future success in improving the education system that serves Wilmington students and all students in Delaware. It also summarizes progress on each of the three action streams in the framework for change: creating responsive governance, funding student success, and meeting the needs of Wilmington students.

As the Commission has made evident, improving educational outcomes is dependent on a host of collaborative and strategic efforts working in unison—one strategy alone will not create continuous learning or sustained and improved student outcomes. A quality education available to all students must begin with a new vision, backed by a common stakeholder commitment to strengthen public education in Delaware. This like-minded commitment is as important to the education of children in Kent and Sussex Counties as it is for the education of children in New Castle County.

Delawareans—from all corners of the state—have been an integral part of the work of the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission. Their engagement in our efforts has helped shape every recommendation that this Commission has put forth since the Commission's inception. Thank you all for playing an important role in the conversation, creation, and advocacy of the Commission's work.

While there are numerous valued contributors, there are some individuals that played a leading role in the work of the Commission:

- **Governor John Carney** for his willingness to continue the fight for all students in Delaware.
- **Secretary of Education Susan Bunting** for her lifetime commitment to student success.
- **Dorrell Green** for his support of the Commission and commitment to putting Delaware students first.
- **The staff and students of the Institute for Public Administration** at the University of Delaware for providing outstanding support to the operations and research of the Commission.
- **Attorneys Thomas Driscoll**, of Tarabicos Grosso, LLP, and **Ian Connor Bifferato**, of The Bifferato Firm, P.A., who have and continue to provide excellent legal guidance at no cost to the Commission.

Lastly, I would like to thank all members of the Commission and its committees for their commitment, hard work, and dedication to improving the Delaware education system so that it benefits all students.

Without you this work would not be possible.

Tony Allen, Ph.D.

Chair, Wilmington Education Improvement Commission

Executive Summary

This report serves as the third annual report that tracks the progress of the Commission's work from July 2017 through June 2018 and informs Delaware citizens and leaders on the actions necessary to address the challenges that face public education in the city of Wilmington and throughout the state.

Part I of this report reviews the Commission's mandate. The Wilmington Education Improvement Commission was established by House Bill 148, which was signed into law on August 4, 2015. This 23-member Commission was charged to:

- Carry out the action agenda developed by the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) as described in *Strengthening Wilmington Education: An Action Agenda*.
- Advise the Governor and General Assembly on how to improve the quality and availability of education for children in preschool through grade twelve within the city of Wilmington.
- Recommend actions to address the needs of all schools statewide that have high concentrations of students in poverty, English language learners, and other students at risk.

Part II of this report includes the Commission's framework, which incorporates the action agenda of the Advisory Committee and focuses on three streams of action needed to improve Wilmington student outcomes: (1) creating more responsive governance, (2) funding student success, and (3) meeting the needs of students in poverty.

Part III of this report details the Commission's progress as of June 30, 2018. Overall, some of the action agenda items have been completed. Most items are in progress with some initial milestones met.

Part IV of this report describes the work that each individual committee has carried out on behalf of the Commission. Each committee's work is focused on specific facets of the action agenda, which in combination contribute to quality access, improved student success, and systemic educational improvement.

Wilmington Demographics and Data Analysis

The Commission continues to monitor the educational progress of Wilmington students and the needs and performance of all students in poverty across Delaware. Based on the 2017 Smarter Balanced Assessment:

- Approximately 83% of students living in the city of Wilmington failed to meet state standards in Mathematics.
- Nearly 74% of students living in the city of Wilmington failed to meet state standards in English Language Arts (ELA).
- Roughly 83% of Wilmington students from low-income families did not meet the standard in Math.
- Approximately 90% of English language learners in Wilmington failed to meet state standards in English Language Arts.

In the fall of 2015, the Commission developed an interim transition, resource, and implementation plan to address the action agenda developed by Advisory Committee. The final plan, *Redistricting in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan*, was conditionally approved by the Delaware State Board of Education in March 2016 and the Delaware General Assembly in June 2016. The plan called for consolidating portions of Wilmington now served by the Christina School District (CSD) into the boundaries of the Red Clay Consolidated School District. That change would mean that more than 50% of Wilmington’s student population would reside in a single school district with a common curriculum and shared instructional strategies—changes designed to produce higher-quality schools and improved student outcomes. Despite efforts by Commission members and support from some legislators, the redistricting plan failed to gain final approval in the legislature.

At the conclusion of the 2016 legislative session, Senate Bill 300 with House Amendment 1 was passed. This legislation required that the Commission undertake an analysis detailing the fiscal impact of transitioning students who live in the city of Wilmington from the Christina School District (CSD) to the Red Clay Consolidated School District as recommended by the Commission’s plan. To fulfill the mandate set forth by the Delaware General Assembly, the Commission created an Ad-Hoc Fiscal Impact Committee that completed this fiscal impact analysis. The final report can be found on the Solutions for Delaware Schools website at <https://sites.udel.edu/cas-weic/files/2016/07/Fiscal-Impact-Report-2017-final-1ky9ycn.pdf>.

Since 2016, the documented outcomes for CSD’s Wilmington students have declined. In 2018, 90% of 5th graders at Elbert-Palmer Elementary School scored below the standard in ELA and 95% scored below standard in math.¹ At Stubbs Elementary School, 95% of 4th graders scored below the standard in ELA and math.² Similar results can be found in all of CSD’s Wilmington schools. To begin to address these issues, the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Governor Carney, the CSD teachers’ union, and the CSD school board to improve Wilmington schools is moving forward. The MOU includes plans to consolidate some schools and shift students, repurpose a building for dual generation use, expand state resources, and upgrade facilities. The state, the school district, and the teachers’ union will share responsibility and work together to strengthen the opportunities for a significant number of Wilmington students, virtually all of whom are poor and black or brown, and most of whom are not currently receiving an adequate education.

The ACLU of Delaware is currently suing the state of Delaware for not providing a “general and efficient system of free public schools.”³ The lawsuit further claims that Delaware is failing a majority of low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.⁴ The research and data analysis performed by the Commission draws the same conclusions.

¹ https://pubapps.doe.k12.de.us/DSARA_Public/ByDistSchSummary.aspx

² https://pubapps.doe.k12.de.us/DSARA_Public/ByDistSchSummary.aspx

³ <https://aclu-de.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DEO-v-Carney-Complaint-final.pdf>

⁴ <https://aclu-de.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Litigation-Summary-Final.pdf>

Part I: Creation and Mandate

In September 2014, Governor Jack Markell formed the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) to make recommendations on how to strengthen the public education system for all city of Wilmington students. Governor Markell charged the Advisory Committee with addressing the underlying challenges facing public education in the city of Wilmington and proposing actions that will propel continuous improvements in schools in the city of Wilmington.

The Advisory Committee's final report, *Strengthening Wilmington Education: An Action Agenda*, was produced in April 2015. The recommendations fell into four categories: (1) Creating Responsive Governance, (2) Meeting Wilmington Student Needs, (3) Funding Student Success, and (4) Implementing Change. It was the fourth category, Implementing Change, that made the Advisory Committee's recommendations stand apart from the several committees that came before it. Earlier committees had developed comprehensive recommendations; however, none of the previous committees had proposed how their recommendations should be carried forward. The Advisory Committee recognized this as a problem and recommended a strategy for "implementing change" in the creation of the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (the Commission), to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

Out of this set of recommendations came House Bill 148 (HB 148) and Senate Bill 122 (SB 122), passed by the General Assembly during the 2015 legislative session and signed into law in August 2015. HB 148 addressed the Advisory Committee's recommendations on implementing change by creating the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission and SB 122 authorized the redistricting work. As established through HB 148, the 23-member Wilmington Education Improvement Commission was charged to:

- Carry out the action agenda developed by the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee as described in *Strengthening Wilmington Education: An Action Agenda*.
- Advise the Governor and General Assembly on how to improve the quality and availability of education for children P–12 within the city of Wilmington.
- Recommend actions to address the needs of all schools statewide that have high concentrations of students in poverty, English language learners, and other students at risk.

The Commission continued work in the 2017–18 school year with three standing subcommittees. The Commission adopted the Advisory Committee's action agenda: creating responsive governance, funding student success, and meeting Wilmington student needs. These three focus areas led to the development of several committees under the Commission that worked to develop implementation plans in relation to a specific focus area with the overarching goal of improving student outcomes. Action alone in one of these three areas is not sufficient; the Commission believes that creating a unified approach to tackle all three action items will result in improved student outcomes.

Part II: Action Agenda and Framework for Educational Improvement

The Commission includes a diverse representation of the Wilmington community, including educators, parents, advocates, and community activists. While diverse, the Commission has approached the work with shared expectations and agreement on guiding principles. While the focus is Wilmington, the Commission believes these principles should apply across Delaware. These principles have been adopted from the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee and helped shape the action agenda.

- **Providing Access to High-Quality Education**—Delivering high-quality public education to all children, including those who are low income, black or Latino, is not only a Wilmington problem, it is a challenge facing all of Delaware.
- **Meeting High-Standards for Student Learning**—All Wilmington schools should meet high and rising standards for student learning in Delaware and across the globe. There should be agreed-upon measures for student success in meeting those standards that apply to all schools.
- **Engaging Families and Parents**—Parent and family engagement is critical to the effectiveness of public education, and we must establish a strong Wilmington education partnership between schools and the families they serve.
- **Creating Community Partnerships**—Wilmington schools should be seen as community assets and must have allies to address the complex challenges of educating the city’s children. These allies include engaged families, community and business partners, early childhood educators, mental and physical health providers, institutions of higher education, and social service providers.
- **Ensuring Access to High-Quality Educators**—All Wilmington students should have access to high-quality educators who are prepared to meet their diverse needs as well as the human and financial resources needed to support student success.
- **Collaboration and Strengthened Commitment**—Wilmington students should continue to be served by a combination of district, charter, and vocational-technical (vo-tech) schools. Policies and practices for Wilmington schools should promote collaboration, shared learning, and a mutual commitment to improvements that serve all students.

The action agenda depicted in Figure 1 builds upon recent improvements in education such as gains in early childhood education and college and career readiness. This action agenda works to accelerate and sustain those gains and complements the core areas recommended by the Advisory Committee’s final report. Strengthening Wilmington education requires that actions be taken in each of these areas in a systematic, coordinated, and sustained fashion. The effectiveness of the action agenda in each of these areas is highly dependent upon the implementation of the action agenda in the other areas. Each area represents a stream of required decisions and initiatives. Progress on any one stream alone will not

be sufficient to support and sustain improved Wilmington student outcomes. Progress on all three of these streams together will result in improved student outcomes.

Creating Coherent and Responsive Governance of Wilmington Public Education

The governance of Wilmington public education continues to be fragmented and dysfunctional. More coherent and responsive governance requires action on three fronts: (1) streamlining traditional school districts operating in Wilmington, (2) creating a coherent statewide plan guiding charter creation and creating a voluntary citywide education consortium, and (3) engaging Wilmington city government as a partner in public education. The Commission is committed to promoting a new vision of public education through which all units—traditional districts, vo-tech district, and charter schools—accept a shared responsibility for and act in concert to support the effective education of all Wilmington students.

Streamlining traditional districts responsible for Wilmington public education is a key part of the process needed to focus responsibility and leadership for the education of Wilmington students. It is certainly not the only part, but the Advisory Committee and the Commission concluded it is essential. The Commission’s recommendations would consolidate more than half of Wilmington’s public school students into a single district.

Beyond redistricting, the Commission seeks to expand collaboration among charters, among districts, and among charters and districts. A complementary part of the Commission’s mandate is to actively promote and support such collaboration, so that the sum of the public education assets represented by the diversity of Wilmington schools can benefit more students in more ways than at any time in the past or present. Further, the Commission believes that the Wilmington city government must engage as a partner in improving Wilmington education. Collaboration at all levels is essential in order to scale-up school success for the benefit of all students.

Funding Student Success

Strengthening the overall education finance structure is of fundamental importance to public education across Delaware. While Delaware already spends a great deal of money on public education, the expenditure of those funds must focus more effectively on meeting the needs of Wilmington students—and other students at risk throughout Delaware. Actions are needed to ensure a sufficient and reliable revenue base at both the state and local levels and also to ensure that funds are allocated in ways that most directly and effectively address the diverse and often complex needs of students at risk. Targeted funding should support low-income students, English language learners, and other students at risk.

While the challenge of addressing these needs is statewide, it is particularly acute in the city of Wilmington, which has the highest rate of poverty in the state. Over the past fifteen years, working groups addressing Wilmington education have repeatedly recommended changes in education funding to better support Wilmington schools and students. All have addressed the unique needs of students in poverty and the additional challenges faced by schools with high concentrations of students at risk.

Additional funding is needed in many areas across the educational lifespan of children—from early childhood education, through K–12, to college and career readiness. Funding also is required to attract and retain the most highly qualified teachers into Wilmington schools.

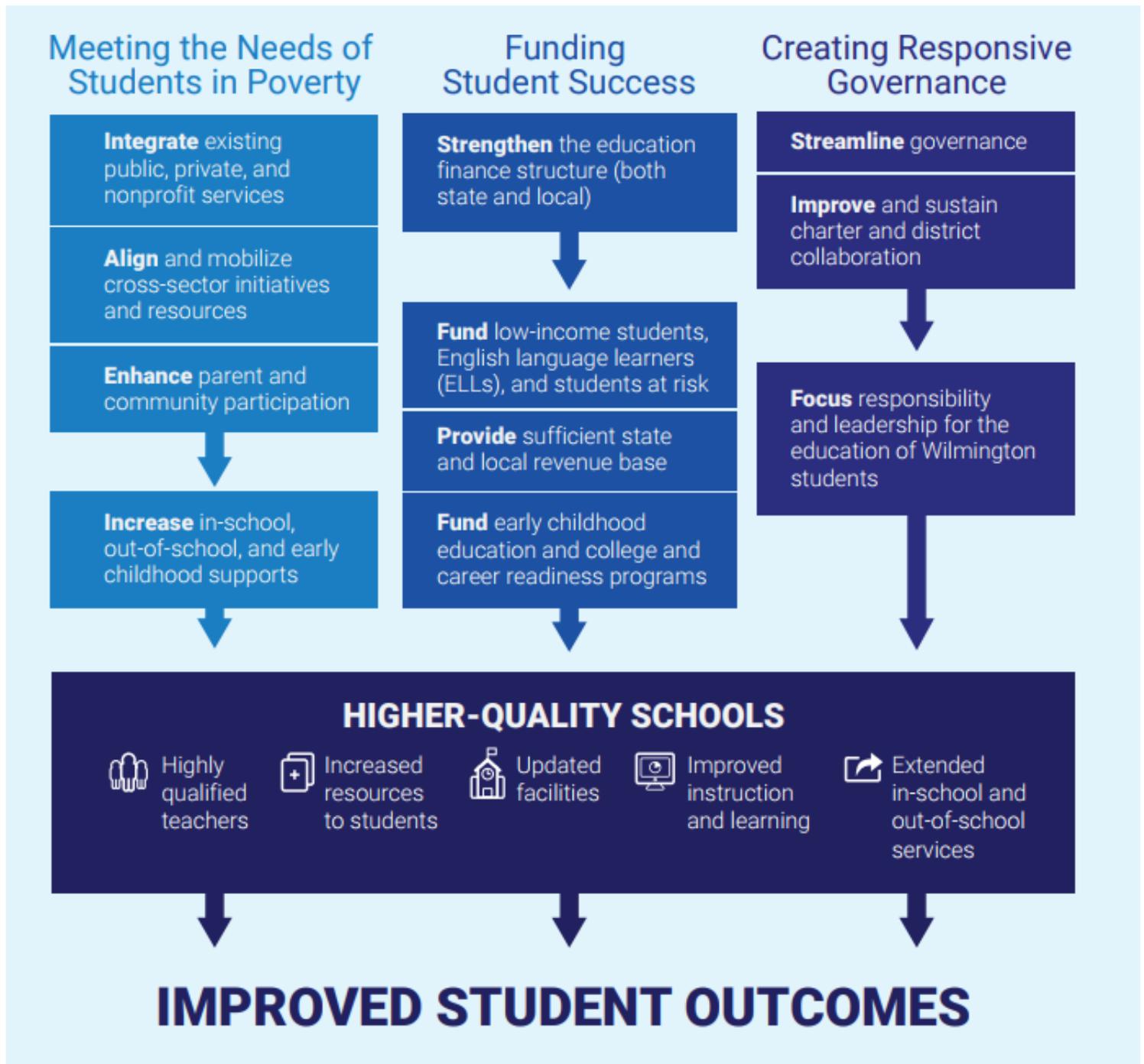
Meeting the Needs of Wilmington Students

Addressing the challenges of students in poverty requires a developmental approach that focuses on alignment of needed supports and services starting in early childhood and extending through entry into a career or higher education. Addressing the needs of these children and their families and providing the needed supports for schools with high concentrations of low-income students is a statewide challenge and needs to be met in a comprehensive manner. There is a need to develop and implement a comprehensive plan that can mobilize existing statewide institutions, policies, and resources toward the common objective of addressing the needs of children in poverty and supporting the schools in which those children are educated. As the Advisory Committee final report proposed:

Alignment of supports and services requires a strong partnership between the community and its schools. All sectors of the community should be mobilized.... Existing services provided by public, private, and nonprofit institutions should be more effectively and efficiently integrated at each stage of child development and in the transition from one state to another. The range of services needed include access to high-quality early childhood education; expanded school time and attention—including enhanced in-school services, such as school psychologists and social workers; availability of after-school programs; expanded school-to-work partnership programs; and more concerted efforts to reach and engage families in student learning and connect them to available services and supports. (Strengthening Wilmington Education: An Action Agenda, 2015, p. 50-51)

This stream of action requires coordinated efforts from all sectors, including more effective integration of state services and the alignment and mobilization of cross-sector initiatives and partnerships. It also requires greater parent and community engagement in Wilmington schools and in support of the continuous improvement of Wilmington public education. The combination and synergy of all of these changes are essential to increasing in-school and out-of-school supports, from early childhood until the transition to work and/or higher education.

Figure One: Action Agenda for Improved Wilmington Student Outcomes



Part III: Status Report on Action Agenda

July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018

The Commission has acted as a community-based council outside of state agencies, working across all governmental units, educational entities, and private and nonprofit institutions to support the implementation of all recommended changes from the final report of the Advisory Committee. Last year, the Commission and the committees continued to build upon the majority of the Advisory Committee’s recommendations. The status report below is for the period from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018. It includes an assessment of progress for the Advisory Committee’s action agenda and for acting on the subsequent priorities established by the Commission and its committees. See below for the key.

Symbol	Status	Definition
	Completed	Action has been taken and wholly completed by the Commission.
	In Progress	Action has been taken to propose and partially complete the item, but it has not been fully finished.
	In Planning	Action discussed and in early planning stages.
	No Action	Action has not been taken.

Creating Responsive Governance

Priorities	Status 2015–16	Status 2016–17	Status 2017–18	Action Taken	Responsibility
Develop plan for the Christina School District (CSD) to leave Wilmington and Red Clay Consolidated School District to include CSD's Wilmington students and schools.				Senate Bill (SB) 122 signed August 2015, mandates the Commission to develop a transition, resource, and implementation plan to carry out the Advisory Committee's recommendation on redistricting.	General Assembly
Colonial and Brandywine School Districts should continue to serve Wilmington students.				Colonial and Brandywine Boards of Education voted to continue to serve Wilmington students.	Commission and school boards
The State Board of Education should approve the Commission's redistricting plan.				Plan submitted to State Board in December 2015. Approved by State Board in March 2016.	State Board of Education
The General Assembly should confirm the State Board's approval of Commission's redistricting plan.				SB 17 provided conditional approval, with requirement for return to legislature for final approval. No further action has been taken by the General Assembly.	General Assembly
Complete fiscal impact analysis of redistricting for 2017 legislative session.				The Commission's Fiscal Impact Ad-Hoc Committee released its fiscal impact analysis of redistricting late Spring 2017.	Ad-Hoc Committee and Commission
New charter approvals and expansions should be deferred pending a statewide needs assessment and a comprehensive plan for the desired number and mix of charter, district, and vo-tech schools.				As mandated in HB 56, the Delaware Department of Education completed a needs assessment. However, the Commission feels the assessment did not fully address the concerns described in HB 56 and a comprehensive plan has not been written.	Department of Education and General Assembly
Charter and district schools should develop in accordance with a new vision that promotes shared capacity, collaboration, and best practices among charters and between charter and traditional schools.				The Charter and District Collaboration committee has considered barriers to collaboration and national best practices. Action on a proposed voluntary compact is underway.	Charter and District Collaboration Committee

Creating Responsive Governance

Priorities	Status 2015–16	Status 2016–17	Status 2017– 18	Action Taken	Responsibility
A Charter Consortium or collaborative compact should be established to better support operational needs and best practices of all charter schools.				The Charter and District Collaboration committee has proposed a voluntary collaborative compact among schools that serve Wilmington students. Action on a proposed compact is underway.	Charter and District Collaboration Committee
An Office of Education and Public Policy should be created in City of Wilmington government to promote active community engagement in public education.				No action taken.	City of Wilmington government
The New Castle County (NCC) Vo-Tech District and traditional district schools and Wilmington charter schools should collaborate on expanded vocational education opportunities for Wilmington students.				No action taken.	Commission with districts and charters

Funding Student Success

Priorities	Status 2015–16	Status 2016–17	Status 2017–18	Action Taken	Responsibility
State funding should be allocated statewide for low-income students, English language learners, and basic special education students K–3.	▲	▲	▲	The Commission has proposed legislation to change the State’s unit count allocation to include this funding. No action taken by the General Assembly on Commission proposal. Fiscal year (FY) 2019 budget allocated funding to support basic special education in kindergarten through third grade.	Commission working with the Governor, General Assembly, and community partners
Additional funding for early childhood education programs should be provided to meet the needs of students in poverty in Wilmington and statewide.	▲	▲	▲	Some increase in funding for FY19.	Commission, Delaware Office of Early Learning, Delaware Early Childhood Council
The State should increase funding for extended in-school and out-of-school services and supports, including after-school programs.	▲	▲	▲	OMB has contracted with the University of Delaware (UD) Institute for Public Administration (IPA) to conduct a needs assessment of extended learning in Delaware.	Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty (MNSP) Committee, Governor, and General Assembly, United Way of Delaware
Strengthening the revenue base supporting public education at both the state and local levels, including property reassessment.	▲	▲	▲	No action taken.	Commission, County Governments, and General Assembly
Establish Wilmington Redistricting Transition Fund to support the costs of district reorganization and approve other funding adjustments needed for implementation of redistricting.	▲	▲	▲	SB 300 establishes the fund with an initial allocation of \$200,000.	Governor and General Assembly
Existing state funding for low-income children and families should be redirected by a comprehensive state plan to more effectively address the needs of students in poverty.	▲	▲	▲	This recommendation has been proposed to Governor Carney’s Family Services Cabinet Council, as similarly recommended in the Commission’ Policy Brief on Child Poverty.	Governor and state agencies with Commission

Meeting the Needs of Wilmington Students

Priorities	Status 2015–16	Status 2016–17	Status 2017–18	Action Taken	Responsibility
A comprehensive early childhood education plan for high-quality programs and services for all children in Wilmington.				No action taken on a Wilmington plan. State investments have increased access to high-quality programs for children from low-income families.	Delaware Office of Early Learning, Delaware Early Childhood Council, Wilmington Early Childhood Council, Commission
A comprehensive plan for improving state and local services for low-income children and their families and for schools with high low-income student enrollment, including the integration of services and partnerships with private and nonprofit institutions.				Commission conducting Wilmington asset mapping, inventory of state policies, and mapping of finances. The Commission has also proposed this to Governor Carney’s Family Services Cabinet Council.	Meeting the Needs of Wilmington Students (MNSP) Committee, Commission, Governor, and prospectively, the Interagency Resource Management Committee
The State should increase in-school supports for students experiencing trauma and other social and emotional challenges.				The Delaware Department of Education has begun a Compassionate Schools Initiative.	MNSP Committee, Governor, General Assembly, and state departments
Delaware P–20 Council should be mandated to recommend improved alignment of resources and programs to support student learning and development from birth through college and workforce.				No action has been taken by the P–20 council, but future action is under consideration.	Governor, Secretary of Education, and P–20 Council
Mobilize and coordinate community (nonprofit and private) programs in support of schools with high concentrations of students in poverty.				United Way of Delaware leading plan to coordinate efforts in Wilmington and statewide. Wilmington Alliance proposed but not implemented by city government.	United Way of Delaware, MNSP Committee, community partners, Wilmington city government, Family Services Cabinet Council, and state agencies
Governor should convene higher education partnership to strengthen Delaware education including coordinated programs of professional development, school improvement, and adoption of national best practices.				No State action taken. University of Delaware (UD) established the Partnership for Public Education. Campus Compact Mid-Atlantic was launched in 2018.	Governor and higher education institutions

Meeting the Needs of Wilmington Students

Priorities	Status 2015–16	Status 2016–17	Status 2017–18	Action Taken	Responsibility
Governor and business community should launch a business sponsorship program focused on Delaware schools with high percentages of low-income students.				No action taken.	Governor and business leaders in state and county chambers of commerce.
Strengthen parents, educators, and community engagement and support with schools as community assets.				UD has undertaken a survey of Wilmington parents/guardians about engagement and political efficacy. The Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement (PEaCE) Committee is working with UD and Public Allies on a Pilot Program for Parental Choice and Information.	PEaCE and MNSP Committees

Part IV: Commission and Committee Operations

One of the Commission's principal priorities has been public engagement with parents, students, educators, and community members. All Commission and committee meetings have been open to the public, and members of the public have been encouraged to participate. The Commission met seven times for official meetings from September 2017 to June 2018.

The agendas and minutes for each of these meetings can be found in the resources section of the Commission's website, www.solutionsfordelawareschools.com. At each of the Commission's meetings, the committee co-chairs provide an update of committees' work, receiving feedback on on-going projects and gathering ideas to bring back to their respective committees. The Commission also has the responsibility of reviewing any recommendations reported from the committees for action.

In addition to the official public meetings of the Commission, there are three committees: (1) meeting the needs of students in poverty, (2) charter-district collaboration, and (3) parent, educator, and community engagement. Agendas and minutes for each of these meetings can also be found on the committee pages of the Commission's website and on Delaware's public meeting calendar. Additionally, several of the committees broke into working groups that met between committee meetings in order to focus on key initiatives of the committees this year.

Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty

Since 2001, when the first report on strengthening Wilmington education was issued, the condition of poverty among Delaware children—particularly children living in the city of Wilmington—has become increasingly widespread. The increase in child poverty is occurring statewide. Some areas in southern Delaware are experiencing growing numbers of children and families in poverty. For example, student poverty is growing not only in the city of Wilmington but also in Dover and in Sussex County, which has the highest percentage of poverty among the three counties. Despite the striking increase in poverty in southern Delaware, the highest concentration of children and families in poverty is in the city of Wilmington.

Understanding how the condition of poverty acutely affects school-age children in the city of Wilmington, the Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee was tasked with developing a comprehensive plan to address unmet needs. The committee's work focuses on the integration of key services for low-income children and families and for schools with high concentrations of poverty. In order to properly address the challenges low-income children face, the committee and Commission believe the alignment of supports and services must track developmental needs from birth through college and entering the workforce. These services include but are not limited to access to high-quality early childhood education, enhanced in-school support, expanded school time, increased availability of after-school programs, and coordinated family engagement.

As the committee staunchly believes and works to exemplify, this work requires effective coordination among all sectors and greater parent and community engagement in Wilmington schools. Cross-sector and community mobilization ensures the integration and delivery of essential services at

each stage of child development and through transitions from one stage to another. Aligning services and securing strong commitments and partnerships between the community and Wilmington schools are both crucial to the committee's work.

As a result of the committee's work in the 2017–18 school year, IPA created a policy brief titled *Wilmington Community Asset and Resource Mapping: An Analysis of the Resources Available to Residents of the City of Wilmington, Delaware*. This brief described what public and nonprofit community resource institutes are in Wilmington, what types of services they provide, who they serve, where they are located, and how their location and operation corresponds to the needs of the city's children and low-income families. Additionally, IPA published an Asset Mapping Resource Guide. This guide provides a list of all public and nonprofit programs that were used in the asset mapping analysis—there are over 100 pages of resources listed that are sorted by category type and zip code. IPA is working toward publishing an online, searchable, and user-friendly version of the resource guide.

The committee also heard multiple presentations from groups involved in meeting the needs of children in poverty like Delaware 2-1-1, The Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement, and the United Way of Delaware. These groups, among others, are working on their own versions of asset mapping projects and the committee is actively trying to coordinate efforts, reduce redundancies, and improve the alignment of services that reach children and families living in poverty.

Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement

Effective public education in the city of Wilmington requires that the community and city government be engaged. Active engagement in both Wilmington schools and in the continuous improvement of Wilmington public education is crucial to the future success of the system and the students within it. Without the partnership among engaged community members, parents, educators, and city government, the work and sustainability of the Commission is not possible.

The Commission's Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee formed to develop strategies and partnerships to enhance the ongoing engagement of parents and families to support the schools in which their students are enrolled. Understanding that active engagement is critical to the effectiveness of public education, the committee works to establish a strong Wilmington education partnership among schools and the families and communities they serve. While parent and family engagement is recognized broadly as of critical importance to student success, the actual mobilization of efforts is generally fragmented. This committee's mobilization efforts are geared toward determining the needs of Wilmington families and working with them on the school choice process.

The Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee aligns with the Commission's belief that Wilmington schools must be seen as community assets. The committee strives to make this possible through the promotion of ongoing, effective, two-way communication with parents, educators, and community residents. In addition, this work requires the ongoing participation of the community in both district- and charter-school decisions that impact the education of Wilmington students. Collaboration between community and school stakeholders is essential to address the needs of all students.

During the 2017–18 school year, the committee continued work on two initiatives. The first was a survey of the political efficacy of Wilmington parents. The committee worked with a UD researcher to create a survey that fit the needs of the committee. The purpose of the survey and data collection was to examine how parent political efficacy in an urban region influences a parent’s perception of and interaction with their child’s school, and a parent’s trust in schools, political efficacy, and habits of participation. The survey was implemented throughout 2017–18 and collected for final analysis in summer 2018. The full report with survey feedback and analysis are expected in the upcoming school year.

The other initiative, implemented during the 2017–18 school year, was a Parent Choice Information Pilot. The purpose of the Parent Choice Information Pilot was to help families living in the city of Wilmington to learn how to successfully navigate the school choice process in Delaware. The project team worked to inform parents about all available school options through workshops, visits to community sites, and other public engagement methods (e.g., print resources). In order to identify optimal school options, the team worked with families to understand the educational environments at each school and how to determine the correct environment for their child both educationally and socially and then supported parents throughout the application process to ensure applications and supplemental documentation/assessments were completed effectively. The project team was led by a Public Ally who created the documentation, handouts, presentations, and other materials needed for this work. There were approximately 500 physical information sheets distributed with more distributed virtually. There were approximately 50 workshop participants, with 16 coaching sign-ups, and several families who successfully completed applications at the workshops.

Charter and District Collaboration

The Advisory Committee recommended and the Commission endorsed that a combination of district, charter, and vo-tech schools continue to serve Wilmington students. Charter schools have become an important component of the Wilmington education system, and that role is projected to grow. Within the state, the city of Wilmington has demonstrated the densest and most rapidly growing concentration of charters with nearly two-thirds of statewide charter enrollment residing in the Christina, Red Clay Consolidated, and Colonial School Districts.

Governance over the Wilmington education system is fragmented due to the high number of school districts and charter schools that serve students. Operating outside of the traditional school districts, the majority of charter schools in Wilmington have grown into a separate public education delivery system despite operating in the same geographic location as traditional school districts. The Red Clay Consolidated School District is the only district that authorizes charter schools and the only district that works with charter schools on an ongoing basis. This exception aside, few successful collaborations and little promotion of shared capacity of best practices exists for improving education for all Wilmington students. Based on research conducted, the committee recommends the creation of a Wilmington Compact that brings together all education stakeholders to find shared goals and work collaboratively to improve education.

Achieving greater collaboration and communication among charter schools and among charter and traditional district schools is a key component of more responsive governance within the city of Wilmington. The work of the committee promotes the idea that the community's schools should share best practices of how to best meet the needs of Wilmington students. The Charter and District Collaboration Committee evaluates national best practices and their applicability in Delaware to provide a foundation of collaboration. Additionally, the committee was tasked with developing and promoting strategies that facilitate collaboration among charters and districts in order to ensure that no matter which school Wilmington students attend, all students have access to quality education and have their needs met.

During the 2017–18 school year, the committee continued working on their recommendation to create a Wilmington Compact. Committee co-chairs and IPA staff members met with nine district and charter school leaders in Wilmington and several community leaders to determine possible collaboration needs for Wilmington schools. The top three answers from school leaders about areas of collaboration they support are: transportation, professional development, and trauma-informed practices. Based on the meetings with school leaders, the Charter and District Collaboration Committee hosted a professional development event focused on middle school math instruction. Another result of the work of this committee was that it influenced the annual Vision Coalition and University of Delaware conference to focus the conference theme on collaboration. The conference had approximately 250 attendees—from a wide variety of sectors—and round table discussions were all focused on collaboration.

Going forward, the committee will work to evaluate conference feedback to determine what collaboration ideas they should pursue, support, and/or align. The committee will also continue to plan next steps for the compact.

Part V: Reports and Publications

Reports and other publications related to the work described above are available on the Commission's website, www.solutionsfordelawareschools.com.

Reports

- [Wilmington Education Improvement Commission's Initial Annual Report, July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017](#)
- [Wilmington Education Improvement Commission Status Report, December 2016](#)
- [Status of Wilmington Public Education Data Report, School Year 2016–17](#)

Policy Briefs

- [Wilmington Community Asset and Resource Mapping: An Analysis of the Resources Available to Residents of the City of Wilmington, Delaware](#)
- [Refocusing the Delaware P-20 Council: Assessment and Recommendations](#)
- [Charter District Collaboration: An Overview of National Best Practices and Options for Schools Serving Wilmington Students](#)

One-Pagers

- [Status of Wilmington Public Education](#)
- [Commission Overview and Action Agenda](#)

Miscellaneous

- [Commission Brochure, Spring 2018](#)

Part VI: Commission Funding and Resources

For the period of July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018, the work of the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission was supported by funding from public and private sources and from contributed services from many institutions and individuals. Support funding included contributed professional services provided by University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA) staff, in-kind and pro-bono services and contributions from other institutions and individuals, grants and donations, and a contract with IPA from the Delaware Department of Education (DOE). The following section describes the types of services provided.

IPA Contract with OMB

A \$155,000 state contract between IPA and DOE provided funding for the provision of staff services to the Commission. The scope of work for the execution of the contract is as follows.

Services

- Work with the chair and vice-chairs of WEIC. IPA will support the general operation of the Commission including planning, scheduling, agenda-setting, coordination with WEIC committees, and participation in and follow-up on meetings with government, education, and community leaders and engagement with students, parents, teachers, and the public.
- Work with each WEIC committee to create and implement work plans that are aligned with the Commission's responsibilities and priorities.
- Carry out the research agendas of the Commission and its committees. Examples of proposed research that align with the Commission's work plans include, but are not limited to researching best practices and surveying parents.
- Write and produce reports and work plans, including the WEIC annual report to be submitted by December 31, 2018, to the Governor, General Assembly, State Board of Education, and Secretary of Education. The annual report will include status updates for the commission and committees.
- Write and produce the annual data report on the status of public education for city of Wilmington students. Provide analysis of enrollment, student proficiency, graduation rates, and dropout rates for P-12 students residing within the limits of the City of Wilmington. This includes students attending traditional, vo-tech, and charter schools across the state during the given school year. The report provides a snapshot of public education for students living in the City of Wilmington.
- Support the communication and outreach activities of the Commission and its committees, including the Commission's website, presentations to community groups, and the development of written communications for use in the public media.
- Prepare and submit a final project report (final deliverable) to be submitted to OMB by June 30, 2018.
- Implement the Parent Choice Pilot to further drive forward the objectives of the PEACE committee. A pilot program will be developed and implemented in Wilmington to enhance

educational choices for underserved students/families accessing high quality education options.

- Initiate the creation of a Wilmington Compact among all schools that serve Wilmington students. This compact provides a model for shared best practices, strategies, and tools for successful collaboration among district and charter schools, which can be tailored to fit the highest priority needs of schools in Wilmington. This work lays the groundwork for establishing a sustainable collaborative support structure for public school educators and community stakeholders (city, county, and state public officials, as well as business leaders) who are invested in productive cross-school collaborations in the interest of all students.
- Write policy briefs similar to the brief titled *Child Poverty Policy in Delaware: A Focus on Health and Education*. Topics will be consistent with Commission priorities and may include but are not limited to Wilmington asset mapping, parent engagement, charter authorization, and public education funding.

The contributions of the Project Director Dan Rich, IPA Director Jerome Lewis, and other UD faculty and senior professional staff were supported as part of the public service mission of the university and have been paid by the university. In addition to services supported by the state contract, IPA also contributed staff and student services to the Commission as part of their public service mission. The university also charged no overhead or other indirect costs.

Contributed Services from Other Institutions and Individuals

Contributions of in-kind and pro-bono support from private and nonprofit partners supplemented the work of the Commission. These resources include legal services, other administrative support from Tipton Communications, and research support from policy advisors.

Fund for Urban Education

The contribution from the Fund for Urban Education is reflected as a 10-year commitment of a total of \$100,000 to support the work of the Commission. The contributors to the Fund for Urban Education are Dr. Quinetta Roberson and Dr. Tony Allen with a matching contribution from Bank of America.

In addition to the contributions listed above, thousands of hours were contributed from other people involved in the work. Finally, the work of the members of the Commission and its committees has been critical to the fulfillment of the Commission's responsibilities.

Part VII: Commission Membership

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission Members

As of June 2018

- Tony Allen, Ph.D.**, Chair, Wilmington Resident and Senior Executive, Bank of America
- S. Elizabeth Lockman**, Vice-Chair, Wilmington Parent, Education Advocate, and Public Allies Alumna
- Ralph Ackerman**, Vice President, Brandywine School District Board of Education
- Adriana Bohm**, Member, Red Clay Consolidated School District Board of Education and Sociology Professor, Delaware County Community College
- Eve Buckley, Ph.D.**, Parent and Education Advocate, Christina School District
- The Honorable Nnamdi Chukwuocha**, Chair, Education, Youth & Families Committee, Wilmington City Council and Member, Wilmington Education Advisory Committee
- Karen Eller**, Teacher, Bancroft Elementary School, Christina School District and Member, Wilmington Education Advisory Committee
- Tim Foxx**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Communities in Schools Delaware
- The Reverend Meredith L. Griffin, D.Min.**, Chairperson, Education Committee Interdenominational Ministers Action Council and Member, Wilmington Education Advisory Committee
- Frederika Jenner**, President, Delaware State Education Association
- Yvonne Johnson**, Parent and Education Advocate, Red Clay Consolidated School District
- Joseph T. Laws, III**, President, Colonial School District Board of Education
- Margie López Waite**, Head of School, Las Américas ASPIRA Academy
- Mike Matthews**, President, Delaware State Education Association
- Valentina Maza**, Student, William Penn High School
- Harrie Ellen Minnehan**, President, Christina School District Board of Education
- Tom Ogden**, Deputy Chief of Staff for Fiscal and Operations Management, City of Wilmington
- Joseph Pika, Ph.D.**, Former President, State Board of Education
- The Honorable Charles Potter, Jr.**, Representative, Delaware General Assembly
- The Honorable David P. Sokola**, Senator, Delaware General Assembly
- Michelle A. Taylor**, President and Chief Executive Officer, United Way of Delaware of Delaware

Institute for Public Administration, Project Staff

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Kelly L. Sherretz, Project Manager

Haley Qaissaunee, Administrative Coordinator

Jerome R. Lewis, Ph.D., IPA Director

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Christopher Kelly, Policy Advisor

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October 2016 – June 2018

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