They Matter Most

Investing in Wilmington's Children and Delaware's Future

A REPORT OF THE WILMINGTON NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS COMMITTEE

JANUARY 2001

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Report of the Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee

January 2001

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Comments from the Chairperson

The Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee (WNSC) was created as part of House Bill 300, the Neighborhood Schools Act of 2000. Section 220 of Subchapter II states the purpose of the legislation: "It is the intent and purpose of the General Assembly through this subchapter to establish and implement a plan for neighborhood schools in Northern New Castle County that is fair and equitable to all affected children in New Castle County."

Section 223 articulates the composition, the basic procedural and financial rules, and the charge of the Committee. Included in that charge is a requirement that the Committee review and analyze a wide range of data and, "[b]ased on the information and analysis . . . submit recommendations to the Mayor of the City of Wilmington and the City Council by January 3, 2001 concerning the creation of a Wilmington School District, neighborhood schools within the current district configurations or neighborhood schools under some alternative district configuration." The legislation also stipulates that the Committee hold a number of public hearings "to take testimony and questions from members of the public and other interested stakeholders."

Created by an act of the General Assembly, with appointments being made in April 2000, the Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee worked between May 2000 and January 2001. The Committee organized itself into three workgroups - *Research, Finance,* and *Communications* - which were chaired by Joan Spiegelman, Charles C. Ryan, and Arnetta McRae, respectively. In addition to hosting the *Achievement Matters* conference in September as part of its own education process, the Committee provided several briefings for public officials over the course of its work. The Committee also held public hearings through which it could hear directly from members of the community. A record of all of these proceedings is published under separate cover, to be circulated as part of the public record.

The Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee has recently gone on record reflecting a majority view that the Neighborhood Schools Act is potentially unconstitutional and could illegally create racially identifiable high-poverty schools. We want to emphasize that this committee has endeavored to carry out its charge from the Legislature in good faith and without prejudice. If the shape of our recommendations does not match what some might have expected, it is certainly not because we have failed to follow the procedures for the Committee's work outlined in the legislation. In fact, it is precisely by following the legislation's specified procedures that we have come to recognize the inherent contradictions in what the Legislature has asked us to do.

Testimony from citizens of all races and all income levels and from all parts of New Castle County, including the City of Wilmington, strongly suggests that parents prefer to send their children to schools close to home. However, much of the testimony makes it clear that even more important than parents' preference for neighborhood schools is their desire for high-quality educational opportunities for their children. We also heard people of various races and backgrounds express concern that neighborhood schools could lead to racially isolated schools across Northern New Castle County. We recognize that some parents may wish to send their child to a school farther away for a variety of reasons: the closest school is not highly regarded; the more distant school offers a particular program not available in the "neighborhood" school (not necessarily better, just different); parents may work close to a distant school and want their child near their place of work; parents may want their children educated in a racially integrated setting.

To state it another way, parents do not want to send their children to neighborhood schools if doing so puts their children at a disadvantage. That concern is echoed in the Legislature's stated intent "to establish and implement a plan for neighborhood schools in Northern New Castle County that is fair and equitable to all affected children in New Castle County."

Striving to remain ever mindful of the concerns of parents and the charge of the Legislature, the members of this committee sought to focus on issues of fairness and equity in all of our deliberations. The data that we reviewed revealed gaps in achievement between students residing in the City of Wilmington and their suburban counterparts, among children of different races, and among children of different income levels. We came to realize that any recommendations that we submitted would have to offer the possibility of eliminating these gaps by addressing the needs of each and every student, including those who currently achieve at the lowest levels.

We eliminated one potential option - the creation of a Wilmington school district - because we felt that it could potentially exacerbate, rather than eliminate, the gaps in student achievement. The Committee was sharply divided on this option. However, after vigorous debate and deliberation, the Committee as a whole could not resolve the tension between a desire for local control and a concern about the lack of a fair and equitable, sustainable local resource base, particularly given the special needs of children concentrated in high-poverty schools.
In the end, we were able, within the constraints of the legislation and the further constraint of an extremely short timetable for our work, to come up with two options for neighborhood schools that have the potential to deliver on the Legislature's intent regarding fairness and equity:

- a Metropolitan School District created by combining Wilmington with the Red Clay and Brandywine school districts
- a Wilmington Charter School District (a school district made up entirely of charter schools)

Any plan that aspires to be fair and equitable to all affected children in New Castle County must include *fair and equitable opportunities to learn* for those children whose residence in a particular neighborhood consigns them by law to a high-poverty school. Therefore, the substance of this report lies not just in the description of student assignment plans but also in the articulation of the conditions that must be present within any plan to offer the possibility of fair and equitable opportunities to learn for children in high-poverty schools.

We want to emphasize that this committee was charged with developing *recommendations,* not specific plans for the *implementation* of those recommendations. Nevertheless, in developing the two options recommended in this report, we gave considerable thought to the potential challenges of implementing our recommendations. That experience puts the members of this committee in a unique position to assist in the transition from the recommendation phase to the implementation planning phase. There is a willingness on the part of committee members to work with the Mayor, City Council, other Northern New Castle County school districts, the Legislature, and any other parties involved in planning the implementation of the Committee's recommendations.

While the submission of this report may fulfill our charge from the Legislature, we know that much work remains to be done before New Castle County can boast of neighborhood schools that provide fair and equitable opportunities to learn for all children in the county. The members of this committee feel a personal responsibility to see this work through to its completion, and we stand ready to assist in any way we can.

Respectfully submitted,

H. Raye Jones Avery

H. Raye Jones Avery
Chair
January 3, 2001

Neighborhood Schools: Setting Out to Do the Right Thing

The work of this committee in considering options for pursuing neighborhood schools in Northern New Castle County has been guided by our attention to what we believe would guarantee, as the General Assembly has called for, fair and equitable treatment for all children. We make our recommendations to the Mayor and City Council based on what we believe will guard against creating systematically disadvantaged schools in a Wilmington school system that could easily face uphill political and financial battles from its inception. In formulating our point of view concerning the overall provision of schooling in Wilmington, we set out to envisage an education system that can best assure that:

- the education of the children of Wilmington improves;
- the achievement gap between Wilmington's children and their peers in Northern New Castle County, and between Wilmington and the rest of the state, be eliminated;
- Wilmington's children cease to be divided among four districts with no Wilmington- based mechanism for overseeing their education; and
- the quality and financial health of schools in our city be consistently and adequately provided for in the future.

We then asked ourselves, "How could a neighborhood schools plan effect these considerations?"

Taken at face value, the concept of neighborhood schools is easy to justify. Most parents do prefer that their children (especially their younger children) attend schools close to their homes. It is also easy to argue that reduced transportation time for students to and from school is better for the students and the schools. And one can argue that neighborhood schools foster a sense of pride in the community and can serve as focal points for community activity, as well as increase the likelihood of parent input and engagement in school-related decisions. These arguments make sense and do appeal to most citizens.

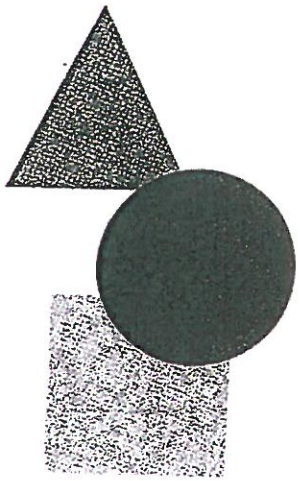
But there is a problem

We fear that assignment based solely on geographic proximity, without adequate attention to the monitoring and enforcing of equitable access to adequate and appropriate opportunities to learn, will serve only to entrench and exacerbate the existing boundaries between income levels and races. Our recommendations to the Mayor and City Council are therefore meant to safeguard against this and are meant to uphold the General Assembly's call for *"fair and equitable treatment of all the affected children."*

Furthermore, cities all over the United States are struggling to get out from under the burden of fiscal and political bases that are insufficient to permit the assurance of a quality education designed to meet the needs of minority children concentrated in high- poverty schools. High-poverty schools are those in which 40% or more of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.[1] Of primary concern to the City of Wilmington, 75% of whose school age children meet this criterion, must be how not to place itself in this exact same disadvantaged situation.[2]

Neighborhood Schools: The Down Side We Must Face Up To

While it is impossible to predict what effect neighborhood schools will have in Delaware, evidence from around the country strongly suggests that in the absence of deliberate desegregation efforts, school populations will revert to a high degree of racial and income-level segregation. Kurlaender and Yun argue that court actions in the late 1990s prohibiting school districts from taking steps to preserve integration have led to serious intensification of segregation and created schools in which minority students must confront high concentrations of poverty.[3]



In a 1999 study Orfield and Yun demonstrate that American public school enrollments show a "pattern of increasing racial segregation for African-American and Latino students."[4] Orfield and Yun show that in 1996-97 more than two thirds of African-American and three quarters of Latino students were in schools that were comprised of more than 50% minority students. Thirty-five percent of both African-American and Latino students were in schools with more than 90% minority enrollment.

This is because of a simple fact: communities all over the United States are segregated by income level and/or by race and ethnicity. A movement away from desegregation and towards neighborhood schools leads to enrollments that simply reflect the income level and ethnic composition of the communities in which schools are located. For example, national data demonstrate that isolated minority schools are 11 times more likely to have high percentages of students from low-income families.[5]

U.S. Schools Are Becoming Increasingly Racially Isolated

1996-97	Percent in Schools that Have	
	Over 50% minority students	Over 90% minority students
African-Americans	69%	35%
Latinos	75%	35%

Source: Orfield & Yun, Resegregation in American Schools, 1999
Figure 1

Wilmington Has More Than Twice as Many Children from Low-Income Families

	Percent of Student Eligible for Free or Reduced-price Lunch
Wilmington	75%
State	33%

Source: Delaware Department of Education, 2000
Figure 2

Wilmington Has a High Concentration of School-age Children

	Black	Hispanic	White
Wilmington	78%	13%	9%
State	31%	5%	64%

Source: Delaware Department of Education, 2000
Figure 3

As the demographic data illustrate, the City of Wilmington has significantly higher percentages of African-American and Hispanic children, children from low-income families (as determined by eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch), Limited English proficient children, and special needs children than the state as a whole (See figures 2- 5).

Because of these basic demographic facts, the creation of neighborhood schools in Wilmington would mean that the average school attended by the city's children will have a greater concentration of poverty, a higher percentage of minority students, and a disproportionate number of special education students and students with limited English abilities.

Figure 6 graphically depicts how the situation of the average Wilmington student could change through implementation of the Neighborhood Schools Act. Using Delaware Department of Education data, we can see the following. At present in Northern New Castle County, Wilmington's children, like all others in the four school districts, attend schools where, on average, 36% of the students are from low-income families. Neighborhood schools could result in Wilmington's children attending schools where, on average, 75% of the children would be from low-income families. Do we really want to create such concentrations of poverty in our schools? And do we really want to do so for students who will be overwhelmingly African American and Hispanic?

...And Has More than Three Times the State Percentage of English Language Learners

	% Limited English Proficient
Wilmington	7.1%
State	2.0%

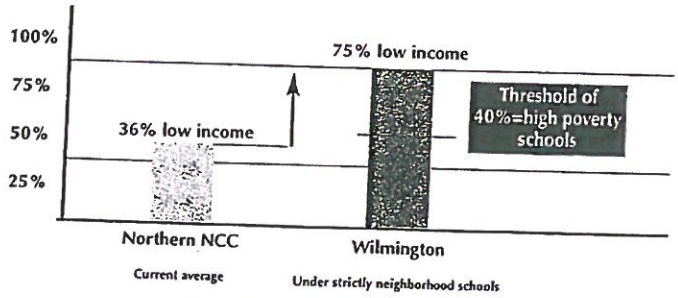
Source: Delaware Department of Education, 2000
Figure 4

...And Has Almost Double the State Percentage of School-age Children with Special Needs

	% Special Education	% Regular Education
Wilmington	21%	79%
State	11%	89%

Source: Delaware Department of Education, 2000
Figure 5

Wilmington's Children Could End Up in Schools with High Concentrations of Poverty

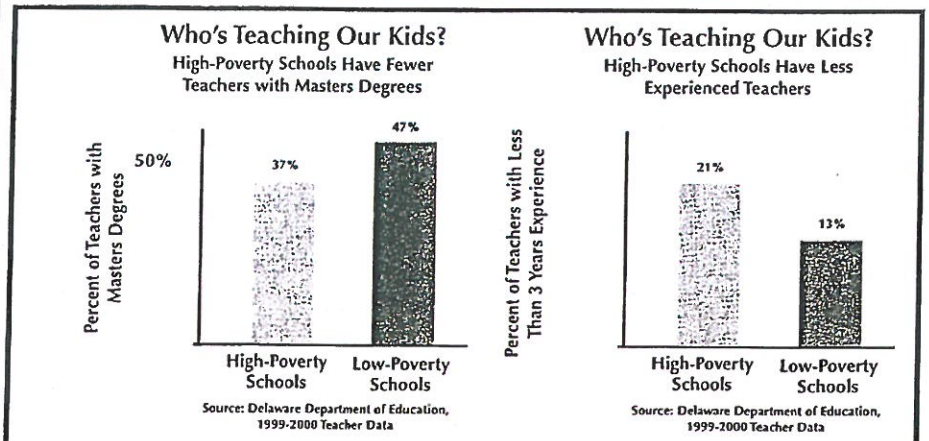


Source: Delaware Department of Education, 2000
Figure 6

Why do we care if minority students end up in schools with high concentrations of poverty?

The abundance of data from around the country demonstrates that schools with the highest concentrations of low-income and/or minority students are the schools that are systematically under-resourced. Higher spending districts consistently have smaller classes; higher paid, better qualified, and more experienced teachers; and greater instructional resources, including a wider range of high-quality course offerings.[6] "School expenditure levels correlate positively with student socioeconomic status and negatively with educational need when school size and grade level are controlled statistically. . . . Teachers with higher salaries are concentrated in high-income and low- minority schools. Furthermore, pupil-teacher ratios are higher in schools with larger minority and low- income student populations. . . . Educational units with higher proportions of low-income and minority students are allocated fewer fiscal and educational resources than are more affluent educational units, despite the probability that these students have substantially greater need for both."[7]

It is obvious to even the most casual observer of American public education that the reason this kind of inequity is possible is the lack of political importance placed on serving the needs of these constituencies. Creating a Wilmington school system in which 75% of the children would be eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and 91% would be minorities would place the city at this same kind of political disadvantage vis-a-vis the rest of the state. From what quarters could we expect to receive the unflagging support needed to secure a continuous stream of resources, effort, and attention to meet the needs of the most disenfranchised members of our society - poor minority children?



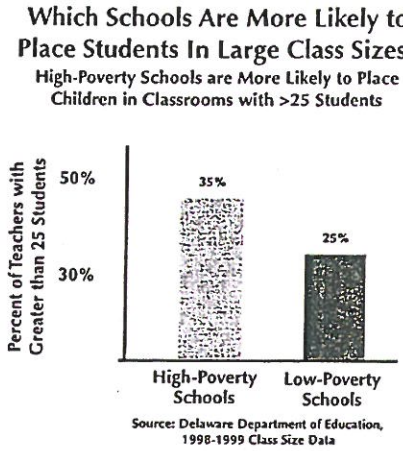


Figure 7

As we consider implementing neighborhood schools, we must face the facts regarding the kind of high-poverty, racially isolated urban schools we could easily end up creating. High- poverty urban schools (more than 40% low income children) face an all-too-familiar list of problems:

- Children perform worse academically than students in low-poverty schools.
- Children read less, get lower grades, have lower attendance rates, and do less homework.
- Peer competition and support for educational achievement are much less evident.
- Children are more likely to have serious developmental delays and untreated health problems and to move during the school year.
- More funding is invested in remedial classes and less in advanced classes.
- Administrators have more difficulty hiring qualified teachers.
- Teachers are more frequently absent than in rural high-poverty schools.
- Student behavior problems occur more frequently, particularly in the areas of absenteeism, classroom discipline, weapons possession, and student pregnancy.
- Students are less likely to feel safe at school.
- Teachers are more likely to report a lack of family involvement as a serious problem.

Many people who look at the data on the educational achievement and attainment of poor and minority children throw up their hands, asking, "What can we be expected to do to educate children from these kinds of circumstances?" We can start by addressing the fact that, in general, urban poor and minority students consistently are offered the least favorable opportunities to learn. Consider information assembled by the Education Trust:

- Low-income children are twice as likely to be taught by uncertified teachers.
- Teachers of students in poor school districts lack resources for teaching reading and math.
- Students in predominantly African- American and Latino schools are more often taught by uncertified teachers.
- African-American and Latino students are less often enrolled in a college preparatory track and take less rigorous math courses.
- Teachers in high-poverty schools spend less time developing students' reasoning skills than their colleagues in more affluent schools. [8]

The argument can be made that teacher certification is neither the only good measure nor a guarantee of teacher quality. We elaborate further on what we believe is needed to ensure high- quality teachers in two later sections. However, across the country, the allocation of non-certified teachers disproportionally to schools serving low- income and/or minority students is indicative of how school systems make decisions regarding the provision of opportunities to learn.

In a study of 900 Texas school districts, Ronald Ferguson found that disparities between the achievement of African-American and White students of similar socioeconomic status could almost entirely be accounted for by differences in the qualifications of their teachers.[9]

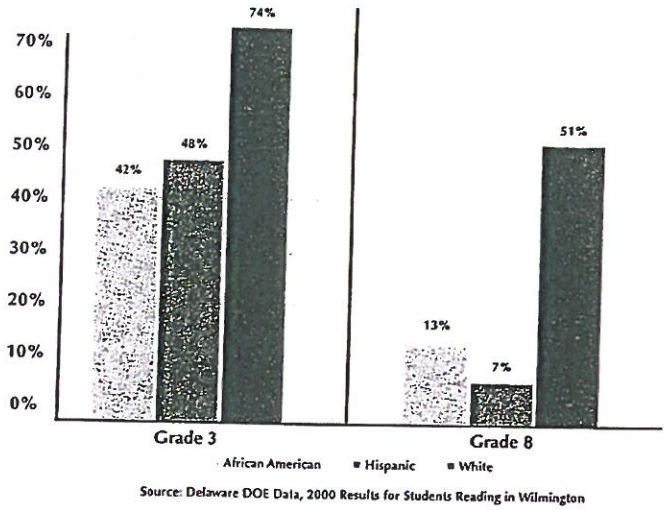
What we know about Northern New Castle County is that already the distribution of resources start to mirror the national patterns referred to above. The charts in figure 7 show that students in schools in which more than 40% are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch have fewer teachers with advanced degrees, have more inexperienced teachers, and have a greater percentage of their classes with more than 25 students in them.

Around the country, state and local education systems are confronting - willingly or through the action of the courts - a reality in which adequately providing for the education of poor children, in poor schools, requires that the kind of inequitable distribution of resources cited above be addressed. In fact, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (34 C.F.R. Part 100) requires that, in federally funded schools, equal learning opportunities must be provided without discrimination.

Knowing that disparities in achievement are primarily due to the stark differences in the learning opportunities offered to children, we can begin to consider the extent to which an achievement gap already exists for low-income and minority children in Northern New Castle County. For example, as measured in 2000 by the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP), a much lower percentage of Wilmington students meet the state standards in reading, writing and math compared with other students in both New Castle County and the state as a whole. This achievement gap is evident in grades three, five and eight, and is even more pronounced when disaggregated by race. Consider the graph in figure 8. African-American and Hispanic children score significantly lower than White children on both the third- and eighth-grade assessments of math performance (and the gap is, in fact, is wider for eighth-grade students).

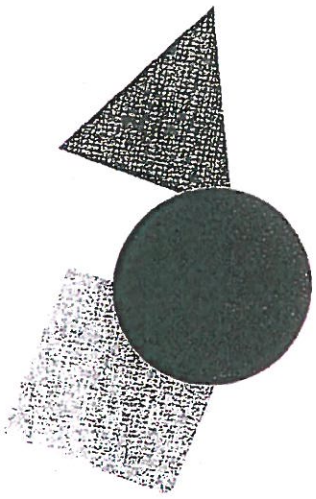
In terms of the achievement gap between students from low-income families and those who are not from low-income households, consider the graph in figure 9. Here we see again a persistent achievement gap across all grades in math between students from low- income families and students who are not from low-income families.

Percent Meeting or Exceeding the Standard in Math
2000 DSTP Results for Wilmington Residents, By Ethnic Group



Source: Delaware DOE Data, 2000 Results for Students Reading in Wilmington

Figure 8

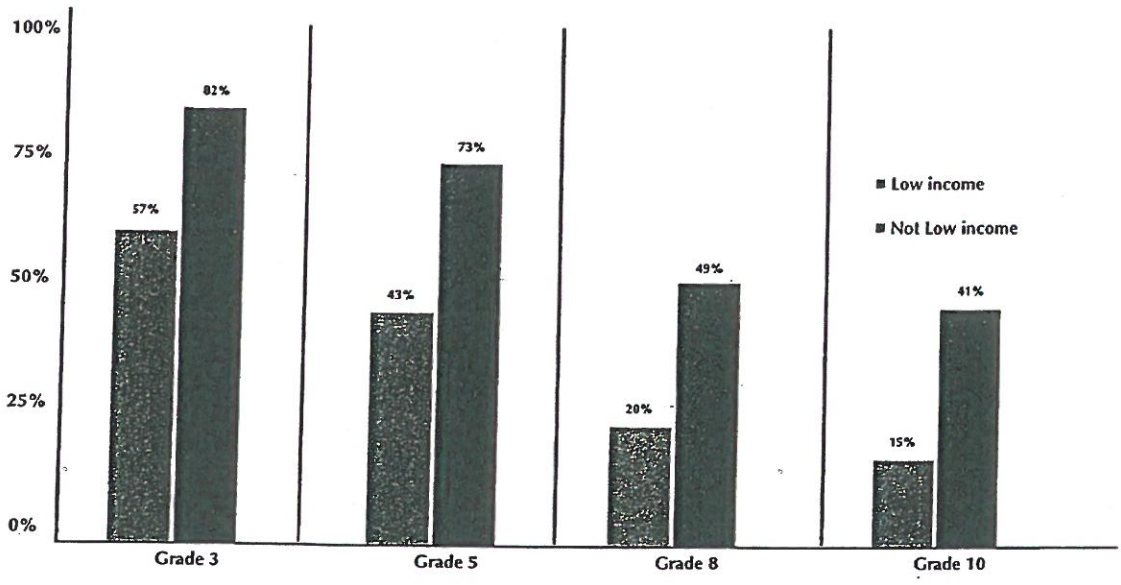


The work of the Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee has been shaped by the stark realities presented in the above discussion. Yes, low-income and minority children realize lower achievement than better off and/or White students. Yes, minority children in schools that have a high concentration of poverty fare even worse. Can we simply blame these children for this poor performance? This next section of the report conveys the amplitude of our resounding "no" to blaming the children and "yes" to taking on the challenge of ensuring equity.

WNSC's Priority Recommendations

We know what the educational challenge is: closing the existing achievement gap for students who live in Wilmington - a challenge made especially daunting by the fact that neighborhood schools could easily further disadvantage Wilmington's students if appropriate remedies are not in place. Whatever the arrangements that are eventually made for implementing the Neighborhood Schools Act, we recommend that those arrangements must assemble, support and ensure an equitable distribution of the components of quality schooling. The committee has worked hard to identify that which research informs us are universal components of quality education, and our findings and recommendations are summarized in the following table.

Percent Meeting or Exceeding the Standard in Math
2000 DSTP Results for Wilmington Residents, By Ethnic Group



Source: Delaware DOE Data, 2000 DSTP Results for the Entire State

Figure 9

Universal Components	Model Features
Student Achievement: Enable all students to achieve	• Increased instructional time, especially in reading and math in early years • Availability of reading specialists in each school • Increased focus on civic responsibility • Student mentoring • Curriculum counselors in all schools (especially middle schools) • Access to personalized college and career counseling • Special education programs which move students into the mainstream as their learning needs are met
Quality Teaching: Enable quality teaching that will have an impact on student achievement	• Innovation in instructional practices and instructional leadership • Highly skilled in content areas • Prepared to teach rigorous curriculum • Diverse methods of instruction to meet diverse learning styles • Focus on literacy and numeracy
School Leadership: Attract and retain visionary and talented school leaders	• Ability to employ instructional leaders representative of the school community • Compensation incentives to attract and retain excellent school staff
Professional Development: Professional development aligned with the standards and adult learning theory and focused on student, teacher, and school needs	• Needs determined by monitoring student progress and identifying corrective actions • Focused on teacher-student interaction • Focused at the school level - responding to the school's needs, aligned with the school's vision of instructional practice, and aligned with standards • On-site professional development in classrooms during the school day • Increased flexible time during year for professional development
Teacher Recruitment/Retention: Recruit quality teachers who have the skills needed to successfully teach urban children	• Compensation incentives competitive with salaries from other urban areas • Alternative certification available to provide flexibility in hiring effective teachers • Waive city wage tax for city teachers • Focus on positive teaching and working environment • Supportive school leadership that enables instruction • Freedom to hire the best candidates competitively during the early spring • Meaningful career ladder • Well-resourced, pleasant working conditions • Coherent mentoring program • Student loan forgiveness program to encourage entry into teaching profession • Freedom from tenure restrictions to move out poor performers
Early Childhood: Provide access for all parents and children to early learning experiences	• Pre-Kindergarten • Full-day Kindergarten • Parents as Teachers - support for new parents • Seamless education extension from early childhood into the primary grades

Universal Components	Model Features
Curriculum Access: Ensure access to challenging curriculum for all students - with no watered- down instruction and none left behind	• Aligned with standards • Rigorous curriculum for all students • More resources invested in advanced classes vs. remediation • Teachers equipped and prepared to teach rigorous curriculum • Availability of arts and music programs
English Language Development: Language learners are engaged in rigorous content learning while mastering English	• Appropriate instruction and support for English Language Learners • Outcome of program - bilingual, biliterate students • Employ the use of appropriate, alternate assessment tools (such as portfolios, etc.) in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act
Smaller Learning Communities: Create smaller learning communities to ensure individualized learning for all students	• Small school size • Smaller student-teacher ratios during instructional time • Collective responsibility for all children in small learning community
Parent Involvement: Foster all parents to be involved in their child's learning	• Establish Parent Resource Centers • Creation of a welcoming environment for parents by school staff designated for that task • Strategies for engaging parents in the day-to-day support of their child's learning needs • Help parents select their child's education program • Offer parent training - empower parents as to how to ask the right questions • Involve parents in meaningful site-based decision making
Accountability: Hold the school community (administrators, teachers, parents, school board members) accountable for meeting student performance standards	• External, independent oversight group for monitoring and evaluation to look at Equity; Achievement growth; Teacher quality; Governance; Curriculum access • Make results public - engage parents, hold hearings, analyze data • Shared accountability between local school and district • Accountability rests with the principal and building team - teachers, parents, and students - and has real consequences for adults • Financial consequences when performance criteria are not met • Determine student progress and learning needs through the use of multiple measures, not through a single test
Governance: Promote building-level decision-making shared by the school community	• Principal is still the chief executive of the school with clear lines of authority but supports shared decision making at the school level • School decisions shared by teachers, parents, administrators

The Committee wants to avoid a situation wherein a neighborhood schools plan translates into a plan for creating advantaged and disadvantaged schools, with most of the disadvantage concentrated in the City of Wilmington. With that in mind, the following two sections of the report present two categories of our recommendations. In discussing these recommendations, we expand on many of the universal elements included in the table just presented.

The first category of recommendations concerns the factors that we think, and that research shows, are necessary to create quality learning opportunities for all children, and especially for the minority students attending schools with high concentrations of poverty. The second category looks at four broad system-level issues that a successful school system serving Wilmington children must be able to address.

Recommendations for Creating Quality Learning Opportunities

Ultimately we want to have high expectations and rigorous standards that apply to all children. However, if we truly expect all students to rise to those expectations, then we must pay attention to the opportunities each child is afforded to learn. When some students have unqualified or inexperienced teachers and outdated textbooks, sit in dilapidated buildings, or do not get to take advanced math or science classes, can we truly expect them to demonstrate the same standard of learning and achievement as those who have the best teachers, materials and facilities and access to a full array of advanced and enriched course offerings? When these kinds of inequities exist in the allocation of resources, can we say that we have fulfilled our part of the bargain in providing an adequate learning opportunity for all children?

Sadly, what we know is that school districts around the country systematically place poor children in these kinds of disadvantageous situations. Luckily, research, experience and wisdom from around the country can also inform us as to what factors are most critical in determining the quality of every child's opportunity to learn. Our job in considering how to establish a new system of schools for Wilmington is to make sure that we take into account this knowledge and construct the means to assure that learning opportunities that reflect these critical factors are available for all children.

Quality Teachers

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) states that quality teaching is what matters most in improving student achievement. Teacher expertise accounts for 40% (more than any other single factor) of the variance in students' reading and math achievement in grades one through eleven.[10] Ferguson also reports that every dollar spent on more highly qualified teachers netted greater increases in student achievement than did less instructionally focused uses of school resources.[11]

William M. Sanders points out that students whose achievement levels are initially comparable have "vastly different academic outcomes as a result of the sequence of teachers to which they are assigned."[12] In a study of teachers and students in Tennessee, Sanders showed that students initially identified as low performing, when assigned to teachers rated as least effective realized an average yearly gain of14 percentile points in their standardized achievement test results. The same caliber of students, when assigned to a teacher rated as most effective, had gains that averaged 53 percentile points.

Ferguson's longitudinal study of Texas schools, results of which are in the chart in figure 10, shows that high-scoring (on Ferguson's measure of teacher expertise) teachers in the 1st and 3rd grade can put low-performing students on a path to dramatically improved achievement.[13] His study also demonstrates that low-scoring teachers can drag down initially high-achieving students. Less than one month ago, in December 2000, the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released Monitoring School Quality: An Indicators Report, which reiterates that an ever growing body of research supports quality teaching as the most important determinant of school quality. Many studies conclude that to ensure teacher excellence, teachers should:

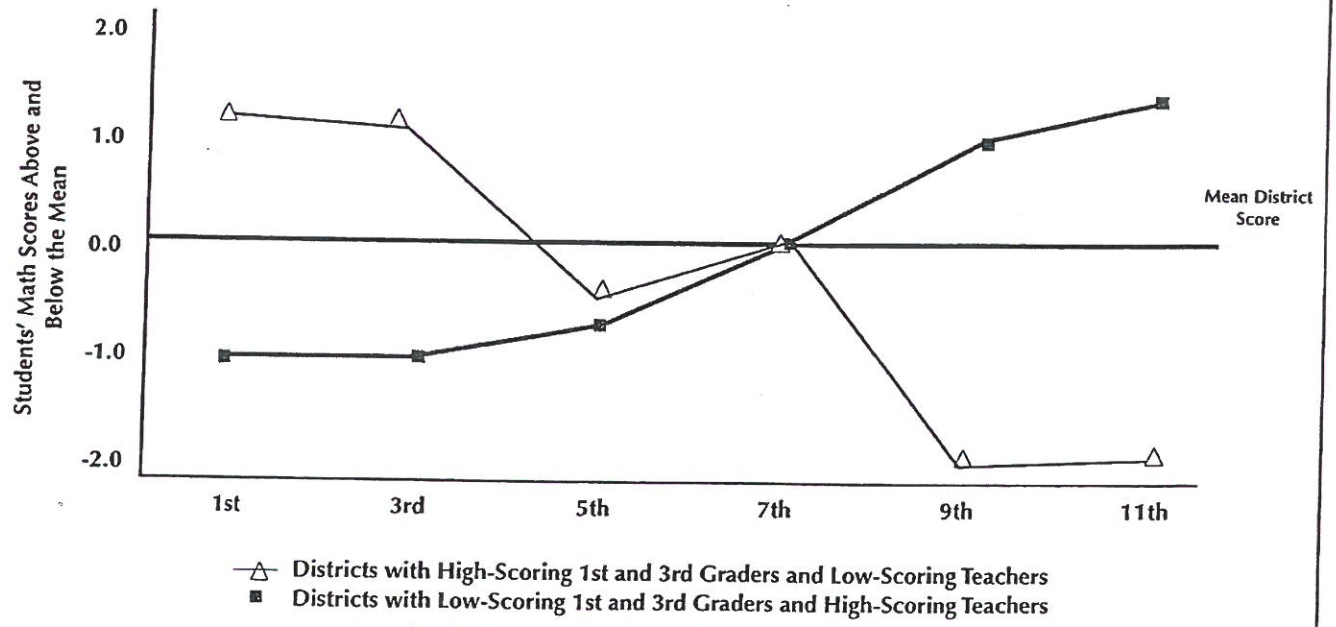
- have high academic skills
- be required to teach in the field in which they received their training
- have more than a few years of experience (to be most effective)
- participate in high-quality induction and professional development programs

What seems to make intuitive sense is now being proven quite consistently throughout the research: that students learn more from teachers with strong academic skills. "Goldhaber and Brewer (1997), Darling-Hammond (2000), and Monk and King (1994) found that subject matter preparation is related to student achievement."[14] Other researchers suggest that academic performance can be gauged by teachers' performance on standardized tests.[15] For disadvantaged, low-income students this data is alarming.

NCES reports in its 1993 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study that "college graduates with the highest college entrance examination scores were consistently less likely than their peers with lower scores to prepare to teach, and when they did teach, they **were less likely to teach students from disadvantaged backgrounds.** Teachers in the top quartile were one-third as likely as teachers in the bottom quartile to teach in high-poverty schools (10 versus 31 percent)."[16]

We conclude that a critical consideration in creating a system of schools to serve the students of Wilmington is attracting, retaining and equitably distributing high-quality teachers.

Long-Range Effects of Low-Scoring and High-Scoring Teachers on Student Achievement (Texas)



Taken from "Good Teaching Matters," The Education Trust, 1998.
Source: Ronald F. Ferguson, "Evidence That Schools Can Narrow the Black-White Test Score Gap," 1997

Figure 10

Smaller Schools, Smaller Classes, Closer Relationships Between Adults and Children

In the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis in education in America was on garnering economies of scale through the creation of large schools. Nothing could have been more wrong-headed. While there may be some cost savings to be realized in creating a large, comprehensive high school, for example, if those "savings" are realized at the expense of children's learning opportunities, then they are clearly not saving us anything. A large body of research gathered by the Small Schools Workshop at the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago shows what small schools can do (as summarized in figure 11).[17]

Small Schools can:

- raise student achievement
- reduce incidents of violence or disruptive behavior
- combat student anonymity and isolation
- increase attendance and graduation rates
- elevate teacher satisfaction
- improve school climate
- be more cost effective
- be as good as or better than big schools

Source: Small Schools Workshop at the University of Illinois-Chicago

Figure 11

Deborah Meier, who established widely heralded small schools in New York City's East Harlem neighborhood, highlights six key advantages of small schools. "First, even if we're talking only about individual classrooms, size is important. But if we're talking about the creation of a thoughtful school culture size becomes decisive - especially if we're trying to create a changed culture. The second reason for small schools is that if the faculty are to be held responsible for their work not individually but collectively, they must have access to each other's work. Third, above all small schools mean we can get to know a student's work, the way he or she thinks. If it's thinking that we're seeking, then it's thinking that we must get to observe, and this requires seeing children over time. . . . It means that every adult in the school feels responsible for every kid and has insights that when shared can open up a seemingly intractable situation to new possibilities. Fourth, small schools offer safety - plain, ordinary physical safety. . . . They offer what metal detectors and guards cannot: the safety and security of being where you are known well by people who care for you. Fifth, in small schools the accountability we owe to parents and the public is a matter of access, not of complex governing bodies or monitoring arrangements. . . . Principals in huge schools survive by creating a climate in which most teachers and most parents don't expect to meet them, much less get to know them. The strategy is a matter of organizational necessity. The result is that administrators can be held accountable only for indirect indicators of performance because that's all they know - 'standardized' stuff, easily manipulated and inauthentic. Finally, only in small schools can we reasonably speak of immersing students in a culture that adults have played a significant role in shaping. . ."[18]

If we can be successful in creating smaller schools, then we must consider the ratio of adults to students in those buildings. The Council of Great City Schools argues that growing evidence demonstrates that reducing class sizes can have a long-lasting effect on student achievement, and particularly on the achievement of children in poverty. Reducing class size is shown to give every student more of the teacher's time and more individualized attention.[19]

Conventionally, we talk of class size as a proxy for measuring what we inherently understand: having fewer children per teacher makes it easier for each teacher to provide the attention and effort required to guide and assist each student's learning. Additional research shows that it is not just reduction of class size that matters, but the ratio of students to professional staff during core instructional periods. In their study of urban schools, the Institute for Research and Reform in Education (IRRE) found that overall student-to-adult ratios range from 10 to 1, to 14 to 1 (excluding non-certificated adult staff such as secretarial, janitorial, etc). In the same schools with such overall ratios, the student-to-adult ratio during core instructional periods ranges from 25 to 1, to 30 to 1.[20] Other work (particularly by Miles and Darling-Hammond) identifies the same patterns of staffing across the country.[21]

Equally important as the lower ratios during core instruction is the continuity of relationships between the students and adults in a school. The Institute for Research and Reform in Education argues for relationships that keep the same teachers and students together for three years. Teachers who have implemented this kind of continuity of care at the elementary, middle and high school levels report that the social and academic benefits more than offset the challenges of adjusting schedules and assignments to allow this.[22]

We recommend that Wilmington schools organize students in smaller learning communities, where children stay with the same teachers for multiple years, within smaller schools, where there is greater focus and effort targeted to core instruction in literacy and math.

Early Literacy

Children begin to develop their language skills in infancy. A baby shows excitement over pictures in a storybook, a two-year-old scribbles with a crayon, a four-year-old points out letters in a street sign. These kinds of actions signal a child's stages of emerging literacy. Encouragement of a child's natural pursuit of language skills is a necessary ingredient for the development of early literacy. The first teacher a child has is his or her parent or guardian, who by encouraging curiosity, interest and experimentation with language, helps build the child's pre-reading skills.

Many communities and school systems around the country recognize the need to assist parents directly, beginning in their children's early years, as a strategy that also contributes to the children's success in school and, in particular, in literacy acquisition. Parent resource centers, Even Start, parent education programs, Parent and Child Education, and a variety of skill development and support efforts are succeeding in helping the families of children as a means to help the children do better in school.

For example, the Parent and Child Education program combines preschool for 3- and 4- year-olds with adult basic education as a way to improve the children's learning skills, raise parents' educational levels, increase parents' educational expectations for their children, and to develop positive relationships between school and the home. Other programs, like the MegaSkills Education Center, provide practical help and skills development for families working to help their children to learn. Many other programs offer English as a Second Language classes, General Educational Development (GED), computer skills, and other courses as additional contributions to building family capacity and creating educationally supportive home environments, as well as better relationships between the home and school. What these programs often identify as key to their success in helping families includes responding to the participants needs by providing things like transportation and day care, scheduling classes at times convenient for families, working in the language of the population being served, and valuing an open and participatory process for decision making.[23]

Returning our attention to the children's formal schooling, research studies confirm that attendance in full-day kindergarten results in academic and social benefits for students.[24] Cryan et al. are among the researchers who have found a broad range of effects, including a positive relationship between participation in full-day kindergarten and later school performance. After comparing similar half-day and full-day programs in a statewide longitudinal study, Cryan et al. found that full-day kindergartners exhibited more independent learning, classroom involvement, productivity in work with peers, and reflectiveness than half-day kindergartners. They were also more likely to approach the teacher, and they expressed less withdrawal, anger, shyness, and blaming behavior than half-day kindergartners. In general, children in full-day programs exhibited more positive behaviors than did pupils in half-day or alternate-day programs. Results similar to those of Cryan et al. have been found in other studies.[25] These positive effects and the academic gains in the first years of school support the value of developmentally appropriate full-

day kindergarten.

Another necessary component for reading success is, of course, excellent reading instruction throughout the early primary grades. Although there is no single reading program that can solve all problems, most effective programs share certain common features. Formal instruction in reading needs to focus on the development of two sorts of mastery: word recognition and comprehension. Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children makes several recommendations for reading instruction for kindergarten through third grade. If we are to prevent reading difficulties among the current generation of children in America, we must provide them with opportunities to:

- explore the many uses and functions of written language and develop mastery of them;
- understand, learn, and use the relationships between the spellings of words and the sounds of speech to recognize and spell written words;
- practice and enhance vocabulary, language, and comprehension skills;
- have adults read to them and discuss and react to the literature;
- experience enthusiasm, joy, and success in learning to read and write, use reading and writing as tools for learning;
- participate in effective prevention programs as early as possible if they are at risk of potential reading difficulties; and
- receive effective intervention and remediation programs, well-integrated with their everyday classroom activities, as soon as they begin to have difficulty.[26]

Early Intervention in Reading (EIR) was developed in 1989 by Barbara Taylor of the University of Minnesota. Since that time over 200 schools in Minnesota and throughout the country have used EIR with over 11,500 struggling readers in grades K-4.

EIR is a daily, 20-minute small group supplemental reading program taught by the classroom teacher to a group of five to seven struggling readers. The goal of the program is to have students become confident and independent readers.

Main Features:

- daily reading and writing sessions for small groups of struggling students focus on strategies and independence
- phonemic awareness training (K-2)

Two other research-proven approaches to early literacy are:

The Literacy Collaborative, originally known as the Early Literacy Learning Initiative, originated in 1986 as a collaboration between staff members from The Ohio State University and Reading Recovery and classroom teachers from the Columbus Public Schools.

Breakthrough to Literacy was founded by Carolyn Brown and Jerry Zimmermann in 1981 at the University of Iowa. Since its initial implementation in Dallas public schools in 1994, Breakthrough (previously called Foundations in Reading) has been adopted in over 1,100 schools in 19 states, serving over 25,000 children.

Source: Early Intervention in Reading, 1999

National assessments have continued to show great need for improving reading instruction in many schools, especially high-poverty schools. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows serious deficiencies in children's ability to read. More than two-thirds of fourth-graders in high-poverty schools are unable to reach the NAEP basic level. Even in wealthier schools, almost a quarter of fourth-graders are unable to attain the basic level.[27]

The mission of public schooling is to offer every child full and equal educational opportunity, regardless of the background, education, and income of their parents. To achieve this goal, no time is as precious or as fleeting as the first years of formal schooling. Research consistently shows that children who get off to a good start in reading rarely stumble. Those who fall behind tend to stay behind for the rest of their academic lives.[28] Supplementary tutoring and remedial instruction can help young readers who are doing poorly. But for all children indeed to have equal educational opportunity, they must have excellent curricula - right from the start - in their classrooms, from kindergarten through the primary grades. Some examples of research-proven early literacy programs are presented in figure 12.

Full Complement of Services

Many states, cities, and communities have developed and implemented models to link schools with a wide range of health, early childhood, extended day, violence prevention, and family and community education services. Variously referred to as community schools, full-service schools, and family resource centers, these models differ in the scope and variety of services they offer, the ways in which the services are delivered, and the arrangements by which they are funded. What they have in common is a belief that schools occupy a position of central importance in communities and, as such, are a logical focal point for bringing together access to the kinds of services, supports, and enrichment activities that both schoolchildren and their families need in order to survive and flourish.

This is particularly true in areas with high concentrations of poverty, such as Wilmington. The state of Delaware has demonstrated its commitment to school-linked services through the establishment of school-based health centers in high schools throughout the state. While that is a significant step in the right direction, we must continue to explore every opportunity to expand, coordinate, and integrate the range of services available to students and families in high-poverty communities and to take advantage of the power of schools to provide the focal point for such linkages.

The WNSC recommends that Wilmington schools offer full-day kindergarten; programs to help parents assist in developing children's reading readiness and early literacy skills; and programs with a strong focus on early primary grade instruction in literacy.

When it comes to student achievement, it is true that even the best support services cannot serve as a substitute for good teaching and learning in the classroom. However, common sense and a great deal of anecdotal evidence tell us that students who do not have access to health services, appropriate counseling, and enrichment activities do not enjoy the same opportunities to learn as students who have such access. Summarizing the emerging research about various school-linked services models, Joy Dryfoos concludes that, although the correlation between school-linked services and student achievement has been difficult to document thus far, "Enough is known about these models to warrant wide replication."[29]

A critical feature of school-linked services is the partnerships that need to be formed for the coordination, complementarity and conjoining of the variety of services and supports that children and their families may need. The school system, county and state agencies, community-based, faith- based or other private voluntary organizations all need to align and coordinate their efforts if comprehensive services are to be made available to support children and their families.

An example of this kind of coordinated full- service school model is New Beginnings in San Diego. "Through a broad collaboration that includes the Department of Social Services; the county's health and probation departments; the city's housing, parks and recreation, and police departments; libraries; and the San Diego Community College, the program offers family support, social services, health care, case management and referrals."[30] Another example comes from New York City. The Children's Aid Society has formed a collaboration with Community School District 6 to develop full- service schools at Intermediate Schools 218 and 155, schools built specifically to accommodate health, mental health and social services and, in the after-school and evening hours, parent/family activities, recreation, and educational enrichment."[31]

We recommend that the state and local authorities promote and actively seek partnership arrangements among the variety of health, family welfare and educational service providers.

Here in Delaware, the Delaware Division of State Service Centers administers a statewide network of 14 service centers, 7 of which are located in New Castle County. "These centers . . . serve as multi-service facilities in which various public and private agencies are collocated, with the goal of promoting access to Delaware's health and human service system through Division staff specializing in community resources and providing client support services that promote increased accessibility, enhanced service integration and efficient service monitoring. Annually, more than 600,000 visits are made to State Service Centers throughout Delaware. Based on demographic analyses and community outreach, each service center provides a mix of services appropriate to the communities which it serves. There are over 160 programs and services delivered through state service centers."[32]

Standards-Based Instruction

Over the past fifteen years, standards-based reform has emerged as a priority for school improvement in many states. Simply put, standards define what children should know and be able to do. By setting clear and high standards, policymakers, business leaders, parents and local community members hope to curb mediocre and poor student performance, and just as importantly, raise performance expectations for all students.

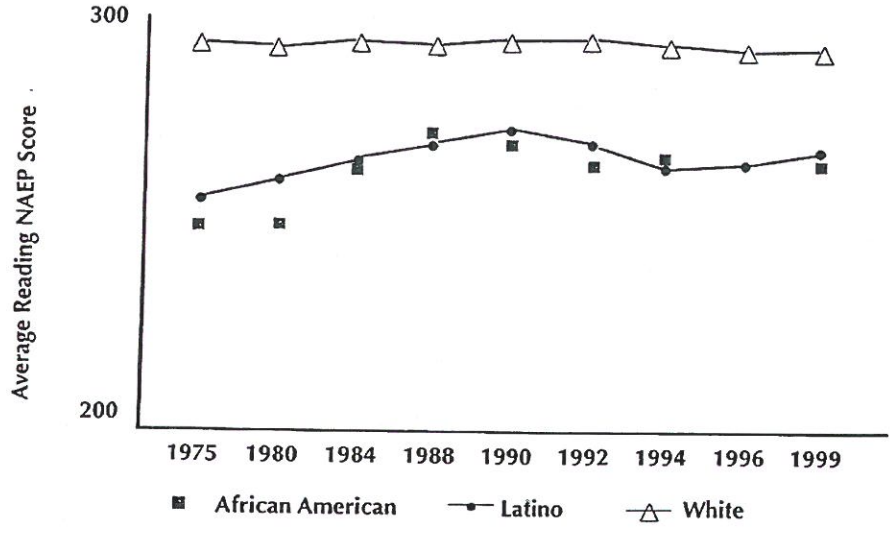
Today, nearly every state is implementing some variation of standards-based reform, Delaware included. Forty-four states have adopted standards in all four core subjects - English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Forty-one states have assessments aligned with standards in at least one core subject.[33]

Standards are the means through which we can better ensure equal expectations for each and every child. Fundamental to a standards-based education is the concept that all children can learn to high standards; the basic educational challenge faced by schools and school districts is how to create the range of learning opportunities that will enable each child to rise to such standards. The Education Commission of the States reports that the little research that has been done on standards suggests the following:

- Standards have the potential to be an engine of change and improvement, but only if other system components are redesigned as well- teacher education and professional development, curriculum, assessment, accountability, and resource allocation.
- States focused on aligning the components of their education system with standards have shown improvement in student achievement and school quality.[34]

Based on 1999 NAEP Trends in Academic Progress, reported by the U.S. Department of Education, a clear performance gap exists between African-American, Hispanic, and White students and has persisted over twenty-five years (see figure13). Why is this so? Proponents of standards contend that different students are held to different expectations. In addition, low-income and/or minority students are more likely to be taught by less qualified teachers and less likely to take the advanced courses that lead to higher achievement scores. And, these same students often have fewer instructional resources.[35]

Gap Narrows, Then Widens
NAEP Reading Scores of 17 Year-Olds



Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress(p. 107) Washington, DC: US Department of Education, August 2000

Figure 13

Top-performing High-poverty Schools:

- report extensive use of standards to design curriculum and instruction, assess student work and evaluate teachers.
- increase the instructional time in reading and math in order to help students meet standards.
- are spending larger proportions of Title I dollars on professional development.
- have comprehensive systems to monitor student mastery of standards and provide extra support to those who need it.
- have state or district accountability systems in place that have real consequences for adults in the schools.
- focus their efforts to involve parents on helping students meet standards.

Source: Education Trust, *Dispelling the Myth*, 1999

Figure 14

Achievement gaps will persist and continue to be perpetuated unless corrected. As Linda Darling-Hammond and the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future note, "States that instituted new tests in the 1980s without investing in teaching did not experience improved achievement."[36]

In 1999, when the U.S. Department of Education released its study of high-performing, high-poverty, urban elementary schools, Secretary Riley summed up the findings by saying, "What stands out among these schools is a clear and unrelenting focus on high standards, a commitment to serving children and ensuring their academic success, and a collective sense of responsibility and persistence among school staff."[37] The Education Trust's work on high-poverty, high-minority schools that achieve at the highest levels also concluded that high standards are a critical feature that undergirds almost every facet of schools' successes. For schools that rely on standards as an essential feature of how classrooms and instruction are organized, the achievement gap can be closed.

But, as the research also points out, standards alone do not raise student achievement.

The message of setting high standards is clear and compelling: setting high standards underlies much school success. But if real achievement gains are required, standards should be coupled with creating fair and equitable opportunities to learn.

While meeting the challenge of educating children in high-poverty, racially isolated schools may seem daunting, our contention is not only that it can be done, but that it must be done.

Several recent studies indicate that by assembling and assuring exactly the kinds of opportunities to learn that we are recommending, schools around the country are succeeding in meeting this challenge. The Education Trust identified high-poverty schools - with 90% low-income students - that were obtaining high levels of achievement. They then compiled the characteristics of those schools (see figure 14).[38] The U.S. Department of Education did a similar study looking at high-poverty, high- performing urban elementary schools.[39] And the school district of El Paso is widely recognized as an education system that has succeeded in not only increasing achievement but also in closing the gap between White and minority students.

Recommendations for a Fair and Equitable System of Schools

In addition to the educational challenges that a school system serving the City of Wilmington must meet, we foresee five system-level challenges to such a system: finance, management of the teaching force, teaching and English language development, accountability, and public engagement. All across the United States school districts (and urban districts in particular) are not rising to meet these challenges. We strongly recommend that, whatever the model chosen to govern and manage the operation of schools in Northern New Castle County, attention be paid to the need to establish the appropriate policies and operational mechanisms that can make our city, unlike the rest of the country, able to meet this challenge.

Finance

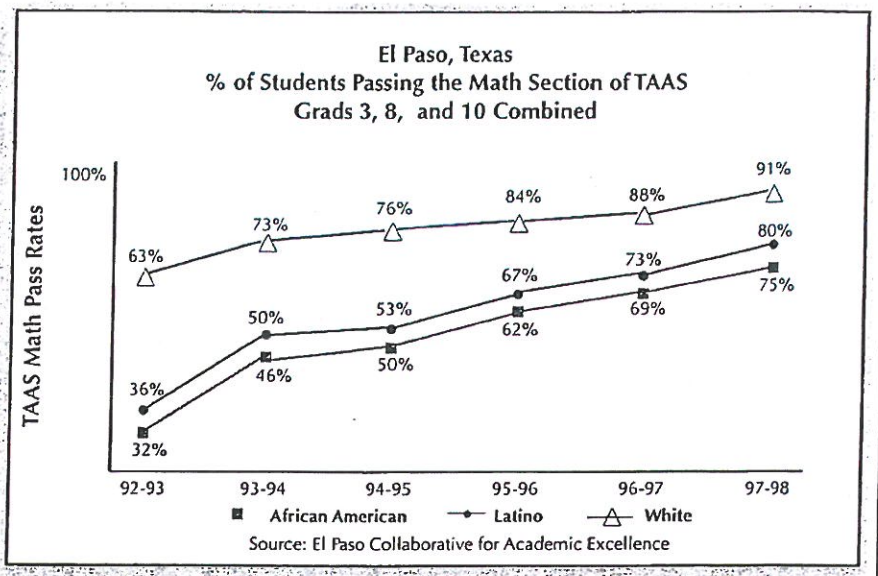
Whoever operates or oversees the operation of schools in the City of Wilmington, the most critical system-level issue they will need to address is assuring the appropriate funding for those schools. We examined the question of assuring the resource needs of Wilmington schools from two perspectives.

The issue of finance cannot be raised without calling attention to the long-term fiscal health of any system of schools serving Wilmington's children. The history

The Gap Can Be Closed

In 1992, leaders at the University of Texas-El Paso and the three El Paso area school districts came together and formed the El Paso Collaborative. The Collaborative's goal was to prepare every young person in this highly impoverished city to enter college without remediation.

Over the ensuing five years, the El Paso Collaborative focused its effort on what matters most to improving student achievement: excellent teaching. Through the collaborative, teachers received intensive assistance in improving instruction. Meanwhile, leaders at the University made major changes in the way they were preparing teachers, ensuring that future teachers were fully prepared to teach to the El Paso standards.



The results as depicted here: higher overall math achievement, continual improvement year-after-year, while substantially narrowing the achievement gap between African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites.

Adapted from *"Good Teaching Matters," The Education Trust*, 1998, 14

of school finance in Northern New Castle County is tied directly to the federal court order that created the consolidated tax district as part of the strategy for enabling desegregation to take place. The court at that time had the foresight to recognize that whether or not the city's children would be treated fairly would depend to a great extent on whether funding for schools would be distributed equitably. [40]

No greater harm could be done to the future education of the children of Wilmington than to put forth a plan for a system of schools that forces the city, by itself, to raise the required local contribution to match the state's funding. Separating Wilmington's schools from an important part of its current local tax base - the New Castle Consolidated Tax District - would severely threaten the current and long-term viability of any Wilmington neighborhood schools plan. This is true for three reasons.

First of all, Wilmington children, by attending schools in the four districts, currently benefit from the level of per student and per unit local funding those districts are able to generate. Delaware Department of Education estimates indicate that removing Wilmington from the consolidated tax district would result in a loss of roughly $5.5 million (20%) in local revenue for city children, with a concomitant reduction in the per student and per unit funding available locally.[41] Reduction in local revenue hits Wilmington particularly hard because the city has disproportionately more special education students than the rest of Northern New Castle County.

While the state does provide additional resources for special education-related units, those resources can only be used for special education children. Furthermore, every unit allocated from the state requires a local match, so additional special education students in Wilmington still call for additional local revenue. City resources would have to be stretched in a way that other localities' funds are not.

Secondly, separation from the consolidated tax district could place the city in a position where it would have to raise its local tax rate. At present, because the city participates in the consolidated tax district, schools that Wilmington children attend benefit from two sources of local funding - the consolidated tax district and the additional local revenue raised by

Educating Students from Low-income Families Costs More

Research on school finance indicates that state funding in many states does include various devices designed to compensate for differences in local tax bases. However, most state aid formulas do not account, in any systematic way, for differences in costs - either in terms of the variation in teacher or other input costs within a state, or in terms of the additional costs associated with educating children with different needs. Reschovsky and Imazeki have done analyses of school cost data to try and establish guidelines for weighted funding formulae that would take into account the extra costs associated with educating children from poor families. In their work they are quick to recognize that the concentration of such children in a school has a profound impact on costs.[42] They argue, and their analysis supports, two facts:

- It costs more to educate each individual additional poor child in a school
- Above a certain threshold, costs rise even more for each additional low-income child

Their work (and others' work as well) suggests strongly that state compensatory or equalization funding formulae must take these facts into consideration.

Figure 16

each of the four districts. If there were no longer a consolidated tax district, Wilmington schools would need to rely on local revenue which the city would generate wholly on its own, implying a substantial increase in local taxes given the city's low level (compared with the suburbs) of taxable assets. It is important to note that the state equalization formula is not designed to make up for the lower level of local revenue of a jurisdiction such as Wilmington.

Thirdly, the city is at a distinct disadvantage in terms of the long-term prospects for its tax base. If a school system serving Wilmington's children had to rely on city tax revenue for its local contribution, it would start out with an assessed value lower than three of the four existing Northern New Castle County school districts. And the prospects for development in the region point to increasing disparity between the growth and wealth of the suburban jurisdictions and the city.

For these three reasons, the WNSC is very concerned that any proposal put forth for enacting neighborhood schools either leave intact the consolidated tax district as a base of funding for city schools, or replace that mechanism with a tax base that would be at least equally as robust and with similar prospects for long-term health. Barring such an arrangement, the state would be called on to devise an appropriately compensatory funding mechanism, one that would serve even better than the current equalization and state school- funding formulae, to make up for an inadequate local tax base (see figure 16 for further discussion of what this implies).

In addition to our concern for the long-term financial base for city schools, we are also concerned with the question of equity. Over the last twenty years, existing approaches to school finance in the U.S. have been successfully challenged in state courts and in several cases have in fact been found to be inherently inequitable, unjust, and an impediment to a child's right to an adequate education.[43] What are needed are funding mechanisms that account for the challenges inherent in educating all children to high standards. As a nation we have decided that it is no longer acceptable to educate one set of children to high standards, while consigning another set of students to low expectations. And we are no longer willing to work to fulfill our low expectations for low- income and minority students by systematically under-resourcing and disadvantaging their schools. Therefore, our challenge is to provide resources for schools serving low-income students not based on per capita financial parity. Rather, as stated by the Wake County Superior Court judge in Hoke County v. State of North Carolina, 95 CVS 1158, we need to base funding on assuring "opportunities and services over and above those provided the general student population in order to put [economically disadvantaged children] in a position to obtain an equal opportunity to receive a sound basic education."

The WNSC has concluded that the city of Wilmington should not be left on its own to raise the local resources required to adequately contribute to the learning needs of its children. We feel strongly that the state will need to provide additional resources to schools serving the children from low-income families in the city.

Attracting, Retaining and Adequately Supporting High-quality Teachers

No system factor has more influence on the learning opportunities offered to children than the quality of the teachers a school district is able to employ. The ability of any school district, and an urban school system in particular, to attract and retain good teachers is a function of many factors. Primary among these are the prevailing demographic and labor market trends among teachers. Like much of the country, New Castle County will be facing retirements of existing teachers right at the point when demand for quality professionals is escalating. State Department of Education data from 1998 showed that 28% of the K-12 teachers in the county were at that time already eligible for service pension. As those teachers inevitably begin to retire, all New Castle County districts will be faced with attracting and retaining qualified replacements, and city schools will be forced to compete with the surrounding jurisdictions in an increasingly competitive marketplace for teachers. One important lesson from the implementation of class-size reduction in California was that generalized increased demand for teachers pulled experienced and qualified teachers to wealthier, suburban districts, leaving emergency credentialed and largely inexperienced teachers to work in urban schools.[44]

The WNSC feels strongly that Wilmington will have to be afforded certain financial advantages to enable the city to compete on relatively equal footing for quality teachers. At the state level, the Delaware Department of Education has already recognized the need to make Delaware teachers' salaries competitive with other states and school systems in the region.[45] We endorse the Education Salary Schedule Improvement Committee's and the Delaware DOE's recommendations to raise starting teacher salaries, as well as to explore the possibility of linking teacher monetary rewards to student performance.[46] We think additional interventions will be needed on the part of an urban center like Wilmington that could end up serving predominantly poor and minority students. For example, the Mayor and City Council may want to consider waiving the city wage tax for teachers as a way to create a financial incentive for individuals to seek teaching positions in schools serving Wilmington's children.

In examining the current trends in demand and supply of teachers, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) estimated conservatively that the country will need to hire at least 2 million teachers during the current decade. This level of demand may seem daunting, but NCTAF contends that for many years the country has graduated more new teachers than it hires. Nevertheless, shortages persist in certain fields of teaching and in certain school districts. These shortages are a problem of distribution rather than of absolute numbers.[47]

In almost every teaching field, schools with the largest numbers of low-income and minority students have greater difficulty filling vacancies. Wealthy districts that pay high salaries and offer more pleasant working conditions rarely experience shortages in any field. Districts that serve low-income students tend to pay teachers less and offer larger class sizes, fewer materials, and less desirable teaching conditions - including less professional autonomy.[48] Distribution of teachers is also an issue within any school district or educational jurisdiction. Senior, highly qualified teachers gravitate towards the schools serving fewer minority or low-income students. Newly hired, too often unqualified, teachers are assigned to the minority and low-income schools.

Analysts looking at the situation from both the left and right agree that school districts' current efforts to recruit good teachers are inadequate. Streamlined procedures for hiring, alternative avenues into the profession, pay increases and rewards for outstanding teachers, financial incentives to work in hard-to-staff schools or in shortage subject areas are all proposals being offered and tried in a number of school districts.[49]

The available research on teaching does not point clearly to a decisive indicator of teacher quality. We know that certification does not guarantee quality.[50] We also know that subject area knowledge is a strong determinant of teacher quality (as measured by the achievement of the students whose teachers know best the subject being taught).[51] Schools need to be able to select teachers who have the required knowledge, enthusiasm, and willingness to work to help all children achieve to high levels. If that means being able to go outside the confines of strictly interpreted certification or licensing rules, then so be it.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation recommends that school systems open the doors to teaching, allowing more people to enter the profession through a variety of unconventional pathways. They also recommend that personnel

decisions be devolved to individual schools, granting them the freedom to hire, compensate, and deploy people in a manner that makes sense for each school.[52] Of course, ultimately schools would then be accountable for the results they obtain. Fordham's argument stresses placing greater emphasis on those results and freeing up schools to innovate around how they obtain them. Clearing space for increased innovation is exactly the attraction of charter schools and a charter district. The founder of a charter school in Washington, DC, when asked which regulation he was most grateful for not having to follow, answered, "Teacher certification." He went on to explain that the freedom to hire people from diverse backgrounds and deploy them creatively was the single greatest source of his school's ability to meet its students educational needs.[53] We feel strongly that schools serving the children of Wilmington should enjoy this kind of creative freedom and be able to deploy a variety of strategies for attracting and retaining teaching staffs that can deliver the goods for the students.

The WNSC recommends that great innovation be used in meeting the challenge of attracting and retaining quality teachers to Wilmington schools. One suggestion is that the City Council consider waiving city wage taxes for all teachers who work in city schools.

Teaching and English Language Development

Because of the diverse backgrounds and needs of immigrant students, school staff need specialized preparation to work effectively with them. All teachers with immigrant students and English language learners in their classes need to know about second language and literacy development, cross-cultural issues, and methods to teach both language and academic content.[54]

Given this, school staffs should recognize that the vast majority of their language minority families are still in the process of adjusting to the mainstream culture and the need to speak English. Secondly, it is essential to take into consideration their stage of acculturation, their length of residence in the U.S., their English language proficiency and their educational level. Thirdly, although more and more language minority students are born in the United States, nearly all of their families have come here as immigrants and/or refugees. Keeping these generalizations in mind when working with parents and families and developing support systems for them will enhance the effectiveness of the learning experience for children who are second language learners.

It should be obvious that immigrant students' language proficiencies have a tremendous impact on their ability to succeed in American schools. But we often overlook the language problems of some students who are second- generation immigrants that struggle with both English and Spanish. These students' language abilities suffer because, in the current political climate, students are pushed from one language to another too rapidly to allow them to develop communicative competence in either one. They fall victim to society's desire for a rapid transition to English, as they are unable to do academic work in either their mother tongue or in English. For these students, neither the linguistic norms of the mother tongue nor those of the target language, English, are available as resources for the kinds of tasks that the schools demand, and the students find it difficult to participate in classes conducted in either language. Although it could be said that these children speak both English and Spanish, it could also be said that they know neither.[55]

Given the Hispanic student population in Northern New Castle County, and particularly the city of Wilmington, the WNSC recommends that any system of schools serving our children must provide adequate resources and attention to ensuring that English language learners attain academic English language proficiency in a timely fashion and master state content standards at grade level. We further believe that the Governor, educators and lawmakers should institute the recommendations of the Delaware Language Minority Task Force for the purpose of improving instruction and eliminating the considerable academic achievement gap between White and Hispanic students.

The Governor, educators and lawmakers should institute the recommendations of the Delaware Language Minority Task Force for the purpose of improving instruction and eliminating the considerable academic achievement gap between White and Hispanic students.

Accountability

Ensuring accountability for equity is a critical system challenge for large school districts. In some states, most notably Texas, state education officials have become more sophisticated in their use of data disaggregated by race and socioeconomic status to focus on issues of equity. For example, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) rates schools and school districts as "exemplary," "recognized," "acceptable," or "low-performing" based on attendance, dropout, and state test data. However, it is not enough for a school or a district as a whole to meet a particular rating threshold. Each subgroup of students identified by the state (African-American students, Hispanic, White, and economically disadvantaged) must also meet the threshold. Thus a school district in which 80 percent of the total students pass the state test could still earn a "low-performing" rating if fewer than 50 percent of the economically disadvantaged students pass the test. Likewise, no district can earn one of the two highest ratings if even a single school in the district is designated as "low-performing." Under such a rating system, a school or district can no longer use the performance of its students in general to mask its failure to educate particular subgroups of students.[56]

While they can play a useful role in identifying schools and districts in which inequities currently exist, such rating systems by themselves cannot provide the kind of diagnostic detail necessary to inform meaningful changes in low-performing schools. As suggested earlier in this report, anyone trying to determine the reasons behind low school performance should begin by looking at the quality of the teaching staff. In one Maryland countywide school district, a broad-based committee of school, community, and business stakeholders identified a problem that

The Committee wishes to stress to the Mayor and City Council that governance arrangements for the provision of schooling in Wilmington must include a capacity to monitor for equitable distribution of learning opportunities and be outfitted with the mechanisms to judge success based on the achievement of all children.

plagues many, if not most, large school districts: "In the present situation, most openings for new teachers are occurring in schools that have high turnover. High turnover schools frequently are schools with the highest concentrations of children who experience challenges to their education, poor school climates, changing administration, or rapidly increasing population."[57] The Committee placed the responsibility for addressing the inequities on the shoulders of the county school district, urging it to adopt a series of recommendations to address the problem, including "encourag[ing] movement within the system as part of the professional development plan of each teacher, to encourage professional growth and prevent 'burn-out.'" As Linda-Darling Hammond and many others have argued, one cannot expect equitable educational outcomes (however one defines them) without an equitable distribution of qualified teachers.

Darling-Hammond also argues for an approach to accountability that encourages self-reflection on the part of school staffs. A key component of such an approach is a practitioner-led school review process, such as that used by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in Great Britain and adapted for use in New York as the school quality review (SQR). In the New York model, teams of teachers, administrators, and community members spend a week on site in a school, examining and observing everything from classes to faculty meetings to actual samples of student work. According to Darling- Hammond, the "reviewers look at evidence of student progress and accomplishments, how the teaching and learning environment supports learning, what kinds of teaching strategies are used, what kinds of learning opportunities different students experience, and how the school functions as a community." The review team shares its findings with the school in an attempt to promote critical reflection on the part of the school staff - attempts that have proven largely successful. Darling-Hammond reports, "Because of the openness engendered by this approach and the credibility that practitioners attach to the examination of practice, most teachers and principals in schools that have experienced the review have been motivated to undertake changes in their practice."[58] An accountability system that includes components like the school quality review acknowledges a simple, but often forgotten truth: Changes in results are impossible without changes in practice.

Public Engagement and Support

On the surface, it would seem to make sense that neighborhood schools lead to greater parental involvement. A school that is a block from one's home is obviously more accessible than a school that is twelve miles away. However, when it comes to public school districts, the definition of

"accessible" is more than a matter of mere geographical proximity. David Matthews, president of the Kettering Foundation and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, writes of a widening gulf between public schools and their publics. He cites findings from a 1992 survey that "while nearly 60 percent of Americans thought parents and other members of the community should have more say in allocating funds and deciding the curriculum, less than 15 percent of administrators and only 26 percent of teachers shared this view."[59]

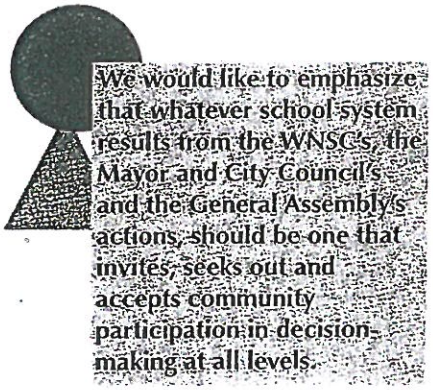
Reforms such as school-based management (also called "site-based" management) are intended to bridge the gulf between schools and communities and promote greater community control over educational resources and decision-making at the school level. However, studies have shown that not all school-based management programs are created equal - and consequently not all of them have a positive effect on student achievement. As one study notes, ". . . whether the school could tailor decisions and resources to the needs of the local community depended on having authority over pertinent resources-budget, staffing, and curriculum-and on having an effective means to register and respond to community needs. Not all programs transferred such authority in all these areas, and not all programs established an effective means to link to the community. We found that within the same district some schools were able to form effective school-level governance mechanisms and focus on school improvement while others fought for power, focused on win-lose decisions, concentrated on inconsequential routine decisions, and paid little attention to generating a vision and plan for school improvement."[60]

While acknowledging that schools and school districts can do more to make themselves accessible to their publics, David Matthews argues that viable school-community links cannot exist in the absence of strong communities and clearly articulated community values and priorities. Drawing on the Kettering Foundation's many years of research in the area of public engagement and civil society, Matthews suggests that schools must take their cues from a larger public agenda: "Our advice would be to start with the community or public, that is, to concentrate first on the community and its concerns rather than on the schools and their goals. We believe that schools are best understood as a means to the broader educational objectives of a community and that well-intentioned reforms often reverse this natural order, treating the community as a means to ends dictated by schools. In effect, we propose retracing the steps that brought the public schools into being in the first place."[61]

In looking at promising links between schools and communities across the country, the Cross- City Campaign for Urban School Reform has identified a set of characteristics that strong schools and strong communities share:

- They are clear about what matters most to them.
- They have a clear vision of where they are headed.
- They live by a spirit of accountability to results.
- They nurture a spirit of efficacy, a prevailing sense of confidence that human action, however small, can have a positive impact, that people have the power to shape their environment, their choices, and their future.
- They seek alignment between the values they hold and the actions they take.
- They struggle to bridge the fault lines of race, class, and power inequality.[62]

As we move to establish new arrangements for providing schooling to the children of Wilmington, the Committee is recommending that the Mayor and City council recognize the importance of stressing public engagement, including educating the community on the issues.



Options for a School System Designed to Meet the Needs of Wilmington's Children

Taking into account all of the issues raised in the previous sections, the Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee has worked to consider a variety of options for how best to govern and manage a system of neighborhood schools serving the city's children. The full range of options considered is summarized in the following table.

Models Considered
K-6 Students Assigned in the City; 7-12 Students Assigned to Suburban Schools
Wilmington District Model
Assignment of Wilmington Children into One Existing District
Neighborhood School Assignments Determined by the Four Existing Districts
Charter District
Metropolitan District

Under the directive of the Neighborhood Schools Act, which requires a minimum of nine affirmative votes before any model can be advanced to the Mayor of Wilmington and the City Council, the Committee has retained and agreed to put forward the last two of these options: 1) a Wilmington Charter District and 2) a Metropolitan District comprised of Wilmington, Red Clay and Brandywine. These options are described below. All committee member votes are recorded as part of the public record published under separate cover. However, the WNSC wants to reiterate to the Mayor and City Council its belief that, whatever option is eventually pursued by them and/or by the General Assembly, the priority recommendations detailed in this report and summarized in the adjacent text box must be taken into account.

OPTION ONE Create a Metropolitan School District

Overview of the Metropolitan District Proposal

Governance:

A school board consisting of representation from Red Clay, Brandywine, and the City of Wilmington would be elected either at-large or by nominating district and would function as a school board under current state statutes. Each school would have its own Local School Council (LSC) which would be responsible for local decision-making at each school (see appendix: Local School Councils - The Chicago Experience)

Finance:

All three districts would need to be consolidated into a single district with a common tax base. The new district would assume control over school properties within the city limits.

Student Assignment:

Student assignment would be in accordance with a neighborhood schools plan where children would be assigned to [illegible] schools would be open to all children in accordance with Delaware school choice statutes and it is assumed that other options, such as magnets and thematic schools, could also be available.

Implementation Time lines:

A student assignment plan, consistent with the Neighborhood Schools Act, would need to be prepared after a thorough assessment of the physical infrastructure (school buildings in particular) is conducted. The analysis would need to be prepared with great attention given to the existing infrastructure and capital requirements to reconfigure all buildings to be age and grade appropriate. Full implementation, once the new district is formed, would take 12 to18 months.

Legislative Actions Required:

The State Board of Education and the General Assembly will have to examine the laws regarding how the City of Wilmington and the school districts of Brandywine and Red Clay could be consolidated to form a metropolitan district.

Action to reorganize the New Castle Consolidated Tax District in support of Christina, Colonial, and the newly-formed Metropolitan districts, or eliminate the consolidated tax district all together.

Costs:

An analysis of the cost savings resulting from consolidation, and additional costs associated with administering a 31,000-student district, would need to be calculated once a model student assignment plan is crafted in the context of a detailed facilities plan. The new district would also assume any outstanding debt service associated with its newly acquired buildings. There would also be costs associated with the delivery of fair and equitable opportunities to learn in neighborhood schools which end up as high-poverty schools and schools with a greater number of special needs children as a result of the Act.

The proposal is to create a regional district comprised of the City of Wilmington, Red Clay, and Brandywine school districts. The consolidated district would function as a unified school district, sharing its students and a common local tax base. The configuration is driven by the proximity of the proposed district and the resulting common tax base. We believe this proposal addresses four critical concerns:

1. It allows us the opportunity to respond to the Neighborhood Schools Act while minimizing the number of underresourced high-poverty schools;
2. Creates the potential for better equalization of resources and sustainable local revenue through the creation of an adequate tax base;
3. Yields greater opportunities for diversity, reducing the likelihood of racial isolation and economic flight; and
4. Reduces the State's and region's vulnerability to the Equal Protection Clause and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

One key component of this plan is the creation of Local School Councils, or LSCs, which have been demonstrated to increase the levels of local control at the building or neighborhood levels and increase parental involvement in schools. In Chicago, LSCs have been in existence for over a decade, with parents, teachers, and community members having a strong, legally defined voice in local school governance through the councils. Established by the Illinois State Legislature in 1988, many LSCs have used their new powers to increase the focus of schools on academic achievement as well as to make them cleaner and safer. Key powers include principal selection and approval of the school budget and school improvement plan. A more detailed description of LSCs can be found in the appendices.

Priority Recommendations of the WNSC:

- Opportunities to learn and student achievement must be the focal points for any neighborhood schools plan.
- Systemic change must be incorporated into any district plan to impact student achievement.
- Any neighborhood schools plan must be well resourced, with additional funds in terms of the per pupil (or per unit) allocation to close the achievement gap experienced by Wilmington students.
- Existing assignment of Wilmington students into four districts poses barriers to implementing strategies designed to impact student achievement, causes fragmentation and impedes effective advocacy in behalf of city children.
- Any neighborhood schools plan requires incentives, including well-resourced buildings and classrooms, to attract and retain quality teachers/school administrators.
- Any neighborhood schools plan should include the establishment of an independent entity to monitor for equity.
- Any neighborhood schools plan must expand support services to address social and health-related needs that impact student learning.
- A unifying public education campaign around closing the achievement gap for underachieving students is needed to engage parents and key stakeholders.

OPTION 2 Create a Charter District

This proposal allows for improved student learning and increased innovation, as intended in the Delaware Code establishing charters, while mitigating the effects of an increased number of high- poverty schools by preserving the current mechanism for funding day-to-day operations.

Overview of the Wilmington Charter Proposal

Governance:

A seven-member school board, partially appointed and partially elected, would have the authority to grant and revoke charters in the City of Wilmington on the basis of student and other performance criteria.

Finance:

The operations of all schools in the district would be funded in accordance with the Delaware Code, Title 14, Chapter 5, where funding essentially follows a student from the student's existing district.

Student Assignment:

Schools would be open to all children in accordance with the Delaware school choice provision. However, the committee recognizes that there would be several children for whom no applications would be filed, particularly before families are well acquainted with the choice application process. The committee has two recommendations regarding this problem. First, a well-planned and funded public awareness and education campaign needs to be implemented, so that parents can easily learn how the system works, as well as acquaint themselves with the variety of schools from which they may choose. Next, rather than fill each charter school with children filing applications, room would be left in each for those children for whom no applications were filed. This latter group would be assigned to each school by the district central staff, based upon proximity and information about each such child's particular need or learning style. In this way, no child would suffer a disadvantage if parents were unable or unwilling to become knowledgeable consumers of educational opportunity.

Implementation Time lines:

Over a three-year period of time, all public schools in the new charter district would convert to charter schools. In order to make the transition smooth and to avoid the rush to find a charter for every school on "day one," the new board would have the authority to direct any of the districts currently operating a particular City school to continue to do so during this three-year period. This decision would be made based upon the relative success of the current program and the availability of a charter applicant whose program matches the new board's plan for that particular school.

Legislative Actions Required:

The Delaware Code regarding the conversion of existing public schools to charter schools requires that "a public school may only be converted to a charter school by approval of the board of the school district in which it is located and that the charter application received the approval of over 50% of the teachers and over 50% of the parents residing in the attendance area of the school with a child(ren) under the age of 18 years, who, after 30 days prior written notice to all teachers and parents eligible to vote, attend a public meeting held for the specific purpose of voting on the proposed conversion. Therefore, the General Assembly will have to modify the existing law so that all schools within the City of Wilmington can be moved to charter status without the approval restriction.

The Delaware Code also states admission preferences that charter schools may make which are the following: by age and grade; by lottery in the case of over-enrollment; siblings of students enrolled at the school. Additional preferences for converted existing public schools may need to be added to ensure that all students residing in the City of Wilmington have a space in a nearby charter school.

Additionally, the State Board of Education and the General Assembly will have to examine the laws regarding how a consolidated tax district may be drawn in the context of a City of Wilmington charter school district.

Costs:

Given the way in which charter schools are funded under existing state law, a Wilmington Charter School District would need a mechanism for financing the board's administration. This could be done through a direct allocation based on per pupil state revenues to the district or a small administrative fee levied on each school. Also, given the fact that the buildings within Wilmington are generally older and in need of renovation, the committee recommends that the state assume any existing debt service costs, the costs of capital improvements, and the costs of new construction.

Under the existing Delaware Code, Title 14, Chapter 5 governs the establishment of charter schools and lists the legislative intent of the act as: to improve student learning; encourage the use of different and innovative or proven school environments and teaching and learning methods; provide parents and students with improved measures of school performance and greater opportunities in choosing public schools within and outside their school districts; and to provide for a well-educated community. A charter school is defined as a public school including 2 or more of grades kindergarten through 12, and having at least 200 students (provided, however, that a charter school may enroll fewer than 200 but no less than 100 students in its first 2 years of operation or for a charter school serving at-risk or special education students), managed by a board of directors, which operates independently of any school board, under a charter granted for an initial period of 3 school years of operation and renewable every 5 school years thereafter by a public school district or the State Department of Education, with the approval of the State Board of Education. The board of directors of a charter school shall have the same standing and authority as a Reorganized School District Board of Education, except the power to tax. The Department with the approval of the State Board of Education may also approve a charter school which plans to enroll fewer than 200 students in special circumstances, such as an on-site charter school proposed by a business as an extension of an on-site early learning or day care center. As of 2000, there is no limit with regard to the number of charter schools allowed in the state.

The concept of a Wilmington Charter District, or district of charter schools, would create a citywide governing body, much like a school board, with the direct responsibilities of monitoring the standards of achievement and operations for all schools operating within the City of Wilmington. This committee would recommend that any charters granted within the boundaries of the new district be required to adhere to the Universal Components set forth in this document. The Wilmington Charter District board would essentially open all schools in the City of Wilmington to charter providers, including existing local districts, over the course of a three-year period. In accordance with Delaware law, while the board of directors for each school would be wholly autonomous with respect to the program and operations of the school, it would also be accountable to the charter district board for its student outcomes. If a school were found to be underperforming and not improving by the charter board, the charter board could revoke the existing school's charter in favor of a new proposal. While the funding for the charter schools would be as currently provided for under the Delaware Code, the Wilmington Charter District would be granted the power of levying taxes, as in other districts across the state.

Advantages of a Charter School District

- Increased local control of schools in the eyes of parents.
- Provides multiple options for delivering schooling in response to multiple learning styles of children.
- Less bureaucratic with more local ownership.
- Underperforming schools may much more easily be closed and reorganized.

Critical Challenges in Moving Forward

While part of the charge to the WNSC was to calculate costs, both operational and capital, of implementing the recommendations, attempting to do so in isolation of the work underway in Christina, Red Clay, Brandywine, and Colonial to meet their charges to craft neighborhood school plans could easily be misleading and grossly inaccurate. The actual costs of transitioning from the existing system to a system of neighborhood schools are interdependent across all of the existing districts. The location and availability of appropriate space and the need to revamp and create appropriate space will dramatically impact all capital costs. Regardless of the model ultimately decided upon by the City Council and Legislature, costs associated with reconfiguring school buildings so that they are grade and age appropriate and adequately equipped and resourced depend almost entirely on the student assignment plans for the county, not simply for those students living within the boundaries of the City of Wilmington. Any attempts to seriously identify those capital and transition costs outside of the collective student assignment plans of the four existing districts would generate false numbers. In order to seriously move forward, the Department of Education, the Legislature, or another authorized body will need to:

1. consider the costs of the option of choice in the context of the emerging neighborhood school plans of the four existing districts;
2. commission a detailed facilities study, incorporating all four districts;
3. drive the analysis of the costs associated with any neighborhood school plans regionally in the context of a well- conducted facilities plan, as the availability of adequate facilities across all four districts and the city of Wilmington will be critical during the transition;
4. calculate actual transportation costs on the basis of both those costs unique to the regional transition to neighborhood schooling, as well as the longer term implications, accounting for special education and any laws pertaining to the transporting of elementary school children;
5. consider the impact of Delaware's school choice provision on student assignment, given that some schools already have a large number of choice applications.

While it is our intent to incorporate the finding of a Wilmington neighborhood schools assignment study now being conducted, any further projections made about costs associated with implementing such a plan would have to be prefaced with a long list of assumptions, without first engaging in, or having actual data from, the above analysis.

Endnotes

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Further Reading

Cahill, Michele. *Schools And Community Partnerships: Reforming Schools, Revitalizing Communities.* Chicago: Cross-City Campaign for Urban School Reform, October, 1996. This paper identifies several approaches to school and community collaborations. Additionally, it includes several examples of school/community partnerships and a resource list of some of the organizations and people doing this type of work.

Carper, Thomas R. and Iris T. Metts. *A Report on Increasing Professional Standards For Delaware's Educators.* Delaware Department of Education, 1999 (see DOE Web site at www.doe.state.de.us/DPIServices/ProfStandReport/ProfStandReport.htm). This report was written in accordance with the Educational Accountability Act of 1998. It sets forth a plan to improve professional standards and accountability in the Delaware school system. The report focuses on how Delaware can assure the quality of educators for Delaware's students and as a result, raise student achievement.

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning. *The Status of the Teaching Profession 2000: An Update to the Teaching and California's Future Task Force.* Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, November, 1999 (see www.cftl.org). This report provides data for education leaders and policy makers that will inform them on possible thinking and actions that may need to be taken to ensure that every California school child has a qualified and effective teacher.

Charles A. Dana Center, University of Texas at Austin. *Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty, Urban Elementary Schools.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service, 1999. This report focuses on Title I-funded schools that pooled their resources through "schoolwide projects" to serve all students and as a result saw a great improvement in academic achievement.

Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Children. Catherine E. Snow, M. Susan Burns, and Peg Griffin, eds. *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children.* Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1998. This report analyzes how reading difficulties may occur and how they can be prevented. The recommendations in this publication extend to all children, but much of the research reviewed by the authors focuses on populations of students with varying degrees of risk.

Council of the Great City Schools. *Reducing Class Size: A Smart Way To Improve America's Urban Schools.* Washington, D.C.: Council of the Great City Schools, October, 2000. This report is the second in a series of reports updating the nation on how the federal Class Size Reduction program is being used by America's urban public schools systems.

Darling-Hammond, Linda. *The Right to Learn: A Blueprint For Creating Schools That Work.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997. This book describes learner-centered schools that work for students in all communities. The author cites New York State's School Quality Review as an example of how standards for learning can be linked to standards of practice, while taking into account the culture of the community.

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Dryfoos, Joy. *A Look at Community Schools in 1998.* Fordham University: National Center for Schools and Communities, February, 1998. This paper describes the

variety of community schools across the country and suggests action that needs to be taken. The author defines a community school as one that "integrates the delivery of quality education with whatever health, social, and cultural services are required in that community."

Education Salary Schedule Improvement Committee. *Final Report to the Governor.* Delaware Department of Education, 1999 (see www.doe.state.de.us/press_release/ESSIC/). The Education Salary Schedule Improvement Committee for the Delaware Department of Education developed a plan to improve the education compensation system. The proposed salary plan improves starting teacher salaries significantly for the first 3 years; encourages career-long professional development for all teachers; defines salary increases based on graduate education; initiates a new framework to encourage targeted in-service training; facilitates school-based efforts to improve student performance; supports professional accountability by providing extra pay for extra responsibilities; and provides adequate time for system-wide capacity building over three years.

Education Trust. *Dispelling the Myth: High Poverty Schools Exceeding Expectations.* Washington, D.C.: Author, 1999. Report of the Education Trust in cooperation with the Council of Chief State School Officers and partially funded by the U.S. Department of Education (see www.edtrust.org). This is the first product from a project between the Education Trust and the Council of Chief State School Officers to identify and learn more about top performing high poverty schools. It contains information on 366 schools from 21 states who agreed to participate.

Ferguson, Ronald F. "Paying for Public Education: New Evidence on How and Why Money Matters." *Harvard Journal of Legislation,* Vol. 28, Summer 1991. The author focuses on the most critical factors that impact student achievement. Teacher expertise accounted for 40% of the measured variance in students' reading and mathematic achievement at grades 1- 11. The report also looks at where spending needs to be focused in order to reap the greatest dividend in student achievement.

Ferguson, Ronald F. and Helen F. Ladd. "How and Why Money Matters: An Analysis of Alabama Schools." *In Holding Schools Accountable: Performance-Based Reform in Education,* edited by Helen F. Ladd, Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1996. This chapter reports the results of an attempt to measure the systematic effects of school inputs on student test scores. The study is based on both district-level and student-level data from Alabama. The evidence suggests that schools' inputs affect educational outcomes and that the effects are large enough to be relevant for deliberations about educational spending.

Goldhaber, Dan D. and Dominic J. Brewer. "Teacher Licensing and Student Achievement." In *Better Teachers, Better Schools,* Marci Kanstoroom and Chester E. Finn, Jr. eds. Washington, D.C.: The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1999 (see www.edexcellence.net). This paper focuses on how students of teachers with regular certification perform relative to teachers who have probationary certification, emergency certification, private school certification, or no certification in the subject. Also, it determines whether specific state-by- state differences in teacher licensure requirements systematically affect student achievement.

Gonztlez, JosuÇ and Linda Darling Hammond. *New Concepts for New Challenges: Professional Development for Teachers of Immigrant Youth.* Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1997. This book presents information about the social and academic needs of immigrant students as well as the strengths that these students bring with them to the school setting.

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—. "No More Settling For Less," *Thinking K-16,* Vol. 4, Issue 1, Spring 2000. This article focuses on the drastic teacher quality difference between schools serving poor and minority children and those serving other young Americans.

Imazeki, Jennifer and Andrew Reschovsky. "The Development of School Finance Formulas to Guarantee the Provision of Adequate Education to Low-Income Students." In William J. Fowler, ed. *Developments in School Finance, 1997.* Washington D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 1998. The authors focus on the discussion of costs in terms of equal educational outcomes. Also, the methodological approach used in estimating public education costs and the data used in this analysis are described.

The Institute for Research and Reform in Education. "First Things First: A Framework for Successful School Reform." A White Paper prepared for the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, June 2000. The seven critical features of school reform identified by The Institute for Research and Reform in Education are: lower student/adult ratios; provide continuity of care; set high, clear, and fair academic and conduct standards; provide enriched and diverse opportunities; equip, empower and expect all staff to improve instruction; allow for flexible allocation of available resources; and, assure collective responsibility.

Jerald, Craig. "The State of the States," *Quality Counts 2000: Who Should Teach?* Education Week's 50-state report card on public education focuses on state efforts to recruit, screen, and retain competent teachers. It includes results from a national survey on how states recruit, test, and license beginning teachers. The survey also examines state efforts to support and evaluate new teachers in the classroom.

Kurleander, Michael and John T. Yun. *Is Diversity a Compelling Educational Interest? Evidence From Metropolitan Louisville.* Cambridge, Mass.: The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University. 2000. This study addresses the experiences of high school juniors in Louisville, Kentucky with regard to interracial schools.

Students reported that they felt prepared and ready to live and work across racial lines as a result of their school experiences.

Leadership Committee on School Equity. *Report of the Leadership Committee on School Equity.* Howard County: Author, 2000 (see www.co.ho.md.us/schlequity.html). The Leadership Committee defines "equity as fairness to all children." Therefore, each student must be provided with "the resources, support, and instruction necessary to achieve academic success." The Committee identifies forty-seven priority issues that potentially affect equity.

Lewis, Anne C. and Anne T. Henderson. *Building Bridges: Across Schools and Communities, Across Streams of Funding.* Chicago, Illinois: Cross-City Campaign For Urban School Reform, 1998. This report discusses eight case studies of schools and their relationships within their communities. The case studies were written especially for the Cross-City Campaign Building Bridges conference.

Matthews, David. *Is There A Public For Public Schools.* Dayton, Ohio: Kettering Foundation Press, 1996. This book reports the results of more than a decade of research studies carried out by the Kettering Foundation on the relationship between the public and public education. The author points to the need for citizens to become more involved with schools based on the assumption that healthy community life is essential to good public schools.

Mayer, Daniel P., John E. Mullens, Mary T. Moore, and Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. *Monitoring School Quality: An Indicators Report.* Washington, D.C.: National Center For Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2000. This report explores why some schools may be better than others at helping students learn. The research described in this report indicates that school quality affects student learning through the training and talent of the teaching force, what goes on in the classrooms, and the overall culture and atmosphere of the school.

Meier, Deborah. *The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America from a Small School in Harlem.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1995. This book draws on the author's life as a teacher and principal and argues for the break-up of large schools into small schools. The author focuses on the success of Central Park East in East Harlem, where 90 percent of the students graduate high school and 90 percent of those students attend college.

Miles, Karen Hawley and Linda Darling-Hammond. "Rethinking the Allocation of Teaching Resources: Some Lessons From High-Performing Schools." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis,* Vol. 20, No. 1, Spring 1998, pp. 9-29. This article develops a framework for examining the use of resources and a methodology that may be used to measure the extent to which schools use their resources in focused ways to support teaching and learning.

National Center for Education Statistics. *Urban Schools.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ERIC ID # 96184), 1996. This report addresses the widespread beliefs about the performance of urban students, and their family and school environments. It uses data from several national surveys, compares urban students and schools with their suburban and rural counterparts on a broad range of factors. This report cites the categories of school poverty concentration as 0-5 percent, 6- 20 percent, 21-40 percent, and more than 40 percent of students in poverty.

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Orfield, Gary and John T. Yun. *Resegregation in American Schools.* Cambridge, Mass: The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, 1999. This report focuses primarily upon four trends: 1) the American South is resegregating; 2) continuous increasing segregation for Hispanic students; 3) there is an increase in enrollment in suburban schools of African- American and Hispanics, but there is segregation within those communities; 4) there is a rapid ongoing change in the racial composition in American schools and many schools now have three or more racial groups.

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"Setting the Standard: Will Higher Expectations Improve Student Achievement?" *The Progress of Education Reform 1999-2001,* vol. 1, no. 5, January-February 2000. This Education Commission of the States publication discusses which standards do and do not work in the classroom and how standards have evolved.

Small Schools Workshop. (See http://www.smallschoolsworkshop.org.) The Small Schools Workshop is a group of educators, organizers and researchers based in the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The Small Schools Workshop collaborates with teachers, principals, parents, and district leaders to create new, small, innovative learning communities in public schools.

Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. "The Teachers We Need and How to Get More of Them: A Manifesto." In *Better Teachers, Better Schools,* edited by Marci Kanstoroom and Chester E. Finn, Jr. Washington, D.C.: The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1999 (see www.edexcellence.net). This policy statement outlines an alternative of how to attract better teachers in the classroom. The basis of the solution is to simplify the entry and hiring process. This includes testing teachers for their knowledge

and skills, allowing principals to hire the teachers they need, and focusing relentlessly on results.

Two Paths to Quality Teaching: Implications for Policy Makers. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, June, 2000 (see www.ecs.org). This paper is a follow-up to a debate on quality teaching between Linda Darling-Hammond, executive director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), and Chester E. Finn, Jr., president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. These two leading experts have been recognized for their opposing positions on the improvement of education in general and of the quality of teaching in particular. The paper contains three sections: 1) an edited transcript of the main part of the debate; 2) a side-by-side analysis summarizing the points of agreement and disagreement between NCTAF's and Fordham's views on quality teaching; and 3) a discussion on the points of consensus between the two organizations and their implications for policymakers.

U.S. Department of Education Planning and Evaluation Service. *School Poverty and Academic Performance: NAEP Achievement in High-Poverty Schools - A Special Evaluation Report for the National Assessment of Title I.* Washington, D.C.: Author, 1998 (see www.ed.gov/pubs/schoolpoverty/). This report presents findings from an analysis of student achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It examines student achievement in the context of school poverty in the United States.

Van Slyke, Dore, Alexandra Tan, and Martin Orland, with assistance from Anna E. Danegger. *School Finance Litigation: A Review of Key Cases.* Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, 1994 (see www.financeproject.org/litigation.html). This paper reviews the legal context against which current debates about the merits of alternative plans for school finance reform are being played out. It reviews the key federal and state court cases that have created pressure both to improve education quality and reform unfair school finance structures. Also, it highlights a number of policy issues that must be addressed by state and local decision makers in their efforts to design new funding strategies that will effectively support education programs to enhance student learning and achievement.

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Wohlstetter, Patricia, Amy N. Van Kirk, Peter J. Robertson, and Susan A. Mohrman. *Organizing for Successful School-Based Management.* Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1997. Researchers at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles spent more than four years studying schools and districts in the United States, Canada, and Australia. This report states their findings and relates the steps to implementing successful school-based management. The study suggests that decentralized management is an essential part of an effective learning community.

Acknowledgements

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