

**Redistricting Work Group**  
**The Redding Consortium for Educational Equity**  
**December 12, 2019**  
**Warner Elementary School, Wilmington, Delaware**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Welcome**

Redistricting Work Group Co-Chair, Nnamdi Chukwuocha, called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m. Chukwuocha opened the floor to introductions from the room and gave opening remarks. He reflected on the history of the city of Wilmington and how it has transformed over the years, and how the Consortium is committed to enacting change and creating a plan to move the city of Wilmington forward to a new educational landscape.

**Work Group Charge**

Dr. Dan Rich, with the Institute of Public Administration at the University of Delaware, reviewed what the charge for the Redistricting Work Group. The charge of the Work Group is to decide on a redistricting plan for the City of Wilmington and northern New Castle County.

**Redistricting History**

Rich reviewed the history of school boundaries in the City of Wilmington, starting with its governance structure. He said that Wilmington's public school system has over 11,500 students, one charter school district, and the rate of student transience is approximately 20-30 percent. The Wilmington school system operates with 23 different independent governing entities that have no legal mandate for collaboration. He stressed that schools now have higher rates of poverty and are more segregated than they were when Delaware started its desegregation initiatives in the 1970s.

Rich then touched on the defining legislation, laws, and policies aimed at desegregating the state's education system. He highlighted the 1974 U.S. District Court order, which created a "unitary system" that combined 11 districts in northern New Castle County into one unitary district without holding any referendums or forums. He further described the fragmentation of public education governance. The General Assembly formally amended the state constitution to abolish a separate education system in 1995. Then it approved the charter school legislation and Delaware School Choice Program in 1996, which Rich said did not foster a collaborative environment for governance. He also discussed the Neighborhood Schools Act of 2000, which created and snowballed into our current governance structure.

Rich acknowledged the multiple attempts to address redistricting and public education equity by various groups since 2001. He said that the most recent redistricting plan failed in the Senate by three votes. Chukwuocha added that this work group, and the Consortium, aims to fix the state's broken education system, perpetuated by the actions and inactions of the legislature.

**Establishing Legislation—Review of Senate Bill 148 and House Bill 222**

Consortium Co-Chair Elizabeth "Tizzy" Lockman briefly discussed the mandates of Senate Bill 148 and House Bill 222. She reviewed that Senate Bill 148 created the Consortium, established

membership, and provides overarching mandates while House Bill 222 provides requirements for the redistricting plan and establishes a timeline for that plan, its process and its implementation.

Chukwuocha said the goal is to change the districts in a way that is not disruptive, create a plan for student transition, and utilize support systems needed to succeed—so city partners are going to be crucial in this redistricting task. He shared his desire for the possibility of Wilmington students and families to come together in a Wilmington High School—that we do not currently have. He said that while it is true inequity has the greatest impact in the City of Wilmington, any redistricting plan affects northern New Castle County and all of Delaware, so the Consortium will work alongside the State Board and General Assembly toward a solution.

### **Timeline for Redistricting**

Chukwuocha stressed that this redistricting plan has a timeline for implementation mandated in its legislation. The Consortium's recommendation and plan must be reviewed and acted upon by the State Board of Education on or after January 1, 2021 and no later than April 1, 2021, and the plan must take effect on or after July 2023 and no later than July 1, 2025. He said the regimented work of the Consortium must adhere to the deadlines mandated in legislation or else it will be void.

Maria Matos, Work Group member, asked why this time is different from previous redistricting efforts. Consortium members from around the table answered that what makes this Consortium different is the unique combination of updated legislation and timeline for implementation, new legislators from the city who have been able to galvanize unanimous, bipartisan support from the General Assembly, and the body of passionate school and community leaders committed to working together toward a solution.

### **Redistricting Options**

Work Group Co-Chair Eugene Young reviewed seven different redistricting options. He gave a disclaimer that while tonight's meeting is constrained to a few minutes of dialogue for each option; a future meeting will discuss these options in more detail.

- **Three-district option:** Boundaries for the Christina School District (CSD) would no longer include City of Wilmington residents and would only include areas in what is now the western portion of the district; however, the Red Clay, Brandywine, and Colonial District boundaries would continue to include areas in the City of Wilmington. Lockman added that this is the option the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission decided on.
- **Two-district option:** Boundaries of Christina and Colonial school districts would no longer include the City of Wilmington, so residents would receive public education services from Red Clay and Brandywine school districts, charter schools, and the Vo-tech district, thus reducing the number of districts serving Wilmington from four to two. Rich said that the previous River Plan resembled this model.
- **Wilmington District:** Reestablish a Wilmington school district that would serve all City of Wilmington residents, which could restore local community control of education and consolidate charter school approval and oversight to the Wilmington School District. Chukwuocha said this model was presented in the Neighborhood Schools report.

- **Northern New Castle County Unified District**: Create a single school district serving northern New Castle County comprised of the City of Wilmington, City of Newark, and all suburbs north and west of the city. This option would provide an overarching educational and administrative unit for all publicly funded education entities operating in northern New Castle County.
- **Northern New Castle County Dual District**: The first option for this model would create two school districts for northern New Castle County—east and west. The eastern district would consist of Wilmington as well as Brandywine and Colonial districts, while the western district would consist of the western part of Christina and Red Clay districts. The second option for this model would create three school districts—Brandywine and Red Clay school districts, Christina and Colonial districts, and Appoquinimink.
- **Alternate Education Zone Models**: An alternate zone model is loosely defined by varying governance structures, increased school autonomy, access to additional funding as designated by the General Assembly, access to state-allocated capital support, and access to funding and resources from private and nonprofit institutions. Chukwuocha said that this option would essentially create zone districts around schools in which all schools in the zone would receive the same types of extra support.

Anthony Delcollo, Work Group member, talked about opportunity of Ball State School District in Indiana, where Ball State University took control of its city’s schools. He also discussed the Delaware Prosperity Partnership in which the private sector provides money for the education system to support job opportunity and retention in the workforce. Rich agreed that student success is equivalent to community success.

### **Stakeholder Engagement and Next Steps**

Young asked that if those present had ideas for any individuals who should be at the table involved in conversation, that they submit those names or ideas to Haley Quissaunee by December 19. He anticipated having two more Work Group meetings in January and reiterated that the Consortium is on a strict timeline to complete this plan.

Delcollo acknowledged how the gross disparity between his high school experience at Salesianum versus student experiences in the City of Wilmington is shocking. Matos added that the education of poor children requires additional care and resources.

### **Public Comment**

Desiree Faison, parent, commented that the most important thing to her and the community is family. She hopes the plan considers what is best for families and keeping families together.

### **Closing Remarks**

Chukwuocha talked about the importance of state funding and how to find appropriate means to support students in need. He said it is time for that issue to be addressed and that we cannot change that process without uprooting existing systems. He acknowledged that several redistricting options were presented tonight and encouraged everyone to contribute their ideas and perspectives next meeting. Chukwuocha is confident that the Consortium’s plan will come to fruition.

**Redistricting Work Group  
Redding Consortium for Educational Equity  
Thursday, December 12, 2019**

**Consortium Members:**

Nnamdi Chukwuocha, Work Group Co-Chair  
Eugene Young, Work Group Co-Chair  
Tizzy Lockman, Consortium Co-Chair  
José Aviles, for Margie López Waite  
Aaron Bass  
Ted Blunt  
Anthony Delcollo  
Dorrell Green  
Tika Hartsock  
Linc Hohler, for Mark Holodick  
Jamie Johnstone, for Rick Geisenberger  
Maria Matos  
Michael Purzycki  
Mary Nash Wilson, for Mike Jackson

**Members of the Public:**

Jenna Ahner  
Natalia Alandari  
Desiree Faison  
Rev. Provey Powell, Jr.  
Jon Sheehan

**IPA/DSU Staff Members:**

Jason Bourke  
Sarah Bruch  
Chris Kelly  
Cimone Philpotts  
Haley Qaissaunee  
Dan Rich  
Leighton Trimarco