



Redding Consortium for Educational Equity

**STATUS OF
WILMINGTON
EDUCATION FOR
THE 2018–2020
SCHOOL YEARS**

Executive Summary

Prepared by

Institute for Public Administration
University of Delaware



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
**BIDEN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC
POLICY & ADMINISTRATION**

Redding Consortium for Educational Equity

Status of Wilmington Education for the 2018–2020 School Years

Executive Summary

June 2021

Prepared by the
Institute for Public Administration
Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy & Administration
University of Delaware

Preface and Acknowledgements

The Redding Consortium for Educational Equity (the Consortium) was created in 2019 to recommend policies and practices to the Governor and General Assembly that will achieve educational equity and improve educational outcomes for all Pre-K–12 students in the City of Wilmington and northern New Castle County, Delaware.

The Redding Consortium for Educational Equity is the sixth group, since 2001, charged with addressing equity and governance issues for Wilmington and northern New Castle County, Delaware school systems through state-level policymaking.

While there are numerous valued contributors, a special thanks goes to:

- **Governor John Carney** for his willingness to continue the fight for all students in Delaware.
- **Secretary of Education Susan Bunting** for her lifetime commitment to student success.
- **The Delaware General Assembly** for its leadership and support of the pursuit for educational equity.
- **All members of the Consortium and its Work Groups** for their commitment and dedication to improving the Delaware education system so that it benefits all students.
- **The staff and students** of the Institute for Public Administration at the University of Delaware and Delaware State University for providing outstanding support to the operations and research of the Consortium.

Without you all this work would not be possible.

Senator Elizabeth ‘Tizzy’ Lockman & Matthew Denn
Co-Chairs, Redding Consortium for Educational Equity

Introduction

Prepared by the University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration (IPA), in partnership with Delaware State University, for the Redding Consortium for Educational Equity, this report provides an updated analysis of enrollment, student proficiency, graduation rates, and dropout rates for Pre-K–12 (P–12) students residing within the limits of the City of Wilmington. This analysis includes students attending traditional, vocational-technical (vo-tech), and charter schools across the state during the 2018–2020 school years. The report provides a snapshot of public education for students living in the City of Wilmington.

The Redding Consortium for Educational Equity (the Consortium) was created through legislation to recommend policies and practices to the Governor, General Assembly, and the Secretary of Education to achieve educational equity and improve educational outcomes of all Pre-K to grade 12 students in the City of Wilmington and northern New Castle County. The Consortium also monitors the educational progress and outcomes of all low-income, English learners, and other student at risk in the City of Wilmington and across northern New Castle County.

The Consortium’s predecessor was the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission, which built upon the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee’s recommendations and advised the Governor and General Assembly on how to improve the quality and availability of education for children in grades P–12 within the City of Wilmington; recommend actions to address the needs of all schools statewide that have high concentrations of students in poverty, English Learners (ELs), and other students at risk; and carry out the action agenda developed by the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee as described in *Strengthening Wilmington Education: An Action Agenda*.

This report is the only report in Delaware monitoring the educational progress of Wilmington students as a whole and evaluating the needs and performance of low-income students across the state. Annual evaluations on indicators of student success include disaggregation by geographic locations, with a specific focus on heavily concentrated areas of poverty across the state. Disaggregating data in this way more clearly identifies trends in achievement and opportunity gaps that disproportionately affect low-income students, ELs, and other students at risk in Wilmington and across Delaware.

Authors and Report Preparation

This report was written and prepared by IPA at the University of Delaware. The authors include:

- Kelly Sherretz, Project Manager and IPA Policy Scientist
- Haley Qaissaunee, IPA Policy Specialist II
- Abigail Armstrong, Graduate IPA Public Administration Fellow
- Brendan Laux, Graduate IPA Public Administration Fellow

This report was edited and formatted by Communications Advisor and IPA Assistant Policy Scientist Sarah Pragg. IPA is led by Director Jerome Lewis, Ph.D., and addresses the policy, planning, and management needs of its partners through the integration of applied research, professional development, and the education of tomorrow’s leaders. Learn more at www.ipa.udel.edu.

Executive Summary

All Delaware students have the right to an adequate education and should have equitable access to high-quality education. The Consortium seeks to remove the achievement and opportunity gaps for students in poverty, English Learners (ELs), and students with disabilities throughout the state, with an initial focus on the City of Wilmington.

This report is the continuation of the Consortium’s annual report on Wilmington student outcomes. This report analyzes data on enrollment, student proficiency, graduation rates, and dropout rates from the 2018–19 school year as well as the enrollment and graduation and dropout rates from the 2019–2020 school year. The report provides a snapshot of education in Delaware, particularly as it pertains to children in the City of Wilmington. In reporting these findings, the Consortium in no way means to criticize the city’s students, nor the local education agencies that serve them, but rather to highlight the urgent realities of education in the City of Wilmington.

Key Findings

Despite statewide improvements in some areas of student performance, the overall trends remain the same as previously reported: Wilmington students are behind their peers on virtually every indicator of student success. The Consortium believes that these trends, for the most part, are the result of systemic problems within the public education system and its inability to effectively address the educational needs of Wilmington students, many of whom live in severe poverty.

The delivery of public education in Wilmington lacks coherent governance, struggles with inadequate school resources to meet student needs, and fails to provide and coordinate in- and out-of-school services and community resources needed to address the needs of students in poverty.

Section I: Wilmington Student Demographics and Public Schools

During the 2018–19 school year, there were 10,852 City of Wilmington students enrolled in public education. Of those students,

- 63 percent were from low-income families
- 9 percent were English Learners
- 21 percent were students with disabilities
- 71 percent identified as Black or African American
- 19 percent identified as Hispanic/Latino
- 8 percent identified as White

During the 2019–20 school year, there were 11,078 City of Wilmington students enrolled in public education with almost identical demographics as 2018–19.

Section II: Student Proficiency

Wilmington and Non-Wilmington Students

Previous reports indicated a performance gap between Wilmington students and non-Wilmington students. This performance gap continues to hold.

- Approximately 25 percent of Wilmington students compared to 55 percent of non-Wilmington students met or exceeded state standards on the 2019 English Language Arts (ELA) Smarter Balanced Assessment.
- Approximately 15 percent of Wilmington students compared to 47 percent of non-Wilmington students met or exceeded state standards on the 2019 Math Smarter Balanced Assessment.

Low-Income Students

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and SAT test results for the past four years confirm that the majority of low-income students living in the City of Wilmington are not proficient in ELA or math. The performance of students from low-income families living in the City of Wilmington is significantly lower than the performance of students from low-income families in each county and statewide.

English Learners

SBAC and SAT test results for the past four years indicate that English Learner (EL) students from Wilmington are performing at significantly lower rates than EL students outside of Wilmington. Approximately 89 percent of English Learners in Wilmington performed well below or below expectations on the state ELA SBAC tests in 2019. Similarly, 90 percent of this population did not meet the state's standards in math.

Students with Special Needs

SBAC and SAT test results for the past four years indicate that students with special needs from Wilmington are performing at significantly lower rates than students with special needs outside of Wilmington. Approximately 93 percent of students with special needs in Wilmington performed well below or below expectations on the state ELA SBAC tests in 2019. Similarly, 97 percent of this population did not meet the state's standards in math.

Data and Definitions

All data are from the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE). The main source of data is the DDOE Data Set that includes data collected from school year 2011–12 through 2019–20. This report only includes analyses from the past four school years. A secondary source of data are the School Report Cards published on the DDOE's website. Each graphic in this report indicates the appropriate data source.

The term "Wilmington students" is defined as Pre-K–12 students residing within the limits of the City of Wilmington who attend traditional, vocational-technical (vo-tech), and charter schools across the state. For the purposes of this report, the terms "City of Wilmington" and "Wilmington" are interchangeable.

The term “non-Wilmington students” is defined as Pre-K–12 students not residing within the limits of the City of Wilmington who attend traditional, vo-tech, and charter schools across the state.

The term “English Learners” (ELs) is defined as students who are identified as part of an English Learners Education Program at their school under Title III of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) at the time data were recorded. Students who have fully transitioned out of their program do not carry an EL designation and therefore are not included in EL data.

Data points are rounded and therefore may not equate to 100 percent when added.

Student Performance

In the following analysis, proficiency categorization is determined by four achievement levels: one being “Well Below Expectations,” two being “Below Expectations,” three being “Meets Expectations,” and four being “Exceeds Expectations.” A student is classified as meeting state standards if they receive a three (meets expectations) or a four (exceeds expectations) on the state assessment.

During the 2014–15 school year, the SBAC tests were administered to students in grades 3–8 and 11 in ELA and math. Starting in 2016, SBAC tests assess students in grades 3–8, and the SAT assesses high school student achievement.

The SAT is available to high school students (grades 9–12) and is administered to all Delaware high school students in grade 11. The test consists of two major sections, evidence-based reading and writing (ERW) and math, which are scored on a scale of 200–800. In spring 2016, the SAT replaced the SBAC as Delaware’s state test for grade 11. DDOE established achievement Levels 1 to 4, with one being the lowest score, to report student performance on the ERW and math sections of the SAT in conjunction with the assessment scores.

To stay consistent with DDOE reporting, the authors of this report followed the data privacy and redaction rules used by DDOE.¹ In some cases, the authors erred on the side of caution to protect student privacy.

¹ <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/3024>



Institute for Public Administration

Biden School of Public Policy & Administration
University of Delaware

180 Graham Hall University of Delaware Newark, DE 19716-7380
phone: 302-831-8971 *email:* ipa@udel.edu *fax:* 302-831-3488

www.ipa.udel.edu

The University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA) addresses the policy, planning, and management needs of its partners through the integration of applied research, professional development, and the education of tomorrow's leaders.

The University of Delaware is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and Title IX institution.
For the University's complete non-discrimination statement, please visit <http://www.udel.edu/home/legal-notice/>