

**Redding Consortium for Educational Equity  
Social Determinants Work Group  
December 13, 2021, 4:30-6:00 p.m.  
Meeting Minutes**

**Welcome**

The virtual meeting was convened at 4:30 p.m. Jeff Menzer, Co-Chair of the Social Determinants Work Group, welcomed all in attendance.

Menzer welcomed three new Work Group members Cora Scott, Delayne Johnson, and Kristin Dwyer taking the place of Jeff Taschner.

**Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the November Work Group meeting were approved.

**Presentation on House Bill 144**

Representative Kim Williams, Work Group member, explained that they will file a House substitute bill for House Bill 144 (HB 144) in the new General Assembly. Williams explains that pre-k was left out of the education lawsuit settlement recently settled in Delaware. What HB 144 will do is fund two-year-olds at a 7:1 (seven students to one teacher) ratio and fund 3–5-year-olds at 8.4:1 ratio, as do with House Bill 86.

Kristin Dwyer explains that DSEA is supportive of this bill and reducing the student teacher ratio is important. Pre-k seems like a blind spot for policy makers and DSEA believes that HB 144 helps alignment because it fits in with HB 86 and creates a better system for pre-k children.

Dawn Alexander shared national best practices are a ratio of between 1:6 and 1:10 for two-year-olds. For Delaware special education ratios, they are currently 1:12.8 and we absolutely need to reduce those ratios and bring those numbers in line with best practices and what we are doing for basic special education students.

Menzer thanked the presenters and wants to continue the conversations with the Superintendents and determine how these ratios impact staffing. Dorrell Green, Superintendent of Red Clay school district, thanked the presenters and agreed that we need to do right by our preschoolers. He reminded them we need to be aware of the impact smaller ratios will have on facilities.

**Wilmington Learning Collaborative Q and A**

Jim Simmons, Director of the Office of Equity and Innovation at DDOE stated that the Wilmington Learning Collaborative (WLC) is a bottom-up approach. The goal is to create a framework and gather folks around the table to answer questions.

**Question 1 - How will children and families who live in the City of Wilmington and are in the Colonial SD feeder pattern be included/supported?**

**Answer** – All students who reside in the city are part of the plan and should be in the plans to close the opportunity gaps. They have offered the WLC opportunity to Charters and they need to connect with Colonial as well as the superintendents in Brandywine, Red Clay, and Colonial to ensure this plan impacts all those students. WLC could be a first step and replicated in the other counties too. Creativity is important to this process.

Margie Lopez Waite, Consortium member, stated she sits on the board of the Community Education Building (CEB) and shared that they are reaching out about how Charter schools, and those in the CEB can be part of the WLC.

**Question 2 - Is there any consideration given to structuring the WLC around schools that serve the majority of students that reside in the City of Wilmington, regardless of geographic location of the school?**

**Answer** – Mostly addressed in previous answer.

**Question 3 - Based on review of other models, what lessons have surfaced that would be advantageous to consider? What lessons should we stay away from?**

**Answer** – They took the framework for the WLC from models in other states, but the situation in Wilmington is unique. In other models, it was a state takeover model versus the WLC which is voluntary. Other models did not use shared curriculum, but Jim is in favor of a shared curriculum due to issues like student transience. A big lesson learned was that teachers must be involved in decision making and it is vital to create trust and build partnerships. It is evident we need to address the high school issue, but we can still make progress with the WLC before that issue is addressed.

**Question 4 - Have there been any conversations or outreach to Wilmington parents for their feedback?**

**Answer** – Several parent conversations are coming up. They also did a city walk in the Pulaski area to encourage parents who have students that attend Pulaski to come to WLC information session meetings.

**Question 5 - How will success be measured for the schools and children in the WLC? Will there be an independent evaluation?**

Answer – We need to look at multiple ways to measure student success like student growth, proficiency rates, and attendance. We also need to find diverse ways to measure engagement and measure what students can do versus what they can memorize.

**Question 6 - Will the timing of the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) allow participating schools time to align curriculum/resources/etc.?**

Answer – No, it will not.

**Question 7 - How would curriculum alignment work with WLC?**

Answer – The WLC needs to look at the cultural responsiveness of curriculum and ensure all kids see themselves reflected in their educational experience.

**Question 8 - How will the WLC ensure there is alignment with different types of funding (i.e., funded recommendations from Redding, federal funding, etc.) and do not overwhelm participating schools?**

Answer – The WLC does not address how schools are funded but how can encourage schools to be flexible and creative in funding choices. There also needs to be a focus on diversifying educator workforce; diversity in terms of race, gender, LGBTQ+, special needs, etc.

**Question 9 - In the WLC, will there be room for student voice?**

Answer – Yes, there must be. There are currently student representatives on school boards that will be involved in the WLC. It is critical to hear from students about what they need.

**Question 10 - Does this plan look at only K-8 model in schools?**

Answer – Yes, there is also consideration for pre-k students. Our system needs to be willing to assist students after they graduate and be able to track them and needs to consider foster kids as well. The WLC is a phase in plan, and it must keep developing in the best interest of the entire school system. Jon Sheehan clarified that not every school involved needs to be k-8, they can just be elementary or middle schools

**Question 11 - What is the endgame for the WLC?**

Answer – It is the beginning phase to restructure the educational system in Delaware.

Jim Simmons asked if folks had questions. Karen Eller, educator, stated she always hears discussions around the need for student voice and is curious if any of the WLC meetings have been with students. She states it is important to get feedback from students and families before the MOU is in place. Jim stated that meetings to engage students start tomorrow and at the neighborhood walks they asked families to bring their children if they have a student in the

district. Karen emphasized the need for ongoing student voice to be captured and Jim stated the Christina School is planning to have a student forum about the WLC.

Representative Williams asked if there are charter schools interested in the WLC? Jim Simmons stated that charter schools have not seemed initially interested and feel they have some of the flexibilities offered by the WLC. He stated that they are willing to work with any charter schools at any point in the WLC discussion and would never exclude them from the conversation.

Representative Williams was also concerned about lawsuits. She stated the school districts must use local money to pay for lawsuits. If a school in the WLC does not follow an IEP (Individualized Education Program), she is worried that they are opening districts up to more lawsuits. Jim Simmons stated he does not believe they will have more lawsuits and that all schools in the WLC will follow special education law. There must be ongoing professional development to ensure schools are following all protocols.

Jeff opened the floor to Jon Sheehan, Governor's Office, who underscored that the WLC is a collaborative and ground up approach. The Governor's team wants to work with the Wilmington community.

In terms of the WLC and pre-k, Jon Sheehan emphasized the need for before and after care. He stated transportation is tough to address and that there needs to be connectivity between early care and kindergarten. Dawn Alexander, Work Group member, stated that providing high quality before and after care helps with the transportation issue because it gives working parents more flexibility.

Teri Lawler, Work Group member, stated that it would be great to hear some of the bright spots at City schools and see what is working in the schools and for those children and incorporate those ideas into the WLC planning.

### **Path Forward**

Jeff reviewed the path forward and the plan for the January meeting is to have Teri Lawler present about social, emotional, and behavioral work in the state and for Dr. Adrian Peoples to begin a conversation around a data dashboard that Redding received funding for in FY22. The February meeting will continue the data dashboard conversation.

### **Public Comment**

No public comment

Meeting adjourned.

## **Attendance**

### **Work Group Members**

Jeff Menzer  
Raye Jones Avery  
Teri Lawler  
Dave Sokola  
Evelyn Edney  
Dawn Alexander  
Kristin Dwyer  
Cora Scott  
Delayne Johnson  
Mark Pruitt Jr.  
Kim Williams  
Tamara Smith

### **IPA/DSU Staff**

Kelly Sherretz  
Haley Qaissaunee

### **Members of the Public**

Margie Lopez Waite, Consortium Member  
Deb Stevens  
Matt Denn, Consortium Co-Chair  
Karen Eller  
Dorrell Green, Consortium Member  
Jon Sheehan  
James Simmons  
Lynne Howard