

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission – Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement

Eden Support Services Center

925 Bear-Corbitt Road Bear, Delaware

Minutes – September 29, 2015

Co-chairs Chandra Pitts and Yvonne Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Welcome and Meeting Introduction

The Co-chairs, Chandra Pitts and Yvonne Johnson, began the meeting by having all of those in attendance introduce themselves. They then reiterated the purpose and goal of their committee and discussed the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee core highlights.

They communicated that the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC) and the Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee will focus on work based on the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee (WEAC) final report. The goal of the Commission and this committee is to make sure that the suggestions of the WEAC final report are implemented successfully. In addition, they went through an overview of the minutes from the last meeting.

Areas of Focus

The Co-chairs divided the committee into several groups for a “breakout dialogue” to discuss challenges and possible solutions in regards to parent engagement, educator engagement, and community engagement.

Definition of engagement:

Many of the groups discussed what “engagement” meant/ looked like prior to discussing challenges.

- It is a two-way street, a relationship that focuses on reciprocation. Therefore, all three aspects of engagement need each other.
- Engagement and the barriers regarding engagement have changed due to the change in relationship from parent to educator to community. Therefore, parents, educators, and the community create a “three-legged” school.
- In order to achieve engagement from parents, educators, and the community- there is a high need for **student engagement**.
- Delaware Readiness teams: currently defining what is engagement for common language
- Chandra Pitts described her definition of engagement as students succeeding.

Parent Engagement

- Transportation: parents cannot get to school activities
 - Solution: utilize city transportation or school buses
- Parent’s need to be educated why engagement is important
 - Solution: **Parent engagement versus parent education**: teach parents why engagement and participation is important

- Parents may have had a negative educational experience that transcended to their children
 - Solution: Create a welcoming environment, have a parent resource person, ensure effective outreach to hard-to-reach parents
 - Solution: Aaron Selekman, Principal at H.B. DuPont said that in developing their parent engagement plan they needed to engage the community where they were and ask them in what ways they wanted to be engaged. The programs matched the parents' needs and wants.
- Parents may not have the time or opportunity to provide additional assistance
- There is a lack of knowledge on parenting (nutrition, sleep, etc.)
 - Solution: offer parent education class to address these knowledge gaps

Educator Engagement

- Need to be able to build relationships with parents
 - Solution: Trainings on how to engage parents
- Need to create a meaningful and high quality engagement with students (otherwise teachers face burnout)
 - Solution: Focus on community building and school culture
- Educators are not from communities they are serving
 - Solution: Train teachers so they have cultural competencies
- Educator burnout/ need for resources
 - Solution: need time and trained individuals to engage with children who might need more attention in and out of the classroom
 - Trained professionals/ psychologists
 - Additional magnet schools to attract students' passions
 - Have more experienced teachers influence other educators
 - Teach without having students realize they're learning
- Needed resources vary from school to school
- A need to encompass different teacher models
- Early educator collaboration in order to create a strong foundation of parent expectations in regards to engagement
 - Classroom visits

Community Engagement

- The community doesn't always buy into the school
 - Ensure school leadership has the competencies to market and build relationships
- Before and after school programming (especially for inner city schools)
- A need for extracurricular activities
- Community engagement is lacking
 - Town halls, meetings, social media

Overall, the discussion led to several key points: a need for a clear definition of what is engagement, a need for student engagement, parent engagement versus parent education, a need for a variety of additional resources, and plans to diversify community engagement.

Conclusion

The Co-chairs were excited by the diversity and the number of people who attended and who were sharing ideas. At the end of the exercise, there were many unique challenges presented as well as potential solutions to each problem. They realized and came to the conclusion that student engagement is a huge aspect of their goal and that parent, educator, and community engagement must be youth-led.

The next meeting for the committee was set for October 20th but is currently being rescheduled. The Co-chairs will be reaching out through their various channels with the new date, time and location. The Co-chairs hope that the next meeting is as well attended.*

The meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m.

**Update: The next meeting has since been set for October 13 from 5:30-7 p.m. at Highlands Elementary School.*

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee
Attendance at the 9/29 Meeting

Committee Members Attending

Chandra Pitts, Co-chair
Yvonne Johnson, Co-chair
Donavon Alderman
Daphne Evans
Wendy Lapham
Pati Nash

Alexis Adrianopoulos
Nicole Williams
The Honorable Trippi Congo
Meredith Griffin
Aaron Selekman
Ted Boyer

Members of the Public

Laura Nash
Steve Fackenthall
Brian Stephan
Deric Clinton
Orrin White
Nancy Williry
Susan Haberstroh
Bill Doolittle
Candice Brown

Kiatanna Lawson
Mia Sanitsky
Zoe Getz
Claire Martinelli
Alex Posner
Sam Mitchell
Allison Maron
Erin Meyer
Allisson Knapp

Hope Bellamy
Mike Matthews
Mia Sanitsky
Zoe Getz
Michelle Suchyj
Annette Fletcher
Melissa Froemming
Heather Townsend
Susan Connor

Institute for Public Administration Staff

Dr. Daniel Rich
Nicole Rodriguez- Hernandez