

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Funding Student Success Committee
September 15, 2015 Meeting**

The meeting was called to order by co-chairs Jill Floore and Mike Jackson at 2:05

The co-chairs welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Funding Student Success Committee of the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC) and then led the room in a round of introductions.

The co-chairs stated that the main objective of today's meeting would be to develop the committee's work plan for what it must accomplish and when. The work plan that the group will review should be a starting point and feedback is welcome. The chairs stated that this work plan outlines is how the committee will collaboratively contributions to the WEIC.

Recap of the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee Report

Mike provided a recap of the Funding Student Success Action Agenda section of the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee's (WEAC) final report. This Action Agenda will be the foundation upon which the WEIC Funding Student Success Committee's work shall be based and can be found on pages 57-61 of the WEAC final report. The recommendations are:

- I. Modifying to the State unit count allocation formula
- II. Strengthening the public education revenue base
- III. Supporting the cost of district reorganization
- IV. Supporting the City of Wilmington Office of Education and Public Policy
- V. Supporting needed investments in early childhood learning/college access
- VI. Urging the Interagency Resource Management Committee to develop a statewide comprehensive education/funding plan for low-income students, families and schools through the

Guiding Principles of the Funding Student Success Committee

Jill provides the group with an explanation of the committee's guiding principles.

- I. Provide cost estimates and financial recommendations of the WEAC Final
- II. Report based on members' representative areas of expertise
- III. Offer sustainable financial solutions to support on-going efforts in impacted districts.
- IV. Ensure recommendations are equitable and do not disproportionately affect any impacted district's funding or tax base.
- V. Recognize that the WEAC recommendation are not simply moving students from one district to another, but involve a complex plan and multiple coordinated resources to improve services and opportunities available for Wilmington and Delaware students.

Jill reiterated the importance of doing more than just replacing the Christina plaque on a school with a Red Clay plaque. The commission has a multi-year life span in order to pursue sustainable solutions. Additionally, she explained that in keeping with the fourth guiding principle, the Red Clay Board has stated that it will not accept any tax increase for its residents.

Overview of the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission

Dr. Rich, WEIC Policy Advisor, provided an overview of the purpose of WEIC. House Bill 148 established the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission to serve the following functions:

- Serve as a State advisory committee to the Governor and General Assembly for the administration of planning, recommending, and implementing changes to improve the quality and availability of education for children in Pre-K through grade 12 in the City of Wilmington and advise the State on improvements for all schools within the State with high concentrations of children living in poverty or English language learners or both.
- Work with and across all governmental agencies, educational entities, and private and nonprofit institutions to promote and support the implementation of all recommended changes from the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee
- Monitor the progress of implementation and recommend policies and actions to the Governor and General Assembly to facilitate progress and to promote the continuous improvement of public education on dimensions addressed by the WEAC recommendations.
- Develop a transition plan, including a timeline, for the provision of necessary services to schools and students affected by the implementation of the changes recommended by WEAC.
- Develop a resource plan regarding transitional resources to effectively implement school district realignment.

The most pressing requirements of WEIC are the transition plan and resource plan, which must be submitted first to the by December 31, 2015. State Board of Education and then to the General Assembly and the Governor for final approval.

Before submitting to the State Board of Education, the Commission is required to solicit feedback via public hearings. Therefore, the goal is to release a draft plan to the public in the middle of November.

Funding Student Success Committee Work Plan

Dr. Rich reviewed a draft Project Timeline with the committee and explained the committee's role in relation to the full Commission. The number one priority is to act on the items required in the redistricting and transition plans. To do this, the Funding Student Success committee will working closely with the Redistricting Committee in order to provide financial projections for the redistricting plans. It will also be proposing structural enhancements to the existing education finance structure that are needed to support students. The items required of the Funding Student Success committee are listed below in the work plan. Dr. Rich stated that some issues are structural and others are resource-based. For the structural issues, such as reassessment and unit count, the committee should be proposing a process that includes a timetable and stipulation of responsibility. (For instance, next year the commission, working in collaboration with the business managers throughout the state, will complete....). For issues that are resource-based, such as the reallocation of units, the committee should provide analysis.

- I. Enhancements to the Existing Education Finance Structure
 - a. State public education revenue base
 - b. Establishment of a Low-Income Unit
 - c. Creating a K-3 Basic Special Education Unit
 - d. Current Expense Tax Rate Implications
 - e. Referendum and Property Reassessment
 - f. State Equalization Funding
- II. Defining the Impact of District Reorganization
 - a. State
 - i. Reallocation of Units and Revenue Impact for Division I, II, III, Academic Excellence, Exceptional Student Unit, and Related Services
 - ii. Reallocation of Ancillary Units and Revenue Impact
 - iii. Reallocation of Non-Unit Funding (Professional Development, Unique Alternatives, Educational Sustainment Fund, Student Discipline, Technology Block Grant, State Testing Computers, World Language Expansion)
 - iv. Transportation Funding Impact (may not be able to do exactly without known feeder patterns)
 - b. Federal
 - i. Reallocation of federal funding across grants received by Christina, Colonial and Red Clay
 - c. Local
 - i. Shifting Assessment Base/Impact on 4 Tax Rate Components Choice, Charter and Tuition billings (might include in (a))
 - ii. New Castle County Tax District Impact
- III. Capital Funding and Asset Management
 - a. State Minor Capital Improvement and Local Match Funding
 - b. Funding Deferred Maintenance Transfer of School Facilities, Capacity of Each Building and Associated Deferred Maintenance for each building
- IV. Project Planning and Transition Funding

Review of Upcoming Meetings

In order to complete the work plan outlined above, the committee agreed to the following meeting schedule.

- September 22 – Enhancements to the current funding structure
- October 6 – Defining the Impact of Redistricting – Local, State and Federal
- October 27 – Transition Costs and Public Policy Integration
- November 11 – Review and Develop Final Recommendation

All meetings will take place from 2-4 p.m. at the Red Clay District Offices, located at Baltz Elementary School. Per the recommendation of Dr. Kevin Carson, the group considered options for additional meeting times. Jill Floore invited anyone who is available to meet from 2-4 p.m. at the Red Clay District Offices on the Tuesdays when the committee does not have official

meetings in order to work on prepping for the meetings. The entire committee agreed that there will be a lot of “homework” to accomplish between meetings.

Comments from the Committee and Public

Andy Hegedus asked how much money goes into each school in cash dollars. It would be helpful to see how much each district gets in order to have a baseline for comparison.

Mike Matthews commented on the importance of recognizing that per pupil funding reported at a school level is an average. Individual students have different needs with different costs. Mike also suggested that the group consider reducing class size based on the school’s percentage of low income students. Jill Floore responded that the committee will take providing financial analysis for the policy recommendations put forward by the Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee. Mike stated that weighted student funding should not harm high-performing schools or result class size increases for suburban schools.

A member of the public asked why WEAC recommended Red Clay take over a large role in the city and not a combination of Red Clay and Brandywine. She raised the concern that families will have to send their kids to schools that are not the closest to their house. She stated that district lines should be drawn in a way that builds community. Dr. Rich provided a summary of the WEAC report’s explanation of its governance recommendations and stated that students are currently bused away from their neighborhoods. While there is no guarantee that a student’s new school would be the closest to their house, the overall restructuring does aim to improve the access of the Wilmington community to their students’ schools.

Scott Kessell inquired about how to include representatives from Kent and Sussex in this process since some items of the work plan will have significant impact on the whole state. Dr. Rich responded that some issues are specific to Wilmington and others will certainly impact other areas of the state with high concentrations of poverty. Essentially, this committee will be laying out a process that describes who needs to be involved moving forward, in what capacity, and on what timeline. The relevant stakeholders can be statewide. In the meantime, there is no reason for committee members not to reach out to other colleagues.

The meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

Attendance

Funding Student Success Committee Members

Jill Floore, Co-chair
Mike Jackson, Co-chair
Kevin Carson
Kristin Dwyer
Emily Falcon
Ed Freel
Jason Hale
Andy Hegedus
Scott Kessel
Elizabeth Lewis
Mike Matthews
Mike Piccio
Robert Silber

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission Members

Harrie Ellen Minnehan
Kenny Rivera

Institute for Public Administration Staff

Elizabeth Burland
Neil Kirschling
Dan Rich
Liz Farley-Ripple
Kelly Sherretz
Kervin Zamora

Members of the Public

Carlton Cannon
Henry Clampitt
Eric Loftus
Donna Marshall
Laura Nash
Donna Smallwood
Meghan Wallace
Representative Kim Williams