

## **Wilmington Education Improvement Commission**

Red Clay Consolidated School District Office

Minutes - August 25, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 5:36 p.m. by Chairman Dr. Tony Allen.

Dr. Allen welcomed the Members of the Commission, District Chiefs, and the public to the first meeting of the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission. A list of attendees is attached.

The Commissioners each introduced themselves. Each member of the public was invited to introduce themselves by Dr. Allen.

Dr. Allen welcomed incoming Secretary of Education Steve Godowsky to the meeting. Dr. Godowsky expressed the importance of the work being done as well as the importance of the Department of Education's support of the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission.

Dr. Allen presented on the role of the Commission. The presentation is attached.

Dr. Dan Rich, Policy Director, presented the proposed Commission meeting schedule. The proposed schedule includes meetings on the third Thursday of every month from 4-6 p.m. The point was raised that December 8, 2015, a proposed supplemental meeting date, would conflict with school board meetings. This date will be reconsidered.

On September 15, 2015, Commission leadership will be presenting the draft outline of the Redistricting Report to the State Board of Education.

Dr. Rich reviewed Senate Bill 122. The bill authorizes the State Board of Education to alter the boundaries of the New Castle County school districts, consistent with the recommendations from the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee's report and based on a transition, resource, and implementation plan prepared by the Commission. This plan must be submitted to the State Board of Education no later than December 31, 2015, and acted upon by March 31, 2016. This plan must be approved as a package.

The Redistricting Plan must accommodate the districts that are involved. The Commission must ensure that the district plans are developed and that they connect and reinforce one another. The legislation indicates key elements that need to be included in order for this to happen in a non-disruptive way. The implementation of redistricting will take several years.

A draft of the Redistricting Plan to review is expected before Thanksgiving.

### **Dr. Allen opened the discussion to questions from the Commission members.**

- There was a question regarding whether or not Commission members will be expected to participate in the committees.
  - Yes, Commission members will be expected to participate in the committees.

- There was a comment regarding the need for broader community participation in the work of the committees.
  - Committees will be open to the public. Any committee nominations should be sent to the committee co-chairs for consideration.
- There was a question regarding the involvement of the districts in the development of the redistricting plan.
  - The districts have to make their own plans. The Commission will provide the support necessary to develop these plans.

The Commission discussed the Guiding Principles from the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee. These Guiding Principles are attached.

**More Comments from the Commission/Co-Chairs:**

- Judge Kuhn indicated that we must be cautious to engage the voices of students who do not have family to engage because they are in foster care, their parents are in prison, or their parents are otherwise unable or unwilling to participate.
- A point was raised that the Commission should not focus on providing schools with more funds, but should examine how the resources are being used and the flexibility of the resources available to schools.
- The animosity between district and charter schools should be recognized.
- The Commission should remain cognizant of the current state of teacher training, and the fear that is being developed in teachers.
- Commissioners should become/continue to be ambassadors for the work that the Commission is doing.
- There was a request for a financial workshop for the Commissioners, so that all the Commissioners are able to answer questions.

**Dr. Allen opened the discussion up to public comment:**

- There was a concern raised about the meaning of “access to high quality instructors,” found on the WEAC final report. How can a discussion about teacher effectiveness still be a productive conversation?
  - Dr. Allen answered that the Commission is not expected to be educational experts, but the Commission is meant to be a catalyst for action. The Delaware Department of Education should address these issues more collaboratively to support the districts.
- There are a lot of groups that are working to solve education issues (DOE and SBE review of opportunities, student success 2025). It seems that there are potential collisions against these groups.
  - Dr. Rich responded that these groups should be connected. The student success 2025 does not deal with the structural issues that we are discussing; they focus more on what we want students to learn. The statewide review is a result of the WEAC recommendations, and this should serve as a baseline.
- Why are charter schools increasing enrollment while this moratorium is in place?

- Chandra Pitts reminded everyone that there has been no stance among this Commission against charter schools, it was simply said that there needs to be a plan in place before more charters are formed.
  - Dr. Rich explained that these enrollment increases were planned before this moratorium took effect.
- Shouldn't other education areas be a part of this discussion?
  - Dr. Allen explained that governance is only one of the five items that this commission will address. WEIC has multiple committees with different goals. WEIC will also make recommendations for the improvement of education from kindergarten to grade 12.
- There were some positive comments about the hope that the efforts to improve education in Delaware might actually get done right this time through WEIC.
- Representative Williams thanked the Commission for serving, and thanked Dr. Allen and Dr. Rich for making these meetings open and making the public feel welcome.

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission  
Attendance at the 8/25 meeting**

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission Members**

Tony Allen, Ph.D., Chair	Harry E. Minnehan
The Honorable Nnamdi Chukwuocha	Joe Pika, Ph.D.
Karen Eller	Chandra Pitts
Meredith Griffin	The Honorable Charles Potter, Jr.
Frederika Jenner	Kenny Rivera, Vice-Chair
Yvonne Johnson	Vicki Seifred
Joseph T. Laws	The Honorable David Sokola
Tizzy Lockman, Vice-Chair	Michelle Taylor
Margie Lopez-Waite	Breyonna Williams
Aretha Miller	

**Committee Co-Chairs**

The Honorable Chandlee Kuhn, Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee  
Jill Floore, Funding Student Success Committee  
Jacqueline D. Jenkins, Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee

**District Chiefs**

Dusty Blakey, Colonial School District Superintendent  
Merv Daugherty, Red Clay Consolidated School District Superintendent  
George Evans, Christina School District Board member, District Representative  
Vicki Gehrt, New Castle County Vocational Technical School District Superintendent  
Mark Holodick, Brandywine School District Superintendent

**Institute for Public Administration Staff**

Sarah Pragg  
Kervin Zamora  
Elizabeth Burland

## Members of the Public

Donavon Alderman

Ted Ammann

Connor Bifferato, WEIC Legal Counsel

Adriana Bohm

Darlene Cader

Mairead Chase

Robert Chase

Katrina Cowart, Senator Marshall

Tom Driscoll, WEIC Legal Counsel

Kristin Dwyer

Ed Freel

Steve Godowski

Julie Harrington

Darlene Jeter

Tyrone Jones

Mike Kempski

Neil Kirschling

Jackie Kook

Lillian Laws

Dr. Jerome Lewis

Mike Matthews

Mary Kate Mauser

Matthew Meyer

Keith Morton

Pack Morrill

Byron G. Murphy

Mike Oboryshko

Kevin Ohlandt

Fran O'Malley

Jackie Pardee-Meda

Kristin Pidopon

Laura Rowe

Nitton Rao

Stephen Smith

Jeff Taschner

Meghan Wallace

Oran White

Bob Williams

Representative Kim Williams

Mike Wilson