

**Redding Consortium for Educational Equity
Settlement Work Group
January 25, 2021 5:00–7:00 p.m.
DRAFT Meeting Minutes**

I. Welcome and Introductions

Aaron Bass, Co-Chair of the Settlement Work Group, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Kelly Sherretz, Institute for Public Administration (IPA), established the meeting norms. Work Group members then introduced themselves and what they hope to contribute to the group.

II. Review of Work Group Scope and Goals

Chuck Longfellow, Co-Chair of the Settlement Work Group, introduced the scope of the Work Group and invited feedback. The scope of the group is to be a watchdog for the implementation of the recent educational equity lawsuit settlement, be the subject matter expert of the settlement for the full Consortium, ensure that the Consortium is responding appropriately to the settlement, and to create recommendations for the General Assembly to implement the settlement's requirements.

Chuck further outlined the broad goals of the group, including to offer guidance to the General Assembly when decisions related to the settlement must be made, to push the state and General Assembly to exceed the changes mandated by the settlement for the betterment of students, and to connect the settlement to broader opportunities for systemic and equitable change.

III. Review of Settlement

Kelly Sherretz reviewed previous efforts in the state to address funding inequities. Aaron reviewed the key points of the lawsuit settlement:

- Opportunity funding will grow from \$25M to \$60M by school year (SY) 2024-25
- Funding for K-3 special education will grow to match current funding for grades 4-12 by SY 2023-24
- Beginning in SY 2022-23, there will be a \$4M annual commitment to teacher recruitment and retention in high needs schools
- By SY 2023-24, the Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP) will have its funding increased from \$6.1M to \$12.2M
- An ombudsperson program will be established in each county to assist students and families in resolving disputes or complaints concerning various inequities.
- Future capital projects will require an equity statement to explain how the project would impact the equitable distribution of new and renovated buildings within the district
- The state will hire an independent organization to complete a holistic assessment of the Delaware public school finance system by January 2024.

Each stipulation of the settlement has a timeline for the State and General Assembly to act in response. If at any point a deadline is missed or the minimum compliance is not met, the settlement is ended and the original lawsuit continues.

Chuck went into further detail about the minimum requirements to look for in the fiscal year (FY) 2022 budget, to be introduced during the 2021 General Assembly. He described the later year budget requirements as an opportunity to accelerate or increase the requirements of the settlement.

Aaron invited questions or statements about the settlement from Work Group members. Gary Henry, Work Group Member, pointed out that across the country similar reforms represent about 6.4% of education budgets, while the minimum requirements of the settlement would represent just 1.4% of the DE education budget. He agrees that the settlement should be treated as a floor for reform.

Shelley Rouser, Work Group Member, asked if the scope of the Work Group extends beyond allocating money to different areas. Aaron clarified that yes, the scope of the group does extend to making sure recommendations lead to outcomes, not just allocations. Chuck added that the settlement leverages the already existing opportunity fund, and part of the scope of the group may be to understand if those funds are being used appropriately and effectively.

Aaron clarified to the group that the settlement is not approved all at once. The General Assembly approves the budget annually and must reaffirm the settlement’s requirements each time. The General Assembly may choose not to continue with the requirements of the settlement, which could trigger the lawsuit to continue. He reiterated that the settlement’s requirements along with instituting best practices is a floor for systemic change.

Kelly discussed how the current recommendations from other work groups align with the stipulations of the settlement:

	Educator Work Group Recommendations	Social Determinants Work Group	Funding & Governance Work Group
Opportunity Funding			
K-3 Special Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommended K-3 Special Education funding for FY22 	
Early Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed enhanced ECAP funding 	
Teacher Recruitment and Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow Our Own Program Whole School Professional Learning 		
Ombudsperson			
Capital Projects			
Independent Assessment			

IV. Next Steps

Aaron highlighted the great opportunity the settlement is as a floor to help students and requested of work group members to focus squarely on the interests of students in the conversations of the Work Group, and not their vested interests.

V. Discussion

Dan Shelton, Superintendent of Christina School District, emphasized that this should be an opportunity for real, permanent change to modernize the system, and embed opportunity funding into the unit count formula or another permanent funding structure. Aaron agreed, and emphasized that the high number of past efforts that have ultimately failed is a testament for the need for more permanent reforms.

Chuck commented that some prefer the unit-count system, others want to fully reform the education funding system. He thinks that the discussion of increasing equity can be done within the current unit count system. Kristin Dwyer, Work Group Member, agreed in part with Chuck, saying that the unit-count system is a good foundation and hopes that the group can come to a consensus on how to enhance the current unit-count system and put guardrails in place to modernize it. She drew attention to Maryland's periodic reviews of its education funding. Aaron encouraged this conversation, pointing out that the settlement only serves as oversight through 2025 and guardrails to protect existing and future funding will be necessary.

Shannon Griffin, Work Group Member, commented on the scope of the Work Group. She highlighted that need for a provision in the scope of work that focuses on students that are several years behind their peers.

Kristin, highlighting the importance of funding accountability measures, discussed how an "Opportunity Dashboard" that tracks what advantages high performing schools have is helpful to understand which resources to provide to schools that are lagging behind.

Aaron closed the discussion and invited more in depth discussions about solutions and the scope of the group at future meetings.

VI. Public Comment

Dawn Alexander encouraged the work group to look into the Social Determinants work group's [recommendations](#), especially in regards to ECAP and pre-school unit-funding, in its work.

Amy Solomon suggested developing easily digestible videos for General Assembly members to better understand the recommendations of the Consortium. She also noted her disturbance from reading school outcomes data.

Daniel Walker, the Wilmington City Council Chief of Staff, expressed the views of the City Council. The Council believes that the City of Wilmington should have specific Ombudspersons as a part of the settlement implementation to understand the local contexts and influences, and believe the current funding system is antiquated and does not provide enough flexibility to education administrators. Though they do not know the will of the General Assembly, they hope that children will be put first even when it is uncomfortable.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm. The next meeting of the Settlement Work Group will be on Monday, February 8th at 5pm.

Future Meetings

Monday, February 8th, 5pm

Thursday, February 18th, 5pm (Full Body Meeting)

Monday, March 1st, 5pm

Monday, March 22nd, 5pm

Monday, April 12th, 5pm

Monday, May 3rd, 5pm

In Attendance

Work Group Members

Aaron Bass, Co-Chair

Chuck Longfellow, Co-Chair

Raushann Austin

Kristin Dwyer

Shannon Griffin

Tika Hartsock

Gary Henry

Cliff Howell

Monique Martin

Shelly Rouser

Laurisa Schutt

Members of the Public

Dawn Alexander

Dwayne Bensing

Tammy Croce

Erin Goldner

Taylor Hawk

Brendan Laux

Kelsey Mensch

Haley Quissaunee

Laurisa Schutt

Jon Sheehan

Kelly Sherretz

Amy Solomon

Daniel Walker

Redding Consortium Members

Matthew Denn, Co-Chair

Elizabeth "Tizzy" Lockman, Co-Chair

Stephanie Ingram

Dan Shelton