

Redding Consortium for Educational Equity
Full Body Meeting
March 21, 2024
Meeting Minutes

The Redding Consortium full body meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. at Delaware State University (DSU) at the Riverfront in Wilmington, Delaware. Senator Elizabeth Lockman, co-chair of the Redding Consortium, welcomed all in attendance.

I. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Kevin Kelley, Consortium member, motioned to approve the December 14, 2023, full-body meeting minutes. Representative Nnamdi Chukwuocha, Consortium member, seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the December 14, 2023, meeting minutes as submitted.

II. Monitoring and Implementation Updates from the Social Determinants Work Group

Kelly Sherretz, Policy Scientist and Education Services Coordinator at the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA), shared that the IPA team is conducting data analysis to research the effectiveness of the Boost Initiative. The Data Service Center (DSC) and Community in Schools (CIS) shared the data with the IPA. Through cross-district collaboration between New Castle County public and vo-tech schools, the Boost '22-'26 initiative allows graduation coaches to directly support the City of Wilmington students to improve academic achievements, close opportunity gaps, and increase graduation rates. Graduation coaches, provided by CIS, work with students for 2-3 years.

Sherretz informed the Redding Consortium that it will receive a deeper dive into the IPA team's analysis in April 2024. Raye Jones Avery, co-chair of the Social Determinants Work Group, confirmed.

III. Monitoring and Implementation Updates from the Educator Work Group

Tika Hartsock, chair of the Educator Work Group, shared that between October 2023 and January 2024, the Educator Work Group co-chairs, Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) partners, and Redding Consortium staff visited five of the twelve participating schools in the [Redding Teacher Leadership Initiative](#) to learn about the impact of the program. The *Redding Teacher Leadership Initiative* is a whole-school professional development program for the 2023-24 school year. To promote further alignment between the Redding Consortium and the

WLC, the WLC will scale the *Redding Teacher Leadership Initiative* into a multi-year professional development program.

Hartsock met with the Delaware Higher Education Office (DHEO) to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Redding Scholarship Program alongside IPA and DSU staff. She presented that DHEO has awarded over 200 scholarships to eligible educators and staff in Redding schools since Fall 2022.

Hartsock announced that former co-chair of the Educator Work Group, Representative Michael Smith, has stepped down from his position with the Redding Consortium. The Consortium thanked Rep. Smith for his work and leadership as co-chair.

IV. Redding Consortium Redistricting Context from Councilman Jea Street

Councilman Jea Street provided historical insight and context into the Redding Consortium’s current recommendation for redistricting. In May 1981, the “county district” evolved into four separate school districts in New Castle County. Since then, Delaware has established four commissions to equalize funding, increase support, and decrease school districts for City of Wilmington students. Based on previous work—specifically the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC)—the Redding Consortium has brought forth the current redistricting proposal, the “Modified River Plan.” The “Modified River Plan” calls for four school districts streamlined into two school districts that serve the City of Wilmington—the Brandywine (BSD) and Red Clay Consolidated (RCCSD) School Districts, with the “modification” of Warner Elementary School and Shortlidge (Evan G.) Academy remaining in RCCSD. Changing district boundaries will not be the sole solution for closing opportunity gaps; therefore, the “Modified River Plan” aspires to enhance remediation and support services to bring positive change.

V. A Word from Delaware’s Deputy Attorney General on Delaware Code § 1026 on “Changing Boundaries within the City of Wilmington”

Deputy Attorney General Caroline McDonough shared the legal interpretation of [Delaware Code § 1026 on changing boundaries within the City of Wilmington](#). According to Delaware Code § 1026, the Redding Consortium may submit interim drafts to the Delaware State Board of Education (SBE) for their consideration and is free to collaborate with the SBE at any point in the redistricting planning process. The final plan must adhere to and include all necessary stipulations and elements as written in the Delaware Code for the final plan to be submitted and approved by the SBE.

If the Board approves a final plan, the SBE will send the plan to the Delaware Office of the Controller General so the Office may conduct a fiscal analysis. Afterward, the final plan with the fiscal analysis will be sent to the Delaware General Assembly (GA) for approval or denial. The Governor would then sign off on approving the plan.

Sen. Lockman articulated that the Redding Consortium has changed their timeline for redistricting and plans to work with the SBE as a reviewer and collaborator for any submitted plan.

Joseph Jones, Consortium member, asked for clarification regarding “school districts required to cooperate fully with the Redding Consortium” under Delaware Code § 1026: 3.d. Deputy Attorney General McDonough stated school districts are required to provide financial, student, personnel, and additional data the Consortium may find helpful in drawing redistricting plans.

Lincoln Hohler, Consortium member, inquired about the definition of “interim” for the Consortium's redistricting proposal and plan. Deputy Attorney General McDonough stated that Delaware Code § 1026 does not outline what an “interim plan” is; however, it is up to the Consortium on whether they would like to submit “phases” or “iterative drafts” to the SBE. The Deputy Attorney General recommended that the Consortium collaborate with the SBE to streamline the process.

Kelley inquired if the SBE can approve an interim plan before the final plan is submitted. Deputy Attorney General McDonough expressed that the SBE may approve an interim plan with its proposed boundary changes as “pending.” Sen. Lockman clarified that the interim plan would become finalized and implemented once approved by the General Assembly and Governor.

Raye Jones Avery, Consortium member, suggested revisiting the role of the SBE as it is currently written in the Deputy Attorney General’s memo on Delaware Code § 1026; the SBE does not have the authority to change or alter district boundaries and lines. Instead, it is a collaborator and part of the approval process.

Dorrell Green, Consortium member, further asked if all 13 stipulations under Delaware Code § 1026: 3.a. are required to be included in the final plan. Sen. Lockman and Rep. Chukwuocha answered yes and that the Consortium should address all stipulations to their fullest extent.

VI. An Update on the Timeline for the Redistricting Proposal by Rep. Chukwuocha

Rep. Chukwuocha shared that there have been changes to the Redding Consortium’s timeline for redistricting based on Deputy Attorney General McDonough’s insight and interpretation of

Delaware Code § 1026. This year, by April or May 2024, the Consortium aspires to submit an interim plan to the SBE proposing a two-district model (with the removal of the Christina and Colonial School Districts from the City of Wilmington). Rep. Chukwuocha emphasized that the two-district model is a vetted plan by WEIC and former (and current) City of Wilmington legislators. This plan will emphasize a more substantial role for the WLC in making executive decisions in this transitional period and providing immediate support to City of Wilmington students. Additionally, the interim plan will give a timeline for submitting a plan that addresses all 13 stipulations under Delaware Code § 1026: 3.a. Between March-May, , Consortium members will receive the interim plan for review and they will vote on whether or not to share the plan with the SBE for collaboration and input. By May or June 2024, the SBE will share its feedback with the Consortium.

Rep. Chukwuocha shared the timeline for June/July 2024 to October 2025. The Redding Consortium plans to dedicate monthly full-body meetings to creating a final redistricting plan that answers all 13 stipulations under Delaware Code § 1026: 3.a. The Consortium will also invite additional stakeholders (from the DDOE, impacted school districts, unions, and educators) to answer vital questions concerning tax base shifts, building transfers, funding, educator support, student support, and other concerns. Moreover, the Consortium expects to hold public hearings for impacted school districts in October and November 2025. By December 2025, Rep. Chukwuocha stated that the Consortium will formally submit the final plan to the SBE. Afterward, the SBE has 90 days to approve or deny the final plan.

If approved by the SBE in March 2026, the formal plan is sent to the Joint Resolution of the GA, and will then be sent to the Governor's Office for approval or denial by March to June 2026. Rep. Chukwuocha noted that alterations and implementation of district and boundary shifts may not occur until 2028 or 2029; these dates are tentative.

Kevin Kelley inquired why the Consortium has 18 months to flesh out the redistricting plan. Rep. Chukwuocha and Sen. Lockman stated the Consortium does not have to spend 18 months on the redistricting plan and can work ahead of its timeline. Rep. Chukwuocha assured that the Consortium will support immediate needs for City of Wilmington students with the assistance of the WLC.

Stephanie Ingram, Consortium member, asked who is drafting the interim plan for redistricting. Rep. Chukwuocha stated that he and Councilman Street have been working alongside IPA and DSU staff to write and build the interim plan.

Ingram asked about the inclusion of educator voices and if the Consortium included their needs and concerns in the interim draft. Rep. Chukwuocha stated that educator voices will be important in the final plan and the Consortium will build space and time to include their input.

Ingram implored Rep. Chukwuocha and Dr. Laura Burgos, Executive Director of the WLC, to better define the enhanced role of the WLC. Rep. Chukwuocha stated the MOU of the WLC highlights the WLC's authority to address the immediate concerns and needs of City of Wilmington students in its schools. Dr. Burgos clarified the MOU will explicitly state what the WLC is within bounds to do. Additionally, Dr. Burgos stated that the WLC is looking to the Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership (SEZP) and the Leadership Accountability Network (LAN) as example models.

Dan Shelton, Consortium member, inquired if the Consortium would address the problems surrounding a viable public high school for the City of Wilmington in its plan. Rep. Chukwuocha articulated that the alignment between the Redding Consortium and the WLC emphasizes that a viable high school is an immediate concern within a long-term plan for student and community success. Sen. Lockman reminded the Consortium that the purpose of its body is to propose recommendations and legislative changes to the GA for other bodies, organizations, and individuals to act upon. Shelton concluded by stating that he hoped immediate concerns would be addressed.

Co-Chair of the Consortium, Matt Denn, agreed that the plan can be acted upon more quickly than its proposed timeline but wants to ensure that the success of the City of Wilmington is not jeopardized by moving too quickly as there are many moving parts and potential impacts to redistricting.

Ingram asked if the SBE would receive the interim draft on April 18, 2024. Rep. Chukwuocha and Sen. Lockman stated that the SBE would not receive the interim draft for open dialogue and collaboration if the Consortium votes otherwise in its April 11, 2024, full-body meeting.

Hohler expressed concerns around the WLC having authority over districts and about the proposed two-district model.

Ingram inquired how Consortium members may share their thoughts on the interim redistricting plan. Sen. Lockman and Rep. Chukwuocha encouraged Consortium members to share their thoughts and input before attending the next full-body meeting.

Haley Burns, Assistant Policy Scientist at the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration, concluded that the interim proposal is the first step to the final plan brought

forth on redistricting. Burns shared that including impacted voices is part of the long-term planning process, and for now, the Consortium must first discuss the interim plan amongst itself with collaboration from the SBE.

X. Public Comment

Representative Kim Williams shared concerns about the two-district model and proposed the removal of the Christina School District. Collin O'Mara emphasized including the public school funding crisis in the plan. Bill Doolittle stated that the plan must be realistic regarding how it will impact and assist City of Wilmington students, and furthered by stating its fiscal analysis component will be crucial and systemic change is needed. James Taylor expressed the need to move swiftly on the plan in support of Wilmington students and move forward on presenting an interim draft to the SBE. Dr. Kecia Nesmith articulated that the MOU for WLC must be clearer and that the plan must explicitly define the educational policy problems of practice in the City of Wilmington and why redistricting is the answer to solve these issues.

Sen. Lockman adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.

Attendance

Redding Consortium

Members

Senator Elizabeth
Lockman, Co-Chair
Matthew Denn, Co-Chair
Raye Jones Avery
Aaron Bass
Rep. Nnamdi Chukwuocha
Dorrell Green
Tika Hartsock
Lincoln Hohler
Stephanie Ingram
Joseph Jones
Kevin Kelley
Maria Matos
Xavia Mills
Noelle Picara
Dan Shelton
Jennifer Thompkins
Margie López Waite
Danya Woods
Secretary Mark Holodick -
ex-officio
Nicholas Konzelman -
ex-officio

IPA/DSU Staff

Haley Burns
Alaina Robinson
Shelley Rouser
Kelly Sherretz
Ashley Wilkinson

Members of the Public

Ted Ammann
Laura Burgos
Jason P. Casper
David Davis
Bill Doolittle
Kathy Dulis
Karen Eller
AJé English-Wynn
Erika Gutierrez
Susan Haberstroh
Taylor Hawk
Carly Highsmith
Jenny Howard
Lynne Howard
Susan Huffman
Nicole Kennedy
Victor Leonard
VJ Leonard
Jerome Lewis
Thea Lopez
Y.F. Lou
Jose Matthews
Charles McDowell
Monica Moriak
Kecia Nesmith
Collin O'Mara
Jenny Pabon
Cimone Philpotts
Amy Reynoso
Kristie Ribecchi
Kelley Rivera
Jarek Rutz
Susan Sander
Cora Scott
Jon Sheehan
Kathleen Smith
Alethea Smith-Tucker

Jocelyn Stewart
Malik Stewart
Councilman Jea Street
James Taylor
David Tull
Bob Vacca
Representative Kim
Williams
LaToya Winkfield
Jennie Yeow