

Reading Consortium for Educational Equity
Full Body Meeting
Meeting Minutes
December 14, 2023

The Redding Consortium full body meeting convened at 5:37 pm at Delaware State University (DSU) at the Riverfront in Wilmington, Delaware. Senator Elizabeth Lockman, co-chair of the Redding Consortium, welcomed all in attendance.

Redding Consortium Co-Chairs Update - Senator Lockman and Matt Denn

Bettina Tweedy Riveros shared information about the Vision Coalition event held on December 12, 2023 for the official release of the American Institutes for Research report about the independent assessment of Delaware's public education funding system.

Redding Consortium Co-Chairs, Senator Lockman and Matt Denn, presented a status update about the accomplishments of the Redding Consortium work groups. Senator Lockman provided an overview of the achievements of the Settlement Work Group and the Educator Work Group. Senator Lockman shared how the Settlement Work Group has provided recommendations on how to implement the education lawsuit settlement requirements with fidelity, tracked the minimum actions needed for compliance with the Delaware lawsuit settlement, and monitored the settlement funding in the Governor's budget each fiscal year. The Settlement Work Group officially sunset in June 2023.

Senator Lockman mentioned how the Educator Work Group Co-Chairs have worked with the Delaware Higher Education Office to create the Redding Schools Support Scholarship for educators and school staff at Redding Consortium schools to address teacher recruitment in City of Wilmington schools. Since the start of the Redding scholarship program in the fall of 2022, a total of 136 total scholarships have been awarded to eligible school staff with 71 scholarships awarded in the summer/fall term of 2023. The Educator Work Group Co-Chairs have also worked with the Delaware Department of Education to establish the Redding Teacher Leadership Initiative Pilot Program for whole-school professional development at 12 Redding schools for the 2023-'24 academic year. Currently, the Educator Work Group Co-Chairs and IPA/DSU team are monitoring the implementation of these educator initiatives.

Matt Denn discussed the accomplishments of the Social Determinants Work Group. The Social Determinants Work Group Co-Chairs, Raye Jones Avery and Jeff Menzer, have worked with the work group members to expand access to full-day, state-supported Pre-K. There are 499 state-funded contracted seats for children in the City of Wilmington; a model which has been adopted statewide. The Social Determinants Work Group has also expanded wraparound services for Wilmington students and families through funding from the Redding Consortium. Jeff Menzer shared a brief update about the current developments of the Boost '22-'26 initiative and mentioned an update about the status of the Equity Data Dashboard.

Redding Consortium and Wilmington Learning Collaborative Alignment Presentation:

Senator Lockman, Matt Denn, and Dr. Laura Burgos, Executive Director of the Wilmington Learning Collaborative, presented an overview of alignment between the Redding Consortium and the Wilmington Learning Collaborative. Senator Lockman presented how the Redding Consortium's mission is to recommend policies and practices to the Governor and Delaware General Assembly to improve educational equity and educational outcomes for Pre-K-grade twelve students in the City of Wilmington and northern New Castle County. The charges of the Redding Consortium include monitoring the educational progress and outcomes of Pre-K-12 students and identifying the barriers and improving outcomes for overcoming these barriers. The Redding Consortium is involved with the Brandywine School District, Christina School District, Colonial School District, Red Clay Consolidated School District, New Castle County Vo-Tech School District, and charter schools in Wilmington and across New Castle County.

Dr. Burgos shared that the Wilmington Learning Collaboration's purpose is to accelerate student outcomes through increased autonomy and decision-making at the school level, supported by school-based collaborative structures. The charges of the Wilmington Learning Collaborative include a teacher and learning analysis across WLC schools to inform planning and resource allocation, a design and launch of an Educator Leader Team structure and ELT-Driven innovative projects, and the development site-based community council systems. The school districts in partnership with the WLC are the Brandywine School District, Christina School District, and the Red Clay Consolidated School District.

The areas of alignment between the Redding Consortium and the WLC are empowering school communities, improving outcomes for City of Wilmington students, and co-designing expanded learning activities with school communities. Additionally, the WLC and Redding Consortium have demonstrated alignment in the areas of supporting evidence-based support services, creating state-funded programs focused on educational equity, and expanding access to high-quality teaching and learning for Pre-K to 12 students. Other focus areas of alignment include promoting cohesive governance across school districts and enhancing professional learning investments in teachers and school leaders.

Kevin Kelley shared that a challenge in the City of Wilmington is that decision-making is primarily focused on crime in the city instead emphasizing the role of education and how to strengthen the education system. Kelley asked how the Redding Consortium and the WLC would work together to empower Wilmington families. Aaron Bass asked if there would be collaboration between the WLC and charter schools and districts in Wilmington. Dorrell Green mentioned how there is a need to look at education in the city holistically and not just along school district lines.

Work Group Updates:

The Social Determinants Work Group Co-Chairs presented an update about how DDOE has awarded three wraparound services grants to the Bayard School, Kuumba Academy, and EastSide Charter School. Jeff Menzer shared that the Equity Data Dashboard is currently in Phase 2 and the goal is to complete Phase 2 by spring 2024. The scope of work for Phase 2 is

to align the City of Wilmington to have geotagged data for City of Wilmington students. Menzer highlighted the work of the Boost '22-'26 initiative that is currently underway. The Redding Consortium has funded graduation coaches for up to 3 years. The IPA team at the University of Delaware will help track and measure progress for the Boost initiative and ensure Wilmington students are receiving support from graduation coaches. Raye Jones Avery and Jeff Menzer announced to the Consortium that the Social Determinants Work Group will officially sunset and that the work group co-chairs will transition into monitoring the Data Dashboard, Boost, and the other initiatives of the Social Determinants Work Group.

Tika Hartsock, Educator Work Group Co-Chair, shared an update that P.S. duPont Middle School is now an eligible Redding Consortium school to utilize the scholarship. The application for coursework taken in the winter and spring 2024 sessions opened on October 18th, 2023 and will close on March 29th, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. There have been 53 applicants for the winter/spring application term thus far. Aaron Bass asked if the scholarship is open on a rolling basis; Hartsock confirmed that they are. Raye Jones Avery asked about the eligibility requirements for the scholarship and the participating Institutes of Higher Education.

Discussion of Redding Consortium Fulfillment of Statutory Redistricting Proposal Duties:

Rep. Chukwuocha and Councilman Street provided an update about their work on the Consortium's mandate for redistricting. Sen. Lockman shared the process for redistricting as stipulated in the Delaware Code. She shared that the work group co-chairs would work in consultation with key stakeholders over the next couple of months before the Consortium meets again as a full body to develop a proposal idea that the Consortium can then engage with at its next meeting. The next stage of the process would be to have the Consortium vote on the vetted proposal, send the Consortium-approved plan to the State Board of Education, and if approved by the State Board, then it would be sent to the Delaware General Assembly. Sen. Lockman suggested that the next step is that Rep. Chukwuocha and Councilman Street would continue work on the substantive part of crafting a proposal that Consortium members can engage with as a body. Sen. Lockman also mentioned how the Redding team will share with Consortium members the historical slides about the history of redistricting and information about the progress that has been made over the past two decades in education in Wilmington.

Margie López Waite asked Senator Lockman to share who were the other members of the work group. Sen. Lockman explained there are co-chairs charged with designing a process to engage stakeholders and develop a proposal, and that this process does not include a standing committee. Rep. Chukwuocha stated that he and Councilman Street are meeting with individual stakeholders to present vetted solutions, garner feedback, and input from these meetings to move toward implementation. López Waite asked if she could join the task force because the Hispanic community tends to be overlooked in this conversation, and she is representing the Hispanic Commission. Rep. Chukwuocha shared that this process is open to stakeholder engagement and that they welcome the input. Rep. Chukwuocha also shared that there seems to be a desire to rehash this conversation again where he and Councilman Street feel they should not have to when this is the chosen way to operate and lead this effort. They encourage

the input from Consortium members. However, they do not want to form a committee that will move the process backwards.

Sen. Lockman mentioned how they have studied the standing work groups that have existed in the past and analyzed the stakeholders who are engaged in those processes. Rep. Chukwuocha and Councilman Street would hear from and work with Consortium members in terms of the process and development of this work. The Consortium would advance the results of it. Sen. Lockman also shared that there will be a public-facing aspect of this process at a later time. Councilman Street and Rep. Chukwuocha will come back to the Consortium with a proposal for review and discussion before beginning the process where there are public hearings. Board workshops would likely also be included in this process as well.

Aaron Bass asked Rep. Chukwuocha and Councilman Street that if they are looking at already vetted plans and then would determine which of those one or two proposals would be chosen for consideration. Rep. Chukwuocha responded by sharing that they have not reached that determination, but there is going to be a vetted plan that they present to the Consortium members. Bass replied by asking about the timeline for this process. Rep. Chukwuocha shared that he and Councilman Street are working with our district partners to determine a timeline for proposal development and the timeline is also driven by presenting to the Consortium and to the State Board of Education. Currently, the process is still in the development phase, and they will present the proposal to the full Consortium.

Sen. Lockman announced that the next full body meeting would likely take place in early March. Bass responded by asking in March if there would be a proposal for review. Rep. Chukwuocha stated yes. Tika Hartsock then asked a follow-up question if the Consortium would then vote on the proposal. Sen. Lockman responded that the Consortium would have to engage with the proposal first. Hartsock mentioned during the original work of the Funding and Governance Work Group, they were reviewing three or four redistricting plans. Rep. Chukwuocha stated that the Funding and Governance Work Group had vetted options and the WIN (Wilmington Improvement Network), which was popular at that time. He felt the WIN proposal closely aligned with what is now the WLC. The redistricting proposal being discussed now was also popular during those original discussions and is being brought back up as another step in governance reform. Hartsock asked where the WIN proposal came from for consideration, and Rep. Chukwuocha replied that the WIN option came from the Funding and Governance Work Group. He shared that the proposal took some pieces from other plans and created the WIN network.

Matt Denn also responded by saying that Rep. Chukwuocha and Councilman Street are going to come up with a single proposal. First, they would come up with something that provides enough detail for people to be able to comment on, but it is not going to be as detailed as what the final plan would be. Then, they will take it out to a broad group of people, including at the district level and members of the Consortium, to try to get their input on that stage of the proposal. They would then refine or adjust based on the input received from Consortium members. Denn shared that Rep. Chukwuocha and Councilman Street will work with staff to

develop an extremely detailed plan that includes all 13 items that must be addressed, as required by the Redding legislation, for the Consortium to consider and ultimately vote on.

Aaron Bass asked when this process would take place considering an upcoming election in November 2024 and newly elected leaders in January 2025. He shared that it sounded like the process would take place in 2026. Matt Denn stated that the expectation is that this redistricting proposal development process would take place this year. Tika Hartsock then asked if the Consortium is planning to meet more often given the full body meets quarterly. Senator Lockman shared that they will see how the next couple of months of work go and then the Consortium will meet as much as necessary.

Superintendent Lincoln Hohler expressed concern about how the Governance Work Group was dissolved and then reconstituted without the superintendents and that the co-chairs were not leading a committee of other individuals involved in this process. Hohler shared that the Empowerment Zone was one of the options presented in 2019, which closely resembles the mission and work of the WLC. Hohler also voiced concern about the mention that there has been no progress to improve education and governance in the City of Wilmington. He initially expressed skepticism about the success of the WLC, but he has been impressed by the work of Dr. Burgos and her leadership of the WLC in her first 90 days with the initiatives she has supported and implemented. Hohler acknowledged that there is still more work to be done, but the WLC has made great strides in those areas and is working with partner organizations to improve education in the City of Wilmington. Additionally, Hohler mentioned the current timeline. Three of the districts represented on the Consortium will go out to referendums and if the referendums do not pass then support for children will be greatly impacted. He also mentioned how the ongoing reassessments and AIR report could cause more confusion among this larger conversation about redistricting. Hohler objected to the superintendents not having a seat at the table around the discussion that involves governance and redistricting.

Matt Denn stated that there would be multiple opportunities for the superintendents to have a voice in this process. There will be ample time and multiple opportunities for people to weigh in on the development of the proposal. Denn suggested that the Consortium needs to give them time to put something together for people to react to. Sen. Lockman shared that Consortium members have a seat at this table in the development of the plan.

Rep. Chukwuocha stated that this process is not meant to exclude anyone. In the past, this process has been derailed by work groups and seemed to be set up to fail. Rep. Chukwuocha and former Co-Chair Eugene Young used to meet with the superintendents monthly before and during the beginning of COVID-19. They felt that those were great meetings, and Rep. Chukwuocha shared that it has always been a two co-chair model and then Councilman Street replaced Eugene Young. The two-co-chair model was not meant to exclude anyone nor to disband the committee.

Aaron Bass shared that there is a disconnect and that without that proposal that the process is missing something. He suggested that once the Consortium receives the proposal and shares

those ideas, then the Consortium members can react and have a conversation about it. Bass shared that he looks forward to that future meeting and discussing the process moving forward.

Councilman Street shared his concern over Brandywine's response and seeming unwillingness to be involved in the redistricting discussion or process. He provided historical data to discuss how Wilmington students are consistently disenfranchised. He shared his concerns that this redistricting process will not move forward and may ultimately be up to a judge in the form of a lawsuit. He shared that his political journey has always been about these children.

Raye Jones Avery shared her reflections about how she chaired the Neighborhood Schools Committee, which brought credible experts from across the country, and how these experts from Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Ohio addressed desegregation in places grappling with similar things as Wilmington. She shared that everything those experts told us not to do that we did. Jones Avery mentioned that she participated in and attended WEAC meetings and WEIC meetings. She noted that conditions have worsened, and there are some strategies and interventions that can inform this current process. She stated that the Consortium needs to be able to have uncomfortable conversations and bring a variety of diverse stakeholders to inform the process, but the most affected constituency are the children and their parents. Additionally, Jones Avery mentioned that the Consortium must confront race and economic issues in order to make progress. She shared that she does believe we are making some progress and she lauded Dr. Burgos's work. Jones Avery shared that if people were not dogged about the WLC then it would not have happened, so we have to be dogged about this process and we need a broader movement than elected officials.

Sen. Lockman concluded by stating that Representative Chukwuocha and Councilman Street are open to process suggestions and input in the coming weeks of work since they will be accountable to everyone at this table for that process.

There was no public comment. Senator Lockman motioned to adjourn the meeting and Tika Hartsock seconded the motion.

Full Body Meeting Attendance List

Redding Consortium Members

Sen. Elizabeth Lockman
Matt Denn
Aaron Bass
Sen. Eric Buckson
Rep. Nnamdi Chukwuocha
Dorrell Green
Tika Hartsock
Lincoln Hohler
Stephanie Ingram
Raye Jones Avery
Kevin Kelley
Margie López Waite
Jeff Menzer
Xavia Mills
Dan Shelton
Rep. Mike Smith
Bettina Tweardy Riveros
Secretary Rick Geisenberger - *ex officio*

Members of the Public:

Laura Burgos
Paul Dunford
Susan Huffman
Monica Moriak
Jon Neubauer
Betsy Price
John Read
Cora Scott
Jon Sheehan
Councilman Jea Street
Julia Zammith

IPA/DSU Staff

Haley Burns
Destiny Carmona
Jenna DeMaio
Lauren Dykes
Alaina Robinson
Shelley Rouser
Esha Shah
Kelly Sherretz
Ashley Wilkinson