

Redding Consortium for Educational Equity
Full Body Meeting
April 11, 2024
Meeting Minutes

The Redding Consortium full body meeting convened at 5:40 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

Dan Shelton, Consortium member, motioned to approve the March 11, 2024 retreat meeting minutes and the March 21, 2024, full-body meeting minutes. Kevin Kelley, Consortium member, seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the March 11, 2024 retreat meeting minutes and the March 21, 2024, full-body meeting minutes as submitted.

II. Redistricting Interim Plan Update and Review

Senator Lockman acknowledged the work over the past several months to bring about transformational change for public schools in the City of Wilmington and Northern New Castle County to the forefront. She also acknowledged the attention that any kind of change proposal will have and strong feelings of educators from the City of Wilmington who have experienced attempts at reforms in the past. Senator Lockman shared that the Consortium is here to listen and strive to be effective allies for everyone impacted by any proposal for change that is coming forward.

Senator Lockman stated that the Redding Consortium leadership team has heard and values the feedback shared by Consortium members about the path forward on an interim plan. As a follow-up from the last full body meeting on March 21, the Redding Consortium members had two weeks to review and provide feedback on the draft interim plan. Haley Burns, Assistant Policy Scientist at the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) and staff member for the Redding Consortium, presented a recap of the redistricting interim plan feedback from Consortium members. Before this full body meeting, IPA staff collected a summary of feedback from Consortium members through plan review and a survey. Burns provided a summary of the feedback for the plan shared by section.

The main sections of the interim plan include:

- Section 1: Immediate Support for Wilmington Students in the Christina School District
- Section 2: Development of a Two-District Approach
- Section 3: A Process Timeline for Final Plan Development and Stakeholder Engagement
- Section 4: Further Recommendations for Action

III. Consortium Member Feedback Activity and Discussion

Burns discussed the purpose of the interactive feedback activity for Redding Consortium members. The “Interrogating the Slice” activity included a protocol of 9 predetermined groups with 3 Consortium members per group. Burns asked the Consortium members to review the interim plan section by section and provide feedback. Consortium members in each group assigned a notetaker and recorded feedback in a Google Doc.

Senator Lockman facilitated the activity with Consortium members. All Consortium members provided feedback using a framework for the discussion around “Zones of Comfort, Zones of Opportunity, and Zones of Danger.” Each group provided feedback on the four sections of the interim plan using this framework.

- **Zones of comfort** (feedback that reflects where we are resisting growth and change staying at ease doing what we’ve done based on what we currently know, and not facing our data and embracing new ways for the benefit of our children);
- **Zones of opportunity** (we may be somewhat uncomfortable, unfamiliar—but we recognize that the risk is worth it and something different needs to happen for different results for our children);
- **Zones of danger** (pushing too fast too soon without the proper information or resources; pushing ourselves into a place of increased harm to students and survival mode)

The summarized feedback activity documents are posted online at solutionsfordelawareschools.com access them here.

Senator Lockman noted that the next steps will be continued discussions and revisions to the interim plan. IPA and DSU staff will work to create an updated version of the interim plan that incorporates the feedback collected. The next Redding Consortium full body meeting will take place on April 25th to review the updated interim plan with integrated feedback and potentially vote to determine what framework of the plan for redistricting moves to the State Board of Education.

IV. Public Comment

Jennifer Dalgarn, Vice President of the Christina Education Association, shared that there is a misconception that teachers are the enemy and shared that instead they are mentors who dedicate their lives to their students. Dalgarn recommended looking at ways to achieve a common goal when we think differently and by taking blinders off. She suggested that moving students and educators to other districts ignores how communities are affected and the need to meet the basic needs of the impacted communities.

Richard Smith, President of the State of Delaware NAACP, reflected upon his experience growing up during Brown vs. Board of Education. Smith stated the problem is that the City of Wilmington is experiencing fractured governance in education with four separate school

districts, several charter schools, and a New Castle County Vo-Tech District, but in places like the cities of Camden, Georgetown, and Seaford, each has their own school district. Smith stated that since 1978, there have been four school districts for City of Wilmington students. There are not enough people of color with voting power on school boards representing the City of Wilmington. He recommended that Wilmington needs a school district with its own independent decision-maker and acknowledged the NAACP is ready to sue to get schools on the right track for students.

Arisa White, a school counselor at the Bancroft School, expressed her concerns that families and teachers are not being seen. White stated that nowhere in the proposal is there a discussion of addressing the problems faced by students and families, such as mental health supports, homelessness, incarceration rates, and poverty, and how this plan addresses ways to help the city become whole again. White stated that no district can do that alone. White also suggested this proposal seems like a money grab for districts and she had questions about who receives the largest share of the funds. White said this is playing a political game with people's lives, while those who will be the most affected by this plan are not even at the table.

Councilman Jea Street shared that recent press coverage highlighted the plight of children in the City of Newark, Delaware, who are locked into a cycle of illiteracy. These children have not received adequate support throughout primary school and are now struggling in high school. Councilman Street said there is no justification for busing kids out of the city to schools that are unwilling to accommodate them and that he is not afraid to seek legal action. Councilman Street remarked that segregation has had detrimental effects on the city, with much-needed assistance being withdrawn.

Chasity Cook from the Brennen School expressed that many paraeducators are concerned with the uncertainty of not being able to remain at their current school with this current plan. Cook stated there is a fear among educators that they or others may be transferred elsewhere, which may not be in the best interest of the children. Cook shared that it is important for children to be with the educators and staff who know them best.

James Taylor acknowledged that the Consortium is not advocating for individuals to be seen as saviors. Instead, they are striving for educational justice. Taylor said addressing the formal part through this plan so they can get to the substantive part. Taylor remarked that they are hoping to move beyond the superficial concerns and get down to business, getting the necessary work done for educational reform as it is long overdue.

Kyle Lynch, Vice President of the Christina Paraprofessionals Association, stated that transitioning to a two-district approach raises questions about whether staff will be compelled to change districts along with schools or if they will have the option to remain with their current district. Lynch asked if students attending Colonial or Christina schools will be required to switch schools at any point during their education.

Redding Consortium Member Comments:

Dorrell Green, Consortium member, stated that this interim plan should not be referred to as a plan but instead as a framework. Green shared that for a full plan, it is important to consider the 13 stipulations involved which must be answered. Engaging in transactional conversations about what impacts schools, especially when viewing Christina through a historical lens, reveals that their situation stemmed from being non-continuous. Green stated that it is crucial to handle all schools' needs with care and attention. Green said that the Consortium needs a vision of what we want in a proposal moving forward. With so many moving parts, it is imperative to assess what makes sense for the residents of the city of Wilmington, considering factors like community health, infrastructure, and beyond. Green acknowledged that our children are grappling with various issues, often the same ones persisting because of a lack of change. He said there are additional planning considerations and that this plan needs to be viewed from a bigger perspective besides education.

Kevin Kelley, Consortium member, stated that the challenge lies in the fact that the individuals who are crucial for change are often not included in the decision-making process. Kelley acknowledged there is a concern about isolating Wilmington, when in reality, its children are just like any other. This requires recognizing the need for a generational change. Kelley said there is excessive attention to crime when the real conversation should focus on education, mental health, and other critical issues for the students and their communities in Wilmington.

Tika Hartsock, Consortium member, asked if the Consortium is coming back together to discuss the feedback shared during the breakout group activity and if the Consortium is voting. Hartsock also commented that the community is concerned about the accessibility of documents on the Redding Consortium website.

Stephanie Ingram, Consortium member, urged the Consortium to prioritize education as a common goal. The Delaware State Education Association (DSEA) has gathered educator concerns to share related to this interim plan framework. Ingram expressed that educators feel disempowered and unheard. Ingram recommended the Redding Consortium establish an Education Advisory Council and organize meetings that are open to educators and families in a time and place that is open for them to participate in.

Additional Public Comment:

Representative Kim Williams remarked that she is concerned about the plan and path forward. Rep. Williams wants what is best for kids and knows there is urgency to address these issues, but feels the public is not aware of the plan or next steps.

Sen. Lockman adjourned the meeting at 7:43 p.m.

Attendance

Redding Consortium

Members

Senator Elizabeth
Lockman, Co-Chair
Matthew Denn, Co-Chair
Raye Jones Avery
Aaron Bass
Sen. Eric Buckson
Rep. Nnamdi Chukwuocha
Dorrell Green
Tika Hartsock
Lincoln Hohler
Stephanie Ingram
Stanley Spoor as a proxy
for Joseph Jones
Kevin Kelley
Maria Matos
Jeff Menzer
Xavia Mills
Noelle Picara
Dan Shelton
Bettina Tweardy Riveros
Margie López Waite
Danya Woods
Secretary Mark Holodick -
ex-officio
Secretary Rick
Geisenberger - *ex-officio*

IPA/DSU Staff

Haley Burns
Alaina Robinson
Kelly Sherretz
Ashley Wilkinson

Members of the Public

Maya Aldas
Thomas Anderson
Angi Arnold
MaryBeth Barbro
Lori Blevins
Sydney Brown

Jihan Burdah-Smith
Laura Burgos
Cynthia Burns
Ashley Caverly
Andrea Collins-White
Chastity Cook
Kathleen Covelli
Donya Crichlow
Jennifer Dalgarn
Cynthia Davidson
David Davis
Shanika Dickerson
Julie DeHaas
Juwan Douglas
Kathy Dulis
Paul Dunford
Joseph Evans
Steven Fackenthall
Leslie Footman
Tonya Frazier
Doreen Freeburg
Maddie Geller
Brian Givens
Kim Givens
Erika Gutierrez
Susan Haberstroh
Crystal Harrigan
Taylor Hawk
Tanya Hettler
Carly Highsmith
Courtney Horne
Jenny Howard
Susan Huffman
Valerie Jermusyk
Lavina Jones-Davis
Tia Joseph
Nicole Kennedy
J. Kozikowski
VJ Leonard
Jerome Lewis
Gretchen Loose
Samanta Lopez

Y.F. Lou
Kyle Lynch
April Maness Johnson
Colleen Miseti
Shayna Moon
Julie Noonan
Jennifer Oswald-Flynn
Jenny Pabon
Jhilmil Pandit
Z. Pickett-Campbell
John Read
Amy Reynoso
Angela Ringgold
Kenny Rivera
Jarek Rutz
Ray Sander
Susan Sander
Cora Scott
David Segura
Jon Sheehan
Kathleen Smith
Richard Smith
Alethea Smith-Tucker
Deb Stevens
Councilman Jea Street
Katie Swann
Jill Szymanski
James Taylor
Lindalee Thompson
Sean Todd
Tessa Wallace
Damond Warren
Dean Warren
Nyki Whealton
Arisa White
J. Odell White II
Rep. Kim Williams
Shanequa Williams
LaToya Winkfield
Chantel Winn
Belinda Young-Payne