

**Redding Consortium for Educational Equity
Full Body Meeting
September 9, 2024**

Meeting Minutes

The Redding Consortium full body meeting convened at 5:10 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

Matt Denn, co-chair of the Redding Consortium, motioned to approve the May 9, 2024, meeting minutes. Jeff Menzer, Consortium member, seconded the motion. Lisa Lawson, a new Consortium member, abstained from the vote. The motion passed, and the minutes were approved as written.

Senator Lockman also introduced the newest Consortium members: Raymond Fitzgerald, Lisa Lawson, Robert Andrzejewski, Kendra Brown, and Taron Williams.

II. Redistricting Project Updates

Senator Lockman provided a summary and recap of the key areas of the interim plan that had been approved during the previous full body meeting.

A. Social Drivers of Health and Education Landscape Analysis Update

Senator Lockman presented an update about the Social Drivers of Health and Education Landscape Analysis. As outlined in the interim plan, the primary goal of this landscape analysis is to inform the work of the three Redding Consortium subcommittees in their development of a final redistricting plan.

In June and July, the Redding Consortium leadership and staff convened a series of meetings to discuss the vision, goals, and scope of work for the landscape analysis.

In August, Redding Consortium leadership had two discovery meetings with potential state-approved vendors to conduct the landscape analysis. They considered two options: follow the traditional Request for Proposals (RFP) process or use state-approved vendors provided by the Delaware Department of Education. These vendors were previously approved through a specific RFP process to provide educational services with the state of Delaware. One of the primary concerns is the timeline, as the landscape analysis project is expected to take 12 months to complete, and the overall timeline for developing the redistricting plan is 18 months. The leadership team shared they were in the process of vetting vendors to conduct the analysis and assessing the cost of the budget proposals, which have comparable costs. The landscape

analysis is expected to be presented in three phased consolidated reports, with the subcommittees receiving briefings throughout this process. The final comprehensive report will be submitted at the end of the 12-month period.

Senator Lockman shared that there are dedicated funds for supporting the redistricting effort in the Redding Consortium's proposed FY25 spending plan. The Redding leadership team plans to share with Consortium members the proposal from the vendor that gets selected for the project. Redding Consortium members, Dorrell Green, Raye Jones Avery, and Senator Lockman have worked on this effort in collaboration with Redding staff to lead the landscape analysis work with the support of the Consortium. They asked to get consensus and support from Consortium members to empower our team to continue to move this necessary work forward.

Raymond Fitzgerald asked whether the formal RFP process is still being considered or if the committee will solely focus on state-approved vendors with prior experience. He also inquired if a new group could potentially "piggyback" on this process. Senator Lockman responded that they had not yet considered that possibility.

B. Membership Selection for the Subcommittees Listed in the Approved Interim Plan

Senator Lockman presented a draft list of potential subcommittee appointments, explaining that the Redding leadership team tried to evenly distribute members across the three subcommittees. She clarified that school leaders, including superintendents, representatives from the Delaware State Education Association (DSEA), and charter school leaders, have the flexibility to designate members to serve on these subcommittees.

A question was raised about how the subcommittees would meet before the landscape analysis is completed. Senator Lockman explained that the consortium leadership would communicate with the state-approved vendor to discuss what they want to include in the landscape analysis and how it aligns with their responsibilities. However, this is likely to happen in a retreat format several months from now, rather than immediately.

C. Redistricting Work Plan and Timeline

Senator Lockman provided an overview and update on where the Consortium stands in the redistricting timeline, explaining that months 1-4 of the 18-month interim plan have already been completed. She also reported that Representative Nnamdi Chukwuocha is in the process of organizing a joint town hall meeting with Wilmington City Council to give community members an opportunity to hear about and share their ideas about redistricting.

III. Budget FY25 Update and Vote

Redding Consortium Co-Chair, Matt Denn, presented the proposed Redding Consortium spending plan for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. Raymond Fitzgerald asked when FY 2025 begins, and Matt Denn clarified that it starts on July 1, 2024. Raymond Fitzgerald then inquired if the

committee is open to exploring alternative state revenue sources other than the general fund, specifically suggesting Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds due to a surplus. Senator Lockman agreed to look into alternative funding sources.

Senator Buckson requested a continuation of last year's Redding Consortium presentation to the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) and emphasized the importance of understanding the return on investment (ROI) by analyzing where funds are being spent and its impact.

A. Vote on Spending Plan

Matt Denn made a motion to approve the FY 2025 spending plan as written, which includes empowering Senator Lockman, Superintendent Dorrell Green, and Raye Jones Avery as the landscape analysis leadership team. The motion was seconded by Jeffery Menzer. A roll call vote was conducted, and the motion passed.

IV. Monitoring and Implementation Updates

A. Educator Initiatives Updates

Senator Lockman introduced Karen Eller as one of the new Educator Initiatives Co-Chairs. Tika Hartsock and Karen Eller provided updates on educator initiatives, specifically focusing on the Redding School Scholarship program. Tika Hartsock, Educator Initiatives Co-Chair, explained that the Delaware Higher Education Office had moved to offering a one-year application window for the Redding scholarship program, which differs from the previous per-semester application process. The window closed in June, and a total of 77 applications were received—44 from previous awardees and 33 from new applicants. The number of applications has doubled since the last cycle. Awardees will be announced once the budget is approved. The scholarship program provides educators with support for a full year and allows individual scholarships of up to \$10,000 per applicant, per year. This change was made to maximize the number of awards that can be given. Educators expressed their gratitude for the program, noting that many would not have been able to complete their programs without this support.

Karen Eller noted that some educators have reached out about when the scholarships for this year would be awarded. Eller shared a message from the Delaware Higher Education Office staff that recommended that the Redding budget be approved by mid-August so that scholarships can be awarded in time for the fall semester.

Stephanie Ingram asked whether the application window is only open once per year and what happens if someone is placed after the window has closed. Ingram suggested that a possible solution could be to implement a rolling or second application window for new educators and staff teaching in Redding schools who do not know their placements until later in the summer.

Kendra Brown inquired if applicants need to be state employees to be eligible, particularly for agency workers looking to transition into teaching. Tika Hartsock explained that, if those agency

employed individuals are interested in early education programs there are opportunities for them however the Redding scholarship would not be available to them.

B. Boost '26 Program - Data Project Update

Superintendent Jeffery Menzer, Social Determinants of Health and Education Initiatives Co-Chair, provided an update on the Boost '26 Program, a cross-district initiative that promotes collaboration across the five northern New Castle County public school districts and provides graduation coaches to directly support city of Wilmington students to improve graduation rates. A key part of the initiative is the role of graduation coaches, who support students in Wilmington schools to help them graduate. Currently, the vendor Communities in Schools (CIS) has been funded to support the program for three years. The program is currently supporting the Boost 2022 and Boost 2023 cohorts and tracking their student performance.

Kendra Brown, Consortium member, discussed the importance of starting these interventions during 9th grade. Menzer acknowledged that 8th grade and middle school interventions are also being explored, though the process is just beginning. Menzer also mentioned the possibility of expanding the number of coaches, as they currently only have four coaches working with over 500 students. These coaches work closely with school counselors to ensure student success concerning attendance, letter grades, and progression throughout high school.

Senator Buckson, Consortium member, expressed concerns about the overuse of credit recovery programs and stressed that students need to be held accountable for their behavior. Raye Jones Avery pointed out that, while there are valid concerns, credit recovery has produced commendable results in many cases. Taron Williams, Consortium member, added that credit recovery should not be eliminated entirely, as it has been beneficial in helping students.

V. Public Comment

Bill Doolittle highlighted the need to update the data system and suggested that the focus should be on tracking student progress toward graduation plans.

Marco Alberti, an Assistant Principal at EastSide Charter and a current student at Wilmington University, expressed support for the Redding scholarship program and recommended the Consortium make doctoral programs eligible again for the Redding Scholarship funding program, as many educators pursuing higher education want to give back to the Wilmington community. He also advocated for scholarship funding for counseling degree programs. Tika Harstock explained that the priority for the scholarship has been given to bachelor's and master's students pursuing teaching degrees in order to maximize recruitment and retention of educators.

Jenny Howard, a parent, raised concerns about inequities in educational opportunities for inner-city students regarding redistricting, advocating for neighborhood schools to have the same facilities, teachers, class sizes, and programs as others. She noted that competition to get

into middle and high schools is intense, and inner-city students often lack the preparation needed to attend elite schools. She also called for greater access to choice busing for students in underperforming schools.

V. Adjournment

Senator Lockman adjourned the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

Attendance

Redding Consortium Members

Senator Elizabeth Lockman, Co-Chair
Matthew Denn, Co-Chair
Robert Andrzejewski
Raye Jones Avery
Kendra Brown
Senator Eric Buckson
Raymond Fitzgerald
Dorrell Green
Tika Hartsock
Stephanie Ingram
Ayanna Khan
Lisa Lawson
Sean Sokolowski as a proxy for Joseph Jones
Jennifer Thompkins
Taron Williams
Danya Woods
Jim Simmons as a proxy for Sec. Holodick - *ex-officio*
Nick Konzelman as a proxy for Director Cerron Cade - *ex-officio*

IPA/DSU Staff

Natalie Baysinger
Haley Burns
Jenna DeMaio
Alaina Robinson
Shelley Rouser
Kelly Sherretz
Ashley Wilkinson

Members of the Public:

Marco Alberti
Helen Anderson
Laura Burgos
Bill Doolittle
Desiree Faison
Paulette Gaddy
Lauie Girardi
Jenny Howard
Susan Huffman
Nicole Kennedy
Anesha Law
Caroline McDonough
Jennifer Pulcinella
Amy Reynoso
Jarek Rutz
Cora Scott
Kathleen Smith
Deb Stevens
Sarah Stowens