

Redistricting: Interim Plan Overview

A Framework for Governance Change in the City of Wilmington

The Redding Consortium for Educational Equity (Redding Consortium) is a state body created in 2019 to recommend policies and practices to the Governor and Delaware General Assembly that will achieve educational equity and improve educational outcomes for all Pre-K to grade twelve students in the City of Wilmington and northern New Castle County Delaware. One of the main charges of the Redding Consortium, as required by House Bill 222, is to address redistricting in the City of Wilmington and northern New Castle County.

The final redistricting plan must address 13 stipulations as outlined in the Delaware Code and may address additional considerations. Per House Bill 229, the Redding Consortium may submit one or more “interim plans” for action that address redistricting - without including all of the components expected in a final plan - as a means to demonstrate areas of consensus, foster dialogue, and provide structure for the plan development to come.

This interim plan defines a framework and process for creating a final redistricting plan. It presents a path forward to the State Board of Education (SBE) around boundary shifts for school districts, immediate support for our city schools, the timeline and engagement process to develop a final redistricting plan, and policy ideas and reforms to address systemic and systematic change for Wilmington students.

The Redding Consortium recognizes the difficult and dedicated work of educators, staff and community-based organizations currently serving the city of Wilmington’s schools and in the fulfillment of its redistricting charge, seeks not to undermine but to support and enhance this work.

This interim plan suggests:

Section 1: The Removal of the Christina School District from the City of

Wilmington: This section describes that it is the Redding Consortium’s intent for the Christina School District to be removed from the City of Wilmington. The Christina School District is one of the only noncontiguous school districts in the country and its geographic makeup does not work in service for its students or community members. The Christina School District serves students with some of the highest needs in the state and there are chronic issues related to educator shortages and students who are not proficient in reading or math. These are both systemic and systematic issues that need to be addressed.

Section 2: A Process and Timeline for Developing a Final Redistricting Plan and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy:

This section outlines how the Redding Consortium will pursue a model for the city of Wilmington where Wilmington students are served by two or fewer traditional school districts, except the New Castle County Vo-Tech district, instead of the current four traditional school districts with the Christina School District being removed from the city of Wilmington.¹

This section also describes a proposed process and timeline to submit a final redistricting plan to the General Assembly for consideration by March 2026.

Section 3: Further Recommendations for Action: This section describes how, in addition to the 13 stipulations the plan *must* include, the Redding Consortium statute outlines several topics a redistricting plan *may* include. These “big ideas” enhance the plan to shift district boundaries by acknowledging such a shift, while a necessary step, is on its own insufficient to achieve needed systemic change, and providing high-level recommendations for doing so. This includes state investment in impacted schools/districts as well as reforms in revenue, choice and charter school policy to drive equity for Wilmington students who have been persistently underserved, while also considering opportunities for positive, transformative change for all students in the receiving districts.

¹ See [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#) for more context and the history around redistricting in Wilmington

Section 1: The Removal of the Christina School District from the City of Wilmington

Voting Item: It is the Redding Consortium’s intent to remove the Christina School District from the City of Wilmington based on the agreed-upon timeline. The actualization of the removal of the Christina School District is dependent on the Redding Consortium’s final redistricting plan being approved by the State Board of Education, General Assembly, and Governor.

Background Information:

In the wake of the era of school desegregation in New Castle County, which lasted from 1978 to the lifting of that court order in 1995, there was a rapid era of reform both locally and nationally, including the development of a choice and charter law for Delaware and the emergence of high-stakes testing brought on by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. In 2000, this policy-making trend culminated with the Neighborhood Schools Act, passed by Delaware’s General Assembly. All of these policies led to Wilmington becoming a city with several racially identifiable and high-poverty schools, where there had been either more integrated or socioeconomically stable schools prior. For the quarter of a century since, these negative dynamics have continued, harming multiple generations of Wilmington students and their communities. We must recognize that the current system is not working for those impacted and structural reforms are needed to address the deep educational inequities that persist.

The Christina School District in particular has suffered as a result of these systemic injustices. The district is a noncontiguous school district, the only one of its kind in Delaware, serving students in both the City of Wilmington as well as Newark, Delaware, and the surrounding suburban areas. The Christina School District has consistently low proficiency rates for students in their districts, as well as for students who are low-income and who are low-income Wilmington students in Christina. Although Wilmington students are not excelling in any of the four traditional districts serving

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Wilmington students, Christina has faced acute challenges as it strives to serve students with some of the highest needs.

The Redding Consortium acknowledges the challenges and unique needs of the city schools in the Christina School District and recognizes the intentional efforts and work of educators and school staff to support city of Wilmington students. However, the current configuration of this district is not meeting the needs of the students, and Redding Consortium members agree that it is time to change this status quo.

Section 2: A Process and Timeline for Final Plan Development and Stakeholder Engagement

Voting Item: The Redding Consortium approves this framework and timeline for action on redistricting.

Background Information:

This section proposes a path forward for the Redding Consortium to develop its final redistricting plan. This path forward includes meaningful stakeholder engagement and consistent public updates to the State Board of Education on progress for feedback. Redding Consortium members will be actively involved throughout this process through work on various subcommittees to address the 13 stipulations and move towards the development of a final plan to submit to the State Board of Education.

Student and personnel shifts would only occur after the final plan is approved, with a transition period between plan approval and shifts beginning. Under current understanding in 2024, such shifts will not occur for another 3-5 years, but the appropriate transition and implementation period remains to be determined during the plan's development and adoption.

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Process:

The interim plan suggests that Consortium members will review and vet several approaches for redistricting. In any redistricting approach put forward, it is recommended that the Christina School District be removed from the City of Wilmington.

Structure:

Representative Chukwuocha and Councilman Street are the Co-chairs of the redistricting project. Recognizing the varied and complex factors related to this transition planning process, to create a final redistricting plan Redding Consortium members will work through a subcommittee structure to make recommendations to inform specific areas of planning and ensure engagement with impacted communities. These subcommittees will have charges and a timeline for the work of up to 18 months, contributing to the final comprehensive redistricting plan. The full body will meet bi-monthly to hear reports from each subcommittee on progress to ensure transparency and cohesion as recommendations are incorporated into the final plan, the approval of which is the responsibility of the Consortium.

Determining the Redistricting Approach:

The two project chairs will bring forth proposals for consideration and Consortium members will publicly deliberate and vote to determine a path forward. The chosen path forward will address the Redding Consortium's redistricting approach and answer how the approach will address the following stipulation:

- Redrawing of district boundaries in Wilmington and northern New Castle County to better serve the educational interests of all students, including reducing the concentration of low-income students and improving educational services and supports for English learners and other students at risk.

The subcommittees may focus on:

Operational Impacts Subcommittee: Upon approval of the redistricting approach, this subcommittee will address the specific issues around the orderly and minimally disruptive reassignment of students, redrawing lines, reducing the concentration of

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low-income students, and transportation for the redistricting option selected by the Consortium.

This subcommittee may work to address these stipulations:

1. The orderly and minimally disruptive reassignment of students affected by the boundary change and the reassignment of governance responsibilities.
2. The plan must permit students to continue their attendance at the school they attended prior to the boundary change with tuition payments made by the sending district as provided in Chapter 6 [tuition charges] of this title until such time as the pupils complete the grade levels offered in that school.
3. Student transportation.
4. A timetable for implementing each element of the redistricting plan and the designated responsibility for carrying out responsibilities until the date of full implementation.

Fiscal Impacts Subcommittee: This subcommittee will focus on the financial impacts of the redistricting plan that will address issues like required state and local resources, capital assets, and ensuring all students impacted by the plan are supported.

This subcommittee may work to address these stipulations:

1. Resources that will be required, from state, district, and local sources, to support the redistricting transition and provide for the effective ongoing education of all affected students, and for the support of schools with high concentrations of low-income students and English learners.
2. Distribution of capital assets and financial obligations or a process for such distribution.

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3. A stipulation that the funding statewide and locally will facilitate effective implementation of the proposed comprehensive plan in a manner that will improve the educational outcomes for all of the students impacted by that plan.

This subcommittee may engage with these groups and organizations:

- Engage with the Controller General, Office of Management and Budget, and the Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) of the impacted school districts to ensure they are up-to-date on the final plan to help inform the fiscal impact analysis.
- Determine how districts are impacted and the full cost considerations of the plan regarding reassessment and the state equalization formula.
- Directly inform the fiscal impact analysis to be developed by the Controller General.

Community Engagement Subcommittee: A subcommittee on community engagement will work to address and elevate ideas and issues from the educator, family, student, parent, and community member perspective. Serving on this subcommittee will be the Redding Consortium members who represent parents, educators, and community organizations.

This subcommittee may work to address these stipulations:

1. Implications for educators, administrators, and other personnel that may lead to equitable adjustments to local collective bargaining agreements.
2. Engagement of educators, staff, parents, district personnel, and community members throughout the transition.
3. An assessment of the educational needs of City of Wilmington students and the resources required to meet those needs.

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4. Directives for improving secondary education options for City of Wilmington students, such as the provision of additional secondary schools.
5. A process for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the educational impacts and outcomes of implementation, which will include an annual report by the Consortium to the Governor, the General Assembly, the Secretary of Education, and the State Board of Education.

This subcommittee may engage with these organizations and groups:

- Work with DSEA on the creation of an Educator Advisory Panel to ensure educator needs and voices are involved and reflected in the final plan.
- Have smaller leadership meetings with DSEA to determine the best approach for educator engagement and support.
- Conduct focus groups to hear directly from educators working in high-need schools.
- Conduct focus groups to hear directly from parents, families, and community members about their ideas and preferences.
- Conduct regularly scheduled check-ins with the Wilmington Learning Collaborative to support immediate help and assistance to the Christina School District related to:
 - Educator shortages and support
 - Shared decision-making
 - Reducing class sizes
 - Providing mental health and behavioral health intervention support
 - Access to math and reading specialists
 - Access to enrichment activities related to arts, athletics, and more

Timeline:

March-May 2024: Interim Plan Development: This interim plan is updated to include Consortium member feedback and approved by the Consortium for presentation to the State Board of Education (SBE) for feedback.

June 2024 - Fall 2025, at the latest: Final Redistricting Plan Development:

After an interim plan is received by the SBE, the Consortium will:

- Affirm a redistricting approach.
- Form subcommittees to address the 13 stipulations and create a final redistricting plan.²
- Conduct monthly or bi-monthly Consortium meetings to hear report outs from the subcommittees on parts of the final redistricting plan.
- Through the subcommittee structure and Redding Consortium leadership, pursue rigorous stakeholder engagement during this period related to:
 - ***Community engagement*** to hear and learn from educators, leadership, staff, students, families and community members
 - ***Financial impacts*** to hear and learn from district Chief Financial Officers, taxpayers, and the Controller General’s Office
 - ***State Board of Education Updates*** where Redding Consortium leadership will provide periodic updates to the SBE for continuous feedback on the development of the final plan for redistricting
 - ***Public Hearings*** where Redding Consortium and/or the SBE will host public hearings in the impacted school districts prior to the submission of any final plan for redistricting

² See [Appendix 4](#) for the 13 stipulations

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- Each committee creates a final report inclusive of 1) recommended actions, 2) related fiscal implications, 3) stakeholder engagement and communication strategies, and 4) policy reforms required.
- Representatives from each committee bring findings together to create one comprehensive plan to bring to the Redding Consortium for a vote.

October 2025, at the latest: Submit a Final Plan to the SBE: If approved by the Redding Consortium members, a final plan will be submitted to the SBE for approval or denial. The SBE must review the final plan within 90 days.

January 2026, at the latest: Fiscal Impact Analysis

Per HB 229, if the final redistricting plan is approved by the SBE, the Controller General provides financial impacts for the plan.³

Per HB 229, the Controller General shall prepare a fiscal analysis of a redistricting plan approved by the State Board of Education. The fiscal analysis must do all of the following:

- Describe all requirements of and obligations assumed by the State or a school district redistricted under the redistricting plan and any other consequences of the redistricting plan that has a fiscal impact on the State or a school district redistricted under the redistricting plan for each fiscal year following the enactment of the Joint Resolution.
- Include full fiscal cost data estimates, including salaries, operating costs, other employment costs, capital outlays, and debt service that may be incurred under a redistricting plan.
- State how the fiscal cost data estimates were calculated, including what facts were used or assumptions made to calculate the estimates.

³ See [Appendix 6](#) for preliminary guidance from the Controller General's office

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The work of the fiscal impact subcommittee will help to inform the official fiscal impact analysis provided by the Controller General. As the Controller General will be sufficiently involved before the step in the process, there should be nothing unexpected in the fiscal impact analysis provided by the Controller General.

Spring 2026, at the latest: Submit a Final Plan to the General Assembly: If the plan is approved by the SBE, the Redding Consortium will submit the final plan and related Joint Resolution and fiscal note to the General Assembly.

June 2026, at the latest: General Assembly Approval of the Final Plan: If approved, the plan will go to the Governor for signature.

Section 3: Further Recommendations for Action

Voting Item: The Redding Consortium approves this framework for a final redistricting plan to include more detail on broad policy reforms related to revenue, state investment, and charter and choice reform.

Background Information:

In addition to the 13 stipulations the plan must include, the legislation establishing the Redding Consortium outlines several topics a redistricting plan may include as recommendations pertinent to its redistricting plan.⁴ The Redding Consortium’s final plan will consider broader policy reforms that address how to better support and meet the educational needs of city of Wilmington students through the creation of its final redistricting plan.

Revenue policy reforms, state investments in impacted schools and districts, and school choice and charter reform are policy areas that can strengthen the Consortium’s work on its redistricting mandate. The goal of these policy considerations is to promote system-wide reforms for city of Wilmington school communities with a renewed focus on reimagining what the future of education can look like for Wilmington students and how to better support city students, schools, and districts. The Redding Consortium will work to further develop these policy ideas and consider how these policy reform areas can potentially support our work in addressing the 13 stipulations that must be answered in the final redistricting plan.

“...The educational relief [that this generation of City of Wilmington students are entitled to] can only be obtained with additional resources that reduce class size, provide additional instruction time (before and after school, year-round schools), more qualified teachers, behavior modification services, early childhood education, parent training, community support activities and incentives for teacher retention in city schools. Funding for these relief items should be recommended and included in the [final redistricting] plan.”

- Councilman Jea P. Street

⁴ See [Appendix 5](#) for the additional recommendations that may be included in the final redistricting plan

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Furthermore, the Consortium recommends additional research into the following policy areas in order to determine what resource needs and educational supports for city schools and districts should be addressed or expanded upon in a final redistricting plan relating to examining fiscal support for districts, enhancing state investments in impacted schools, and streamlining governance for charters and districts serving city of Wilmington students.

The following policy reforms are proposed ideas for consideration by the Consortium that may or may not be included in a final redistricting plan:

REVENUE POLICY REFORMS

- **Referendum Reform**
 - Recommendations for amending or eliminating referenda for non-capital issues to ensure decision-makers can focus their capacity on student and educator needs.

- **Evaluation of the New Castle County Tax District**
 - Exploration of opportunities to utilize this tax pool for immediate resourcing of transitional activities.

 - Recommendations for addressing the NCC Tax District including how the effects of reassessment, funding reform, and redistricting impact the viability or continued necessity of this existing tax district. *The district was originally created to achieve resource equity among districts involved in the desegregation order.*

STATE INVESTMENT IN IMPACTED SCHOOLS/DISTRICTS

Above and beyond current allocations including Opportunity Funding, the state of Delaware should ensure sustainable investment in the following areas:

- **High-Quality Early Learning Expansion**
 - Broad access to high-quality early education for all students in the district most impacted by the proposed change in district boundaries

- i.e., implementing a **universal pre-K pilot** in the primary receiving district
- **Premium Pay Policy in highest need schools**
 - i.e., pay premium contingent upon educator commitment to a required length of service at schools meeting the criteria of more than 55% of students being classified low income.
- **Support for the development of specialized programs at Wilmington elementary schools moving to a new receiving school district;**
 - i.e., student assignments to be prioritized for Wilmington students zoned to attend specialty programs with ample opportunity for students throughout the district to choice in. These specialty programs may include STEM, Arts, IB, etc. for primary grades through high school.
- **Enhanced Wraparound Services**
 - Recommendations for improvement of the provision and coordination of out-of-school and wellness/behavioral services provided to students and families in the areas impacted by the proposed change in district boundaries.
- **Social Drivers of Health and Education Needs Assessment for the City of Wilmington and Northern New Castle County, Delaware**
 - Facilitate a social drivers of health needs assessment, conducted by the Redding Consortium, to examine the broader ecosystem around the implications of lived conditions that impact students and families before and after school.
 - i.e., broader community impacts on education including homelessness, housing instability, food instability, family instability, other support services, health care access, community violence, and economic viability.

- Addressing education for high need, low-income students requires a holistic approach, considering both educational and environmental factors.

CHOICE & CHARTER REFORM

- **School Choice**
 - Recommendations for changes to enhance equity in policies and practices associated with student assignment and school choice.

- **Charter School & District Coordination**
 - Recommendations for changes in policies and practices to improve coordination and collaboration among districts and charter schools serving students in the City of Wilmington and northern New Castle County, including potential changes in the authorization of charter schools.

The Redding Consortium’s intention, in fulfillment of its redistricting charge, is to support the educators and community-based organizations already providing services in Wilmington’s schools by building upon their educational investments and supports that are currently working, and work with them to enhance their efforts.