

Redding Consortium for Educational Equity

Social Drivers of Health and Education Landscape Analysis

Discovery Phase Interim Report – March 2025

Executive Summary

The Redding Consortium for Educational Equity (Redding Consortium) is charged with proposing a redistricting plan that will improve educational opportunities and outcomes for children living in the city of Wilmington and northern New Castle County. The American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) is honored to support this critical work through a Social Drivers of Health and Education Landscape Analysis that will inform the Redding Consortium’s rationale for redistricting and provide recommendations for better supporting students and families regardless of district boundaries changes. The following summary highlights the key findings from the discovery phase (November 2024 to March 2025) and how we plan to address these findings in the remainder of the landscape analysis.

Finding 1: Providing a sufficient rationale for redistricting decisions and impactful supports for students and families requires (a) a more precise understanding of how students and families experience different combinations of social drivers in different neighborhoods across Wilmington and (b) stronger evidence for how these social drivers impact health and education opportunities than is currently known.

To address this finding, AIR seeks to address the following research questions in Phase 2:

- How do combinations of social drivers vary by neighborhood?
- What is the relationship between social drivers and schools attended?
- How do school options and travel time vary based on exposure to positive and negative social drivers?
- How do students, parents, guardians, caregivers, and teachers describe the impact of social drivers on education and school choices, and how do experiences vary by neighborhood?
- How does access to high-performing schools vary across census tracts, and how do reassignment scenarios impact students’ access and opportunities?

AIR will attempt to answer these research questions using the following approaches:

- We will utilize available data to conduct spatial regression analyses examining which combinations of social drivers have statistically significant relationships with student experiences and outcomes (e.g., school attended, travel time, etc.).
- Using the findings from the spatial regressions, we will conduct interviews and focus groups across a mix of neighborhoods in Wilmington. This will include:
 - four focus groups with up to 20 high school students;
 - four parent, guardian, and caregiver focus groups with up to 20 parents of middle and high school students; and
 - two focus groups with up to 10 school personnel.

Finding 2: The relationship between high student mobility and access to affordable housing surfaced as a priority issue across most interviews. Providing a stronger rationale for redistricting decisions and improved supports for students and families requires a more precise understanding of the scale and root causes of student mobility and the impact on education.

To address this finding, AIR seeks to address the following research questions in Phase 2:

- What are the cross-district and cross-school student mobility patterns for students who reside or have resided in Wilmington over the last 5 years?
- How do parents, guardians, and caregivers describe the root causes of student mobility and the impact on student health and education opportunities?
- How does student mobility impact schools' and community-based organizations' ability to serve students and families?

AIR will attempt to answer these research questions using the following approaches:

- If the data are available (e.g. multi-year student residence and enrollment data), we will prepare a descriptive analysis of elementary school students who resided in Wilmington when they began kindergarten and how (if at all) their residences and schools changed over 5 years.
- Based on the findings from the spatial regressions, we will seek to learn more about how students and parents, guardians, and caregivers are experiencing social drivers across a mix of neighborhoods across Wilmington. We will conduct:
 - four focus groups with up to 20 parents, guardians, or caregivers of students who changed schools in the last 2 years;
 - two focus groups with up to 10 school personnel who support student transitions and wellbeing (e.g., counselors, social workers, Communities in Schools staff); and
 - two focus groups with up to 10 frontline staff from community centers or youth-serving community-based organizations.

Finding 3: Community centers have historically served as vital spaces for community connections and after-school enrichment and academic support, but due to changing civic priorities and funding availability many have closed or are struggling to stay open. Providing a stronger rationale for redistricting decisions and more impactful supports for students requires a more precise understanding of the broader landscape of out-of-school and after-school enrichment and supports and how varying access impacts student experiences and outcomes.

To address this finding, AIR seeks to address the following research questions in Phase 2:

- Beyond community centers, what is the broader landscape for out-of-school and after-school enrichment and support?
- What services are provided? What services do current providers feel that they need to offer but cannot?
- How does access vary by neighborhood?
- How do the experiences of youth vary based on their proximity or access to these organizations?
- What are the alternative spaces that are places of community, connection, and support for youth?

AIR will attempt to answer these research questions using the following approaches:

- We will incorporate community center and after-school locations into spatial analyses.
- We will conduct:
 - five interviews with community center staff;

- two focus groups with up to 10 high school students who reside in neighborhoods with varied access to community centers and after school options;
- two focus groups with up to 10 middle or elementary school parents, guardians or caregivers who reside in neighborhoods with varied access to community centers and after-school options; and
- five interviews with other youth-serving organizations that we learn about through prior interviews or focus groups (e.g., churches).

Finding 4: Extensive investments were made across a wide variety of organizations in Wilmington to address social drivers. Providing a stronger rationale for redistricting decisions and more impactful supports for students requires a more precise understanding of the current state of collaboration between organizations and with districts, and how the current district configuration impacts their ability to provide wraparound services.

To address this finding, AIR seeks to address the following research questions in Phase 2:

- Within the current landscape of organizations providing wraparound services to students and families, what are their priority service areas and what wraparound services do they provide?
- How does the current district configuration impact their ability to provide wraparound services?
- Where are areas of shared interest between organizations and opportunities for collective impact?

AIR will attempt to answer these research questions using the following approaches:

- We will cross-reference organizations from previous community asset mapping efforts, catalog services, and integrate these data into a spatial analysis.
- We will conduct 10 interviews or focus groups with administrators and frontline staff from CDCs or service organizations.

Finding 5: There is a notable and longstanding history of participatory action research (PAR) projects in Wilmington along with multiple organizations and academics that actively support PAR and youth-led PAR work. The landscape analysis will benefit from PAR, and AIR should partner with a local community-based organization and a team of student researchers to provide unique insights into how the Redding Consortium can provide a stronger rationale for redistricting decisions and more impactful supports for students and their families.

To address this finding, AIR seeks to address the following research questions in Phase 2:

- The students leading the PAR study will create their own research questions based on what they think is important for the subcommittees to understand.

AIR will attempt to answer these research questions using the following approaches:

- The students leading the PAR study will determine which data collection approaches are appropriate to answer the research questions they develop.

The research questions and data collection methods described above describe a starting point. As the landscape analysis unfolds, new themes and priorities will emerge, and AIR will collaborate with the Redding Consortium to adapt.