

Summary of Recommendations

The Wilmington Education Advisory Committee was mandated by Executive Order to recommend how to strengthen public education for all Wilmington students. The Advisory Committee represents a cross-section of the Wilmington community and has focused on promoting the long-term best interests of Wilmington's students. While we have vigorously debated the efficacy of public education in Wilmington, we have shared expectations and agree on the following guiding principles.

- ***The effectiveness of Wilmington public education is critical to our entire state; strengthening Wilmington public education will strengthen Delaware.***
- ***All Wilmington schools should set and meet high standards for student learning and there should be agreed upon measures for student success that apply to all schools.***
- ***Wilmington students should continue to be served by a combination of district, charter, and vo-tech schools.***
- ***All Wilmington schools should receive the human and financial resources needed to support student success.***
- ***Policies and practices for Wilmington schools should promote collaboration, shared learning, and a mutual commitment to improvements that serve all students.***
- ***Wilmington schools should be supported as community assets, governed in some way by the community they serve.***
- ***Wilmington schools should have allies to address the complex challenges of educating the city's children. These allies include engaged families, community and business partners, early childhood educators, mental and physical health providers, institutions of higher education, and service providers from all levels of government and from the private and nonprofit sectors.***

The Advisory Committee has focused on four key issues: 1) creating responsive governance, 2) meeting Wilmington student needs, 3) funding student success, and 4) implementing change. These are issues of broad and urgent community concern, and they are critical to strengthening the overall quality of public education in Wilmington. After reviewing earlier reports, meeting with Wilmington community, education, and governmental leaders, and analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of many options, the Advisory Committee developed the action agenda described in this Interim Report. Before the final action agenda is presented to Governor Jack Markell and the General Assembly, the Advisory Committee will solicit input on its interim recommendations from the Delaware community, and especially from the families, citizens, and leaders of Wilmington (see **Opportunity for Public Comments** section for details).

Creating Responsive Governance

The governance of Wilmington public education is fragmented and dysfunctional. More coherent and responsive governance requires actions on three fronts.

- 1. Traditional school districts operating in Wilmington should have a more streamlined configuration that better supports continuous improvement and community responsiveness.**
 - The Christina and Colonial School Districts should no longer serve Wilmington. The Red Clay Consolidated, Brandywine, and New Castle County Vocational-Technical (NCC Vo-tech) School Districts should continue to serve Wilmington children. Red Clay should take responsibility for all Wilmington schools currently under Christina.
- 2. Charter schools should be guided by a new vision of responsibility for the overall effectiveness of public education that promotes shared capacity, collaboration, and best practices among all Wilmington schools.**
 - Governor Markell should call for a strategic plan for charter schools that includes the desired number and mix of traditional, charter, and vo-tech schools. No new charter school or expansion of an existing charter school in Wilmington or New Castle County should be authorized until the plan has been accepted.
 - Wilmington charter schools should form a citywide consortium that includes all charter schools and promotes shared capacity, collaboration, and best practices.
- 3. The Wilmington community and its city government should be engaged partners in the governance of Wilmington public education.**
 - The Advisory Committee endorses the plan of the City of Wilmington to create an Office of Education and Public Policy.

Meeting Wilmington Student Needs

The needs of students in poverty must be addressed through stronger alignment of needed supports and services starting in early childhood and extending through entry into a career or higher education.

- The State should use its existing policy infrastructure to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for the integration of services for low-income children and families, and for schools with high concentrations of poverty. The plan should include recommendations for redirecting current state funding.
- Existing public, private, and nonprofit institutions and investments should be mobilized to carry out key facets of the state plan. These include the State's Interagency Resource Management Committee, the Delaware and Wilmington Early Childhood Councils, community institutions (such as Nemours, United Way of Delaware, Children and Families) and business partners (such as State and New Castle County Chambers of Commerce).

- The city government's proposed Office of Education and Public Policy should play a lead role in strengthening parent engagement in student learning, advocating for students with special needs, and mobilizing community support for Wilmington schools. The Office should be funded and operated by the City of Wilmington.

Funding Student Success

Strengthening Wilmington education requires funding adjustments in four areas: 1) an allocation of funds to schools with high concentrations of students in poverty; 2) an improved revenue base to support the overall costs of public education; 3) transitional resources to effectively implement district realignment; and, 4) funds for early childhood and other programs needed to meet the needs of low-income students.

- The governor and state legislature should approve a weighted student funding formula or a modification to the current unit count formula that incorporates allocations for schools with high concentrations of students in poverty and English language learners, and that expands special education status to grades K–3.
- The resource base supporting public education must be strengthened at both the state and local levels. After 30 years of inaction, property reassessment needs to be implemented without further delay and be undertaken on a regular schedule that reflects national best practices.
- Funding adjustments must be made to support the cost of district reconfiguration.

Implementing Change

A broadly representative, cross-sector Commission, outside of the current agencies of state government, should lead the planning and implementation of the recommendations in this report.

- The governor and state legislature should establish the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC) to oversee implementation and to advise on additional policy and program improvements to strengthen Wilmington education. The commission should be an independent body operating outside of the Department of Education and should report to the governor and state legislature annually. The commission should sunset after five years.

Opportunity for Public Comments

Contact the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee outreach team for public comment and participation.

Email: wilmingtonschools@gmail.com

Message Box (Google Voice/Text): [\(302\) 385-6206](tel:3023856206)

Feedback Form: <http://bit.ly/wilmschools>

Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/wilmingtonschools/

Meetup Group: www.meetup.com/Solutions-for-Wilmington-Schools/