Overview: City of Wilmington Education Summary and Projections
November 2015

Background

The City of Wilmington's population is estimated to increase by approximately 2,700 people, 3.8 percent, between 2015 and 2030. Approximately 1,200 of these new residents will be school-aged students (five to 19 years old), bringing the total number of school-aged children in the city to approximately 15,400.[i]

There are currently 24 schools located within Wilmington city limits, including 11 public charter schools.[ii] Students from inside and outside of the city attend these schools.

Enrollment Trends

Overall, enrollment in all of New Castle County increased 9.6 percent between 2003 and 2013. The Brandywine and Red Clay Consolidated school districts experienced a slight increase in student enrollment from 2003-2013, with Christina seeing a decrease of 13.4 percent. New Castle County Vo-Tech School District experienced a 32.3 percent increase over the same interval and enrollment in charters grew 103.8 percent.[iii]

Available data shows that city traditional schools are nine to 58 percent empty. Traditional schools in Red Clay and Christina have the largest percentage of empty seats among the four districts serving the city.[iv]

Choice Trends

It is estimated that between 2005 and 2030, the Brandywine, Colonial, and Red Clay school districts will not have a significant change in the number of students choosing to attend a school outside of the district. During the same time frame, it was projected that Christina School District would see an increase of over 1,200 students choice out of the district.[v]

Table 1: Choice By District		
District	% Choice Out	% Choice In
Brandywine	11.75%	6.29%
Christina	31.56%	4.95%
Colonial	27.25%	2.59%
Red Clay	20.80%	8.34%

In the 2013-14 school year, Christina, Colonial, and Red Clay were three of the four districts in the state with the highest percentage of students who choiced out.[vi] For more information by district, see table 1.

Seat Projections

Although total enrollment has decreased slightly over the last decade, these enrollment trends may shift as we see an increase in the number of charter seats located in the city. During the 2013-14 school year there were 3,148 public charter seats available within the City of Wilmington. Using enrollment projections for charters already approved, by the 2019-20 school year, there will be 6,167 seats available within the city.[vii] We cannot project which schools students will leave to attend the public charter schools opening in the city; these students will likely be a mix of students from inside and outside of the city.

Conclusion

The changing Wilmington education landscape has a number of implications on its schools. Moving forward, we must continue to track the choice trends and building capacities of city schools to ensure the educational landscape is best suited for continued improvement of schools in the city.

Sources:

[i] Delaware Population Consortium. (2014). Annual Population Projections.
http://stateplanning.delaware.gov/information/dpc/DPC2014v0.pdf

[ii] Delaware Department of Education. (2015). School and District Profiles. http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/02/86/10286.pdf

[iii] Delaware Department of Education (2013). Delaware Public School Enrollment Trends
http://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib09/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/141/EnrollmentTrends2012.pdf

[iv] Delaware Department of Education. (2014). School Facility Capacity Data. http://www.doe.k12.de.us/facilitynet

[v] Delaware Department of Education. (2007). Delaware Unified School District Enrollment Projections.
http://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib09/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/141/SchoolDistrictEnrollmentProjections.pdf

[vi] Delaware Department of Education. (2014). School Choice Reports. http://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/1528

[vii] Delaware Department of Education. (2015). Charter School Applications and Modifications. http://www.doe.k12.de.us/Domain/151