Summary of Wilmington Education Reports

Previous Recommendations and Proposals:

- Wilmington Neighborhood Schools (2001)
- City of Wilmington Report on the Neighborhood School Act (2001)
- Hope Commission (2006)
- Wilmington Education Task Force (2008)
- Mayor's Youth, Education and Citizenship Strategic Planning Team (2014)
- Wilmington Education Advisory Committee (2015)
- Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (2015)

November 2015

The current system of Wilmington districts is the result of a long and storied history in the city, which was one of the four involved in the landmark Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court ruling.

1897: Separate educational system encoded in 1897 constitution

1921: Delaware General Assembly (GA) requires separate but equal schools; 50 separate school districts operating in state

1954: *Brown v. Board of Education*; desegregation ordered, but compliance limited

1956: *Evans v. Buchanan* first brought to court; court victories, but implementation is delayed

1957: US District Court requires Delaware to develop comprehensive desegregation plan

1965: State Board (SBOE) adopts resolution to close smaller schools and phase out the last "black school district"

1968: GA passes *Education Advancement Act*, consolidates smaller districts (Wilmington excluded) & provides equalization funding

1971: *Education Advancement Act* challenged in Supreme Court; *Evans v. Buchanan* reopened

1974: US District Court decides Wilmington schools segregated; *Education Advancement Act* declared unconstitutional

1976: *Evans v. Buchanan*; court mandated inter-district busing, upheld through repeated appeals

1978: "9-3" busing school desegregation plan implemented

1980-1981: Delaware GA passes law prompting SBOE to create four districts in New Castle County; court upholds

1980-1990s: Sustained pressure to desegregate districts in Delaware, but also gradual loosening of desegregation standards nationally

1993: State of Delaware requests unitary status for four districts; US District Court assents (1995)

1995-1996: Court-ordered, federal supervision of desegregation ends; busing continues largely unchanged

1995: GA formally amends state constitution to abolish separate education system

1996: Delaware School Choice Program (Partly a response to busing)

1996: Delaware GA passes legislation allowing charter schools

1998: Wilmington High closes as a traditional school and reopens as a magnet (Cab Calloway) and a charter school (Wilmington Charter).

2000: Neighborhood Schools Act. Busing is dramatically reduced

2001: Report mandated by Neighborhood Schools Act released entitled "They Matter Most"; report is adopted by Wilmington City Council with additional recommendations, but no state action is taken.

2006: Hope Commission Report produced and new non-profit created; recommendations are made with no action.

2008: Wilmington Education Task Force chaired by Senator Margaret Rose Henry; recommendations are made with no action.

2013: Mayor's Youth, Education and Citizenship Strategic Planning Team is established but issued no formal report.

2014: Governor Markell creates the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee (WEAC).

2015: GA approves and Governor Markel signs bill establishing the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC)

2015: GA approves Governor Markell signs bill authorizing the State Board to change boundaries of northern New Castle County school in a manner consistent with the WEIC final report, based on a plan developed by WEIC.

2015: WEIC submits final plan to the State Board

Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee (2001)

Report recommendations:

Early Childhood	• Provide access for all parents and children to early learning experiences including:
	  • Pre-kindergarten
	  • **Full-day kindergarten**
	  • Offer **programs to help parents** assist in developing children's early literacy skills
	  • Seamless education extension from early childhood into the primary grades

Student Learning	• Increased time for **reading and mathematics** • **Extra learning time** on Saturdays and year-round schools • Ensure access to **challenging curriculum** aligned with academic **standards** • Create **smaller learning communities**, where students stay with the same teacher for multiple years within smaller schools, to ensure individualized learning for all students • Institute the recommendations of the **Delaware Language Minority Task Force** to improve instruction and eliminate the considerable academic achievement gap between White and Hispanic Students

Teacher and Leader Quality	• Innovative teacher recruitment:
	  • Attract, attain, and equitably distribute high-quality teachers
	  • Provide **alternative certification** to provide flexibility in hiring quality teachers
	  • Offer **compensation incentives** to attract leaders
	  • City council consider **waiving city wage taxes** for all teachers who work in city schools
	  • Grant individual schools the freedom to hire, compensate, and deploy teachers
	• Provide extra time for professional development, including in-classroom follow-up and support

Public Engagement and Support	• School system should seek out and accept **community participation in decision making** at all levels • Provide **Parent Resource Centers** to help meet children's health and social service needs • State and local authorities should promote and actively seek partnership arrangements among the variety of health, family welfare and educational service providers
Accountability	• Governance arrangements for the provision of schooling in Wilmington must include a capacity to monitor for equitable distribution of learning opportunities and be outfitted with the mechanisms to **judge success based on the student achievement of all children**
Finance	• The state should provide **additional resources to schools serving children from low income families** in the city
District Realignment	• Create a **Metropolitan School District**, which would consolidate Red Clay, Brandywine, and the City of Wilmington into one, new district. **Local School Councils** would be implemented to increase local control. **OR** • Create a **Wilmington Charter School District** of all city public schools governed by a school board authorized to grant and revoke school charters on the basis of student achievement and other performance criteria.

City of Wilmington Report on the Neighborhood Schools Act (2001)

Following the release of the Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee's report, City Council and Mayor of the City of Wilmington conducted a review of the recommendations and submitted a plan on behalf of the City of Wilmington.

- The Wilmington City Council and Mayor recommended the adoption of all the Wilmington Neighborhood School Committee's recommendations (previous slide) with the exception of the recommendations for district realignment. Instead, they recommended:

District Realignment	• Implement the **"River Plan"**, which would reduce the number of districts serving Wilmington students to two: Brandywine and Red Clay School Districts, which shall respectively serve students residing to the North and to the South of the Brandywine River. **Local School Councils** would be implemented to increase local control. **AND** • Create a **Wilmington Public Charter School Consortium** of existing and future city charter schools governed by a board appointed by the Mayor, City Council, and County Executive

- Additionally, The Wilmington City Council and Mayor recommended:

Family Intervention Specialists	• The state should provide financing for individuals to **provide children and families with support services** in schools with large number of low-income students such as extracurricular activities, crisis intervention, after school programs, learning workshops, educational guidance, and after school support services.
Equity Office	• The state should provide financing for **an independent entity to monitor for equitable distribution of resources** in the areas of curriculum, educational facilities, supplies, teachers, custodial services, athletic facilities, and support services.
Outreach Library Program	• The state shall provide additional **annual funding to each library in the state that serves historically low-income and low-literacy communities** for purposes such as providing programs targeting pre-school children and providing extended weekend and summer hours and programs.
Special Education	• The state should establish a **Statewide Special Education/Learning Disability Advocacy Office** to address the needs of special education and learning disabled students.

Report recommendations:

- **Primary Recommendation:** Create a strong youth advocacy organization to improve the education of City children.

Early Learning	• Improve the **quality of child care and pre-school programs** for all City children • Focus on **early literacy and math skills** in middle schools as the building blocks of future success
Teacher and Leader Quality	• Make **professional development** available for teachers who teach urban youth and making sure that more students graduate from high school • Work with the State's colleges and universities to improve the **preparation of teachers** for the challenges of teaching urban youth
Career and College Access	• Make sure that more **students graduate from high school**
Parent and Community Engagement	• Help parents prepare their children for school • Create partnerships among school districts, community centers and religious institutions to ensure effective **after school programs and tutoring** for students in their own communities
Truancy	• **Reduce school truancy**
Other Report Recommendations	• Implement the recommendations of the Neighborhood Schools Commission, the City of Wilmington Report on the Neighborhood Schools Act, and the Hope Commission's Education Committee report

Report recommendations:

School Funding	• Implement a **weighted-student funding** statewide • Provide greater **flexibility** in formulas
Data	• Track education data specific to residents of Wilmington that attend public schools • Use a variety of data to evaluate quality of opportunities, such as growth over time
District Realignment	• **Reduce four districts to two**: east of Market St as part of Brandywine and those west as part of Red Clay • Consider creating one **northern New Castle County school district** comprised of the city and all suburbs to the north • Ensure **proportional representation on school district school boards** of city and suburb residents • Implementation should be as **revenue neutral** as possible
School Configurations	• Build **public middle schools** in Wilmington • Create **public high schools** in city and consider special arrangements to accept students from all city districts and share costs • Consider **state funding for transportation to students who want to "choice"** to high schools in surrounding districts
Professional Staff	• Build leading-edge **training and recruitment strategies** to prepare our strongest teachers to work in high need schools • Build a repertoire of effective **instructional strategies** to deliver high-quality, **standards based curriculum**. • Build **urban professional development center** in Wilmington to model best practices in contemporary urban education • Target **incentives to recruit and retain** "hard-to-staff" school staff, e.g. loan forgiveness or signing bonuses for those working and living in a high need school community
Learning Environment	• School learning environment must be **safe** • Focus on **high academic standards** and expectations • Ensure **small learning environments** • Establish collective responsibility for student outcomes with **clear targets for improvement tied to accountability**
Student Equality of Access	• **Increase number of seats available** to city students for high performing votechs remove admission practices that limit the of any school that limits enrollment available in city public schools • Ensure equity and access of latest **technology**

Additional Study	• Research on best practices in community and school partnerships and engagement models
	• Explore formation of public/private partnerships focused on revitalization of Wilmington school neighborhoods
	• Explore implementation of holistic community-based education across school districts in Northern New Castle County serving Wilmington students without regard to the geographic location of the public school
	• Develop a citywide implementation plan:
	    • Establish appropriate outcomes of Wilmington schools, aligned to performance standards
	    • Conduct a gap analysis
	    • Assess financial and legal limitations of current systems and proposed solutions
	    • Build on what is working
	    • Develop implementation strategy that addresses citywide needs

Draft recommendations:

School Funding	• Create a simple and fair system for funding education in Delaware whereby resources are allocated based on **individual student need** and **follow individual students** to whichever school they attend
	   • Eliminate the unit system of funding
	   • Implement weighted student funding

Early Learning	• Establish **publicly funded preschool and full day kindergarten**

Parent and Wilmington Community Involvement	• Establish **Neighborhood School Councils** to
	   • Be governed by elected advisory boards
	   • Allow school principals to work with parents and teachers to develop annual academic and financial plans
	   • Develop and review new school policies
	   • Focus on student achievement, and participate in the evaluation and participate in the selection of the school's principal
	• Reestablish the state's **Data Service Center** and make available to the public all data concerning every student's education
	• Allow Mayor to appoint a New Castle County Vocational-Technical Board of Education member
	• City of Wilmington to establish Citywide Parent Teacher Association

Charter Schools	• Establish a mechanism for Municipal participation in the **authorization and review of charter schools** located in New Castle County

District Realignment	• Consolidate the Colonial, Christina, Red Clay, and Brandywine School Districts into two regional districts:
	   • **The Greater Wilmington District** (comprised of the City of Wilmington, Red Clay and Brandywine School Districts)
	   • **The Greater Newark District** (comprised of the City of Newark, Christina and Colonial School Districts)

Summary of major recommendations:

Reconfiguring Wilmington School Districts	• Traditional school districts operating in Wilmington should have a **more streamlined configuration** that better addresses the needs of Wilmington students and more fully supports continuous improvement and community responsiveness. • Namely, **Red Clay** should be assigned the schools and students currently served by Colonial and Christina in the City of Wilmington.
Pursuing a New Vision for Wilmington Charter Schools	• Charter schools should be developed in accordance with a **statewide strategic plan** • Existing Wilmington charter schools should form a **citywide consortium** that promotes shared capacity, collaboration, and best practices among charter schools and between charter and traditional schools
Meeting Wilmington Student Needs	• Develop a **statewide plan for stronger alignment of needed supports** and services from public, private, and nonprofit institutions starting in early childhood and extending through entry into a career or higher education.
Funding Student Success	• An allocation of **funds to schools with high concentrations of students in poverty** • An i**mproved revenue base** to support the overall costs of public education • **Transitional resources** to effectively implement district realignment, and • Funds for **early childhood** and other programs needed to meet the needs of low- income students.
Implementing Change	• The governor and legislature should establish, through the Delaware Code, the **Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC).**

Summary of major recommendation:

Reconfiguring Wilmington School Districts	• The boundaries of the Red Clay Consolidated School District should be altered to include the portion of the City of Wilmington now served by the Christina School District. • The schools and students currently served by Christina in the City of Wilmington should be assigned to Red Clay. • The Christina and Red Clay Consolidated School Districts will continue to collaborate to outline an approach for reassignments of students, student transportation, facilities and capital assets, governance modifications, and stakeholder engagement
Funding Student Success	• An allocation of **funds to schools with high concentrations of students in poverty** • An i**mproved revenue base** to support the overall costs of public education • **Transitional resources** to effectively implement district realignment, and • Funds for **early childhood** and other programs needed to meet the needs of low- income students.
Meeting Wilmington Student Needs	• Develop a **statewide plan for stronger alignment of needed supports** and services from public, private, and nonprofit institutions starting in early childhood and extending through entry into a career or higher education.

- WEIC has also created the following committees to develop recommendations and work plans for furthering the other areas of the WEAC Action Agenda which were not the primary focus of *Redistricting in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource and Implementation Plan:*
    – Charter and District Collaboration Committee
    – Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee
    – Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee