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June 2, 2022

Dear Brandywine, Christina, and Red Clay School Boards,

First and foremost, we want to thank you for your engagement and partnership over the past year. Our team has enjoyed working with you and your school communities as we built -- together -- a shared vision for schools in Wilmington. Our goal has been to develop a framework to facilitate school-level decision-making, community empowerment and governance, and a hyper-focus on the needs of city students, educators, and families.

Over the past year, we've held numerous engagement sessions. These range from town hall meetings at schools, family engagement sessions with trusted community partners, Zooms with educators and community leaders, and one-on-one or small group conversations with educators, students, families, and community members. While we are proud of the engagement conducted over the past year, we are also aware that we are building on the work of those who have come before us. We're continuing the commitment started by the Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee, the Wilmington Education Taskforce, the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee (WEAC), the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC), and the work currently being done by the Redding Consortium.

Each of these community-driven efforts produced recommendations to help schools in the city. We believe we can begin to fulfill the promise of these recommendations with the creation of the Wilmington Learning Collaborative (the WLC).

Attached is a draft agreement that would create the WLC and guide our collective next steps. We are asking all of you to vote to join in this agreement. It is not intended to be the answer to every problem our schools are facing. Instead, it creates a structure to continue our work together, on behalf of the children we all serve. We look forward to joining you at your June public meeting to discuss the draft agreement, in advance of you taking a vote this summer.

The agreement includes the following key points:

Building-Based Flexibility and Autonomy

By signing this agreement, we as a state, and you as school board members, would be committing to grant city schools broad flexibility and autonomy to make building-level decisions tailored to the specific needs of their students, staff, and families.

Shared Decision-Making

This agreement commits us all to supporting the creation of building-based Educator Leader Teams (ELTs) and empowering educators on those teams to work with the school leadership on key decisions. Collectively, we will work to engage experts in building-based shared decision-making to help support this important facet of the WLC.

Commonality and Consistency

Throughout this agreement, you'll see a focus on collaboration across district lines, which includes exploring a culturally relevant common curriculum that speaks to students' lived experiences, a common instructional technology package, common evaluation metrics, joint professional learning, common guidelines, and more.

Community-Based Governance

This agreement would create a new nonprofit entity called the Wilmington Learning Collaborative. The community-based governing board (the WLC Council) of that new entity would focus solely on WLC schools and would oversee a small staff (the WLC Team) to coordinate that work. The WLC will be accountable to the districts for progress. Additionally, each school will have a site-based Community Council, to engage and empower families, community members, educators, and students at the school level.

WLC Team

The WLC will have a focused team to directly support city schools and coordinate WLC initiatives. The WLC Team will be supervised by the WLC Council, and will be accountable to the districts for achieving results.

Collaboration with Institutions of Higher Education

The WLC Team, the WLC Council, and districts will work closely with our institutions of higher education (IHEs) to best support the needs of WLC schools. Those IHEs would provide both expertise and an ongoing commitment to the success of the schools.

Staffing

The districts agree to staff schools at or above their traditional allocation. This agreement gives participating schools discretion to use their current and additional funds to hire more staff to support instruction, mental health, or other important identified needs. Educator and community feedback has consistently mentioned the need for additional staff, and we believe this is an important addition to schools in Wilmington.

District Liaisons

Each district will dedicate one staff member to serve exclusively with the WLC Team and WLC Council for a minimum of two years to assist in building a strong foundation consistent with the intent and spirit of the WLC philosophy.

Anti-Racism

The WLC will seek to create school environments grounded in anti-racism, equity, and community, understanding that students, families, and communities deserve a targeted support system that will help overcome institutional barriers to success.

Community Schools

It will be a central goal of the WLC to ensure that city schools will be true community hubs that meet children's and families' needs.

Finances

Each district will serve as the fiscal agent for their participating schools, though each school (with the support of the WLC Team) will be afforded broad flexibility in how they deploy funds to best meet student need. The FY 2023 recommended budget includes an additional \$7 million for schools that join the WLC, and the recommended budget also includes over \$12 million for Redding Consortium recommendations, many of which would directly support WLC schools. This new funding is in addition to Opportunity Funding.

Commitment to School and Community Engagement and Planning Year

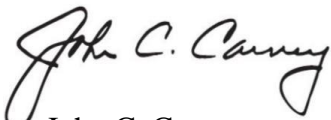
There is agreement that there must be community, family, and educator voice that helps drive the work moving forward. Beginning in the planning year, the WLC will consistently engage educators, families, school leaders, students, and community members in the continued development of this work. The 2022-2023 school year will be a planning year with added supports for schools, while schools and the WLC craft thoughtful plans rooted in the specific needs and strengths of each school.

Needs Assessment and Community Asset Map

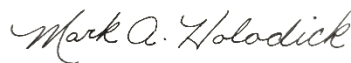
At the beginning of the upcoming planning year, the executive director of the WLC, the district WLC leads, and the WLC Council will conduct an open and honest needs assessment of both district and school practices impacting city students and staff. This will be a foundation of the WLC's planning. Additionally, our year of community engagement helped solidify [a roadmap of feedback](#) from educators, families, students, and community members, with many of the same themes emerging repeatedly.

The attached agreement lays out a structure that will help our schools and community address much of what is in the roadmap. It is time, collaboratively, to finally move this work forward.

Sincerely,



John C. Carney
Governor



Dr. Mark Holodick
Secretary of Education



James Simmons
DOE Chief Equity Officer