



Wilmington Education Improvement Commission

INITIAL ANNUAL REPORT, JULY 1, 2015 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2016

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Preface and Acknowledgements

In 2015, the Delaware General Assembly passed and Governor Markell signed two important pieces of legislation: Senate Bill 122 and House Bill 148. These two pieces of legislation created the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (the Commission) and gave Delawareans the opportunity to build a coalition to improve Delaware public schools. More specifically, the Commission has worked over the past year to create sustainable solutions that meet three streams of action: (1) meeting the needs of Wilmington students, (2) creating responsive governance, and (3) funding student success. In order to implement change, these streams must converge and be acted on together to produce higher-quality schools and improved student outcomes.

As required by law, the Commission must submit an annual report each year until it sunsets in 2021. This report serves as the first annual report that tracks the progress of the Commission's work and informs Delaware citizens and leaders on actions needed to address the challenges facing public education in the City of Wilmington and throughout the state. The report outlines the progress of the Commission, details the current status of education in Delaware, and presents the milestones for future success in improving the education system that serves Wilmington students and all students in Delaware. It also comments on each of the three action streams: creating responsive governance, funding student success, and meeting Wilmington student needs.

This report was written in tandem with more detailed documents: *The Wilmington Education Advisory Committee's Strengthening Wilmington Education: An Action Agenda* and the Commission's *Solutions for Delaware Schools, Vol. 1, Redistricting in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan*.

As we have said many times, improving educational outcomes depends on a host of collaborative and strategic methods. No one strategy will alone be enough to achieve continuous improvement in student learning. A quality education available to all students must begin with a new vision, backed by common commitment, to strengthening public education throughout Delaware. That is as important in Indian River and Capital School Districts—to name a few—as it is for education in New Castle County.

Delawareans—from all corners of the state—have been an integral part of the work of the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission. Their engagement in our efforts has helped shape every solution that this Commission has put forth since the beginning. Thank you, all, for playing an important role in the conversation, creation, and advocacy of the Commission's work. While there are too many to name, there are some individuals who have played a leading role in the work of the Commission:

- Governor Jack Markell for his leadership and unwavering support of the work of the Commission.
- The staff and students of the Institute for Public Administration at the University of Delaware for providing outstanding support to the operations and research of the Commission.

- Attorneys Thomas Driscoll and Ian Connor Bifferato, of The Bifferato Firm, P.A., who have and continue to provide excellent legal guidance at no cost to the Commission.
- Members of the Delaware State Board of Education, led by President Dr. Teri Gray, who affirmed our plan and helped to strengthen our work.
- The School District Board of Education presidents, superintendents, and their staff in northern New Castle County, for working with, and in some cases serving on, the Commission and the committees. Your partnership has been monumental in shaping solutions and moving the work forward.

Furthermore, I would like to thank individuals and institutions from all sectors who have contributed and supported the Commission's work and future progress.

- The Committee of 100
- Delaware Black Caucus
- Delaware Business Roundtable
- Delaware State Board of Education
- Delaware State Chamber of Commerce
- League of Women Voters of Delaware
- Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League
- Nemours Health and Prevention Services
- New Castle County Chamber of Commerce
- Rodel Foundation of Delaware
- The Brooks Fellowship
- The Fund for Urban Education
- The Wilmington Education Strategy Think Tank
- Tipton Communications
- University of Delaware
- Delaware State University
- United Way of Delaware
- Vision Coalition of Delaware
- Wilmington Head Start, Inc.

Lastly, I would like to thank all Commission and committee members for their commitment, hard work, and dedication to improving the Delaware education system so that it benefits all students. Without you, this work would not be possible.

Tony Allen, Ph.D.
Chair, Wilmington Education Improvement Commission

Executive Summary

As established through House Bill 148 signed into law on August 4, 2015, the 23-member Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (the Commission) was charged to:

- Carry out the action agenda developed by the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) as described in *Strengthening Wilmington Education: An Action Agenda*.
- Advise the Governor and General Assembly on how to improve the quality and availability of education for children P–12 within the City of Wilmington.
- Recommend actions to address the needs of all schools statewide that have high concentrations of students in poverty, English language learners, and other students at risk.

The Commission's framework, as described in Part II, incorporates the action agenda of the Advisory Committee and focuses on three streams of action needed to improve Wilmington student outcomes: creating more responsive governance, funding student success, and meeting the needs of students in poverty

The Commission's progress as of June 30, 2016, is reported in Part III. Overall, few of the action agenda items have been completed. Most are in progress with some initial milestones met. As per one of the action items, Senate Bill 122 (SB 122) mandated the Commission to develop a comprehensive transition, resource, and implementation plan for the redistricting recommendations of the Advisory Committee. This plan was to be submitted for approval by the State Board of Education (State Board) and confirmation by the General Assembly. The plan was completed in December 2015 and approved by the State Board of Education in March 2016.

The General Assembly passed Senate Bill 17, which gave legislative support for the State Board's approval but required the Commission to return to the legislature for final approval prior to implementation. The Commission's key funding priority, a unit allocation for low-income students, English language learners, and basic special education K–3 was not approved. Additional funding recommended by the Commission for early childhood education was approved. Most of the action agenda items related to meeting the needs of students are underway and will be a priority in the upcoming year.

The committees carry out much of the work of the Commission as described in Part IV, each committee's work is focused on specific facets of the action agenda, which in combination contribute to quality access, improved student success, and systemic educational improvement.

Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty

This committee is focused on developing a comprehensive plan to address the unmet needs of students in poverty, with an initial focus on Wilmington students. The committee has: (1) assessed the needs, gaps, and opportunities for services and supports in early childhood, in-school, and out-of-school settings, and (2) analyzed data collected and identified the common themes in the needs and gaps that should be addressed.

Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement

This committee is focused on developing strategies and partnerships to enhance the ongoing engagement of parents and families to support the schools with high concentrations of students in poverty, initially focused on Wilmington students. The committee has identified gaps in parent, educator, and community engagement and crafted a research plan to assess national best practices to address the gaps.

Charter and District Collaboration

This committee promotes shared capacity and collaboration among all schools, recommends the application of national best practices for collaboration, and supports the development of a state plan that provides the configuration of schools and programs required to address the needs of all students. The committee has identified barriers to collaboration and has evaluated national best practices and their applicability in Delaware to provide a foundation of collaboration.

Redistricting and Funding Student Success

This committee developed the transition, resource, and implementation plan for redistricting required by SB 122. The Funding Student Success Committee developed recommendations for funding the redistricting proposal, strengthening the funding base, and allocating funds to students in poverty, English language learners, and other students at risk. The Commission and both committees held numerous public meetings with districts, school boards, families, and other stakeholders to keep them involved and informed about the process and recommendations proposed.

Wilmington Demographics and Data Analysis

The Commission continues to monitor the educational progress of Wilmington students and the needs and performance of all students in poverty across Delaware. Based on the 2015 Smarter Balanced Assessment:

- Approximately 84% of students from the City of Wilmington failed to meet state standards in Mathematics.
- Nearly 75% of students from the City of Wilmington failed to meet state standards in English/Language Arts.
- Less than 40% of students of low-income families across the state performed at state standards in English/Language Arts.
- Only 1 out of every 4 students of low-income families in Delaware met state standards in Mathematics.
- Less than 70% of Wilmington students graduate from high school in four years, a rate that was lower than state rates (84%) and rates among the state's low-income population (74%).

Part I: Creation and Mandate

In September 2014, Governor Jack Markell formed the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) to make recommendations on how to strengthen the public education system for all City of Wilmington students. Governor Markell charged the Advisory Committee with addressing the underlying challenges facing public education in the City of Wilmington and proposing actions that will propel continuous improvements in City of Wilmington schools.

The starting point for the work of the Advisory Committee was the documented failure of public education for many City of Wilmington students combined with the absence of collective responsibility for that failure. The Advisory Committee reviewed the work of earlier Commissions addressing the challenges of City of Wilmington education, starting with the 2001 Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee. The longer history of City of Wilmington education and the changes in conditions since 2001 also framed the Committee's deliberations. The Advisory Committee developed its final recommendations with input from community members, educators, and state and local government through the most transparent process in recent history.

The Advisory Committee's final report, **Strengthening Wilmington Education: An Action Agenda**, was produced in April 2015. The recommendations fell into four categories: (1) Creating Responsive Governance, (2) Meeting Wilmington Student Needs, (3) Funding Student Success, and (4) Implementing Change. The Advisory Committee recommended streamlining governance by reducing the number of school districts serving the City of Wilmington; promoting shared capacity, collaboration, and best practices for both charter schools and traditional schools; authorizing future charter schools in accordance with a statewide strategic plan; and creating a role for the Wilmington city government in the education of City of Wilmington students.

The Advisory Committee recommended stronger alignment of the needed supports and services for low-income children from early childhood through college and/or career. This should be done through stronger parent engagement, which could be achieved partially through support provided by the creation of the Office of Education and Public Policy in the city government; mobilization of existing public, private, and nonprofit institutions and investments; and a review of the existing policy infrastructure for the creation of a comprehensive statewide plan for the integration of services for low-income children and their families. The Advisory Committee recommended improving the revenue base, allocating funds to schools with high concentrations of students in poverty, providing funds for district realignment, and increasing funds for early childhood. Finally, the Advisory Committee recommended a strategy for "implementing change" in the creation of the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (the Commission), to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

It was the fourth category, Implementing Change, that made the Advisory Committee's recommendations stand apart from the several committees that came before it. Earlier committees had developed comprehensive recommendations; however, none of the previous committees had proposed

how their recommendations should be carried forward. The Advisory Committee recognized this as a problem and recommended the creation of the Commission for this purpose.

Out of this set of recommendations came House Bill 148 (HB 148) and Senate Bill 122 (SB 122), passed by the General Assembly during the 2015 legislative session and signed into law in August 2015. HB 148 addressed the Advisory Committee's recommendations on implementing change by creating the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission and SB 122 authorized the redistricting work. HB 148 established the 23-member the Commission and mandated that it,

...shall advise the Governor and General Assembly on the planning, recommending, and implementing of improvement to the quality and availability of education for children Pre-K through grade 12 in the City of Wilmington and for which such changes may be instructive for addressing needs of all schools within the State with high concentrations of children living in poverty, English language learners, or both. (HB 148)

The Commission began its work in August 2015 with 23 members and five standing subcommittees totaling approximately 100 members. The Commission's task was to strengthen the overall performance of the public education system on behalf of all students. Its work is multi-faceted in nature because sustained, systematic improvement of City of Wilmington schools requires a developmental approach. With that in mind, the Commission created a multi-step action agenda for improved Wilmington student outcomes. The agenda builds upon and extends the recommendations produced in the Advisory Committee's final report to remain focused on City of Wilmington students.

Part II: Action Agenda and Framework for Educational Improvement

The Commission includes a diverse representation of the Wilmington community, including educators, parents, advocates, and community activists. While diverse, the Commission has approached the work with shared expectations and agreement on guiding principles. While the focus is Wilmington, the Commission believes these principles should apply across Delaware. These principles have been adopted from the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee and helped shape the action agenda.

Providing Access to High-Quality Education

Delivering high-quality public education to all children, including those who are low income, black or Latino, is not only a Wilmington problem. It is a challenge facing all of Delaware.

Meeting High-Standards for Student Learning

All Wilmington schools should meet high and rising standards for student learning in Delaware and across the globe. There should be agreed-upon measures for student success in meeting those standards that apply to all schools.

Engaging Families and Parents

Parent and family engagement is critical to the effectiveness of public education, and we must establish a strong Wilmington education partnership between schools and the families they serve.

Creating Community Partnerships

Wilmington schools should be seen as community assets and must 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 social service providers.

Ensuring Access to High-Quality Educators

All Wilmington students should have access to high-quality educators who are prepared to meet their diverse needs, and to the human and financial resources needed to support student success.

Collaboration and Strengthened Commitment

Wilmington students should continue to be served by a combination of district, charter, and vo-tech schools. Policies and practices for Wilmington schools should promote collaboration, shared learning, and a mutual commitment to improvements that serve all students.

The action agenda, depicted in Figure 1, builds upon the improvements already underway, such as recent gains in early childhood education and college and career readiness. It enables those gains to be accelerated and sustained. The action agenda adds critical capacity in the core areas recommended by the Advisory Committee's final report: creating more responsive governance, funding student success, and meeting Wilmington student needs. Strengthening Wilmington education requires that actions be taken in each of these areas in a systematic, coordinated, and sustained fashion. The effectiveness of the action agenda in each of these areas is highly dependent upon the implementation of the action agenda in the other areas. Each area represents a stream of required decisions and initiatives. Progress on any one stream alone will not be sufficient to support and sustain improved Wilmington student outcomes. Progress on all three of these streams together will result in improved student outcomes.

Creating Coherent and Responsive Governance of Wilmington Public Education

The governance of Wilmington public education is fragmented and dysfunctional. More coherent and responsive governance requires actions on three fronts: (1) streamlining traditional school districts operating in Wilmington, (2) charter governance under a statewide plan and citywide consortium, and (3) engaging Wilmington city government as a partner in public education. The Commission is committed to promoting a new vision of public education through which all units—traditional districts, vocational-technical (vo-tech) district, and charter schools—accept a shared responsibility for and act in concert to support the effective education of all Wilmington students.

Streamlining traditional districts responsible for Wilmington public education is a key part of the process needed to focus responsibility and leadership for the education of Wilmington students. It is certainly not the only part, but the Advisory Committee and the Commission concluded it is essential. The Commission's recommendations would consolidate more than half of Wilmington's public school students into a single district. Beyond redistricting, the Commission seeks to expand collaboration among charters, among districts, and among charters and districts. A complementary part of the Commission's mandate is to actively promote and support such collaboration, so that the sum of the public education assets represented by the diversity of Wilmington schools can benefit more students in more ways than at any time in the past or present. Further, the Commission believes that the Wilmington city government must engage as a partner in improving Wilmington education. Collaboration at all levels is essential in order to scale-up school success for the benefit of all students.

Funding Student Success

Strengthening the overall education finance structure is of fundamental importance to public education across Delaware. While Delaware already spends a great deal of money on public education, the expenditure of those funds must focus more effectively on meeting the needs of Wilmington students—and other students at risk throughout Delaware. Actions are needed to ensure a sufficient and reliable revenue base at both the state and local levels and also to ensure that funds are allocated in ways that most directly and effectively address the diverse and often complex needs of students at risk. Targeted funding should support low-income students, English language learners, and other students at risk. While the challenge of addressing these needs is statewide, it is particularly acute in the City of Wilmington, which has the highest rate of poverty in the state. Over the past fifteen years, working groups addressing Wilmington education have repeatedly recommended changes in education funding to better support Wilmington schools and students. All have addressed the unique needs of students in poverty and the additional challenges faced by schools with high concentrations of students at risk. Additional funding is needed in many areas across the educational lifespan of children—from early childhood education, through K–12, to college and career readiness. Funding also is required to attract and retain the most highly qualified teachers into Wilmington schools.

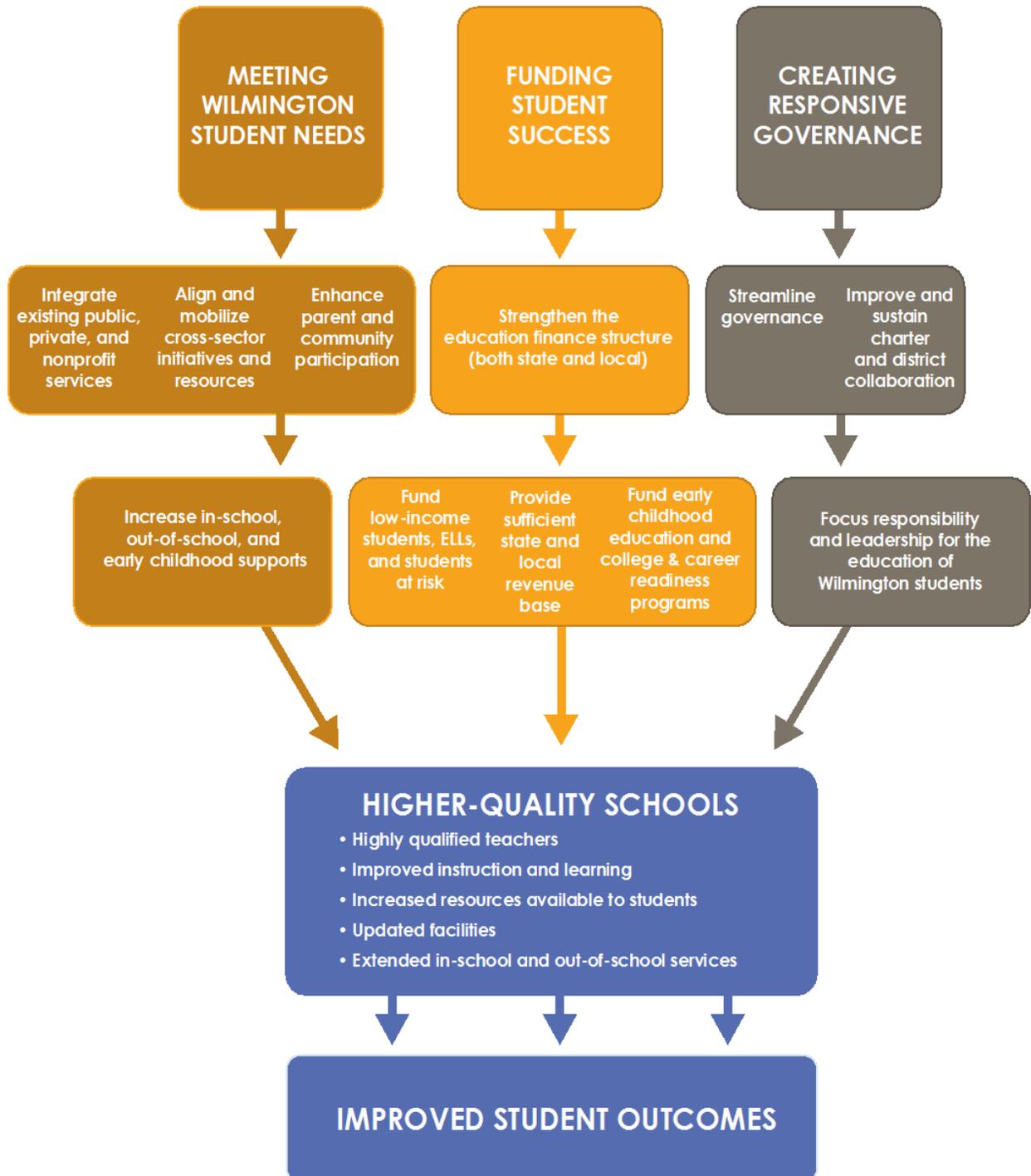
Meeting the Needs of Wilmington Students

Addressing the challenges of students in poverty requires a developmental approach that focuses on alignment of needed supports and services starting in early childhood and extending through entry into a career or higher education. Addressing the needs of these children and their families and providing the needed supports for schools with high concentrations of low-income students is a statewide challenge and needs to be met in a comprehensive manner. There is a need to develop and implement a comprehensive plan that can mobilize existing statewide institutions, policies, and resources toward the common objective of addressing the needs of children in poverty and supporting the schools in which those children are educated. As the Advisory Committee final report proposed:

Alignment of supports and services requires a strong partnership between the community and its schools. All sectors of the community should be mobilized.... Existing services provided by public, private, and nonprofit institutions should be more effectively and efficiently integrated at each stage of child development and in the transition from one state to another. The range of services needed include access to high-quality early childhood education; expanded school time and attention—including enhanced in-school services, such as school psychologists and social workers; availability of after-school programs; expanded school-to-work partnership programs; and more concerted efforts to reach and engage families in student learning and connect them to available services and supports. (Strengthening Wilmington Education: An Action Agenda, 2015, p. 50-51)

This stream of action requires coordinated efforts from all sectors, including more effective integration of state services and the alignment and mobilization of cross-sector initiatives and partnerships. It also requires greater parent and community engagement in Wilmington schools and in support of the continuous improvement of Wilmington public education. The combination and synergy of all of these changes are essential to increasing in-school and out-of-school supports, from early childhood until the transition to work and/or higher education.

Figure One: Action Agenda for Improved Wilmington Student Outcomes



Part III: Status Report on Action Agenda

July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016

The Commission has acted as community-based council outside of state agencies, working across all governmental units, educational entities, and private and nonprofit institutions to support the implementation of all recommended changes from the final report of the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee). Last year, the Commission and the affiliated committees accepted and built upon the majority of the Advisory Committee's recommendations. The status report below is for the period from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. It includes an assessment of progress for the Advisory Committee's action agenda and for acting on the subsequent priorities established by the Commission and its committees. See below for the key.

Symbol	Status	Definition
	Completed	Action has been taken and wholly completed by the Commission.
	In Progress	Action has been taken to propose and partially complete the item, but it has not been fully finished.
	In Planning	Action discussed and in early planning stages.
	No Action	Action has not been taken.

Creating Responsive Governance			
Priorities	Status	Action Taken	Responsibility
Develop plan for the Christina School District (CSD) to leave Wilmington & Red Clay Consolidated School District include CSD's Wilmington students and schools.		SB 122 signed August 2015 mandates the Commission to develop a transition, resource, and implementation plan to carry out the Advisory Committee's recommendation on redistricting.	General Assembly
Colonial and Brandywine School Districts should continue to serve Wilmington students.		Colonial and Brandywine Boards of Education voted to continue to serve Wilmington students.	Commission and School Boards
The State Board of Education should approve the Commission's redistricting plan.		Plan Submitted to State Board in December 2015. Approved by State Board in March 2016.	State Board of Education
The General Assembly should confirm the State Board's approval of Commission's redistricting plan.		SB 17 provides conditional approval, with requirement for return to legislature for final approval. SB 300 creates Wilmington Redistricting Transition Fund and mandates a fiscal impact analysis.	General Assembly
Complete fiscal impact analysis of redistricting for 2017 legislative session.		The Commission created an ad hoc committee to assess the fiscal impact of redistricting and provide a report to the General Assembly by March 2017.	Ad Hoc Committee and Commission
New charter approvals and expansions should be deferred pending a statewide needs assessment and a comprehensive plan for the desired number and mix of charter, district, and vo-tech schools.		HB 56 puts a moratorium on charter approval in Wilmington until July 2018 or pending a state plan. Governor Markell initiated the State Review of Education Opportunities to serve as the basis for a state plan on the desired configuration of schools. Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has initiated a needs assessment prior to completion of state plan targeted for December 2016.	Department of Education and General Assembly
Charter schools should develop in accordance with a new vision that promotes shared capacity, collaboration, and best practices among charters and between charter and traditional schools.		The Charter and District Collaboration committee has considered barriers to collaboration and national best practices.	Charter and District Collaboration Committee
A Charter Consortium or collaborative compact should be established to better support operational needs and best practices of all charter schools.		Research is underway on effective models for support of charter schools across the U.S. No action taken on proposed consortium.	Charter and District Collaboration Committee
An Office of Education and Public Policy should be created in City of Wilmington government to promote active community engagement in public education.		No action taken by the Commission.	City of Wilmington Government
The New Castle County (NCC) Vo-Tech District and traditional district schools and Wilmington charter schools should collaborate on expanded vocational education opportunities for Wilmington students.		No action taken by the Commission.	Commission with districts and charters

Funding Student Success

Priorities	Status	Action Taken	Responsibility
State funding should be allocated statewide for low-income students, English language learners, and basic special education students K–3.		The Commission has proposed legislation to change the State’s unit count allocation to include this funding. Governor Markell recommended a pilot program but funding was not allocated by the General Assembly. No action taken by the Delaware General Assembly on Commission proposal.	Commission working with the Governor, General Assembly, and community partners
Additional funding for early childhood education programs should be provided to meet the needs of students in poverty in Wilmington and statewide.		Governor Markell recommended and the General Assembly provided most of the additional funding requested by the Delaware Office of Early Learning and the Delaware Early Childhood Council.	Commission, Delaware Office of Early Learning, Delaware Early Childhood Council
The State should increase funding for extended in-school and out-of-school services and supports, including after-school programs.		Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee has made this a priority and is identifying best practices for improving state and community services. United Way of Delaware to take on the “My Very Own Library” early literacy initiative. Legislation proposed but not enacted in the last session on after-school programs.	Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee, Governor, and General Assembly, United Way of Delaware of Delaware
Strengthening the revenue base supporting public education at both the state and local levels, including property reassessment.		The Commission has proposed adjustments in the public education allocation system. No state or county action on property reassessment.	Commission, County Governments, and General Assembly
Establish Wilmington Redistricting Transition Fund to support the costs of district reorganization and approve other funding adjustments needed for implementation of redistricting.		SB 300 establishes the fund with an initial allocation of \$200,000. Commission’s Ad Hoc Fiscal Impact Committee is evaluating overall costs.	Governor and General Assembly
Existing state funding for low-income children and families should be redirected by a comprehensive state plan to more effectively address the needs of students in poverty.		No action taken.	Governor and State Agencies with Commission

Meeting the Needs of Wilmington Students

Priorities	Status	Action Taken	Responsibility
A comprehensive early childhood education plan for high-quality programs and services for all children in Wilmington.		No action taken on a Wilmington plan. State investments have increased access of low-income children to high-quality programs.	Delaware Office of Early Learning, Delaware Early Childhood Council, Wilmington Early Childhood Council, Commission
A comprehensive plan for improving state and local services for low-income children and their families and for schools with high low-income student enrollment, including the integration of services and partnerships with private and nonprofit institutions.		Commission conducting Wilmington asset mapping, inventory of state policies, and mapping of finances.	Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee, Commission, Governor, and prospective the Interagency Resource Management Committee
The State should increase in-school supports for students experiencing trauma and other social and emotional challenges.		Legislation expands school-based health centers to all secondary schools. No allocation to meet trauma and socio-emotional needs.	Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee, Governor, General Assembly, and State Departments
Delaware P-20 Council should be mandated to recommend improved alignment of resources and programs to support student learning and development from birth through college and workforce.		No action has been taken by the P-20 council.	Governor, Secretary of Education, and P-20 Council
Mobilize and coordinate community (nonprofit and private) programs in support of schools with high concentrations of students in poverty.		United Way of Delaware leading plan to coordinate efforts in Wilmington and statewide. Wilmington Alliance proposed but not implemented by city government.	United Way of Delaware, Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee, community partners, Wilmington city government, and state agencies
Governor should convene higher education partnership to strengthen Delaware education including coordinated programs of professional development, school improvement, and adoption of national best practices.		No State action taken. University of Delaware established the Partnership for Public Education.	Governor and Higher Education Institutions
Governor and business community should launch a business sponsorship program focused on Delaware schools with high percentages of low-income students.		No action taken.	Governor and Business Leaders with State and County Chambers.
Strengthen parents, educators, and community engagement and support with schools as community assets.		Research on best practices reviewed by Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement (PEaCE) Committee. No actions taken.	PEaCE and Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committees

Part IV: The Commission’s Committee Framework

The recommendations of the Advisory Committee inspired the three streams depicted in the framework for improved student outcomes shown in Figure 1. The streams of action are also associated with the committees charged with developing action plans to improve student outcomes on behalf of the Commission. The committees, working side by side, will develop recommendations that will cumulatively improve student outcomes. The five committees are:

1. Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty
2. Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement
3. Charter and District Collaboration
4. Funding Student Success
5. Redistricting

The improvement of the educational system for all Wilmington students requires a comprehensive approach with cross-sector engagement and community involvement. Each committee’s work is specific in nature but contributes to the larger framework of systemic educational improvement, quality access, and student success.

Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty

Since 2001, when the first report on strengthening Wilmington education was issued, the condition of poverty¹ among Delaware children—particularly City of Wilmington children—has become increasingly widespread. The percentage of Delaware children in poverty has gone from about 10% in 2003 to approximately 23% as of 2013.² This increase in child poverty is occurring statewide. Some areas in southern Delaware are experiencing soaring numbers of children and families in poverty. For example, student poverty is growing not only in the City of Wilmington but also in Dover and in Sussex County, where one finds the highest percentage of poverty among the three counties. Despite the striking increase in poverty in southern Delaware, the highest concentration of children and families in poverty is in the City of Wilmington.

Understanding how the condition of poverty acutely affects school-age children in the City of Wilmington, the Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee was tasked with developing a comprehensive plan to address unmet needs. The committee’s work focuses on the integration of key services for low-income children and families and for schools with high concentrations of poverty. In order to properly address the challenges low-income children face, the committee and Commission believe the alignment of supports and services must track developmental needs from birth through

¹ Poverty is a societal condition that the Commission is working to address. Schools use the term “low-income” as a proxy measure for poverty. For this reason, these terms are used interchangeably throughout this report.

² Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research, University of Delaware (2015).

college and entering the workforce. These services include but are not limited to access to high-quality early childhood education, enhanced in-school support, expanded school time, increased availability of after-school programs, and coordinated family engagement.³

As the committee exemplifies, this work requires effective coordination among all sectors and greater parent and community engagement in Wilmington schools. Cross-sector and community mobilization ensures the integration and delivery of essential services at each stage of child development and through transitions from one stage to another. Aligning services and securing strong commitments and partnerships between the community and Wilmington schools are both crucial to the committee's work.

Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement

Effective public education in the City of Wilmington requires that the community and city government be engaged. Active engagement in both Wilmington schools and in the continuous improvement of Wilmington public education is crucial to the future success of the system and the students within it. Without the partnership among engaged community members, parents, educators, and city government, the work and sustainability of the Commission is not possible.

The Commission's Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee formed to develop strategies and partnerships to enhance the ongoing engagement of parents and families to support the schools in which their students are enrolled. Understanding that active engagement is critical to the effectiveness of public education, the committee works to establish a strong Wilmington education partnership among schools and the families and communities they serve. While parent and family engagement is recognized broadly as of critical importance to student success, the actual mobilization of efforts is generally fragmented. This committee's mobilization efforts are learned through the evaluation of national best practices for engaging parents, families, and community members and the evaluation of models that apply to the City of Wilmington and prospectively to all of Delaware.

The Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee aligns with the Commission's belief that Wilmington schools must be seen as community assets. The committee strives to make this possible through the promotion of ongoing, effective, two-way communication with parents, educators, and community residents. In addition, this work requires the ongoing participation of the community in both district- and charter-school decisions that impact the education of Wilmington students. Collaboration between community and school stakeholders is essential to address the needs of all students.

³ Wilmington Education Advisory Council (2015). Strengthening Wilmington Education: An Action Agenda.

Charter and District Collaboration

The Advisory Committee recommended and the Commission endorsed that a combination of district, charter, and vo-tech schools continue to serve Wilmington students.⁴ Charter schools have become an important component of the Wilmington education system, and that role is projected to grow. In 2012, Delaware ranked third among states in the percentage of public school students enrolled in charters.⁵ Within the state, the City of Wilmington has demonstrated the densest and most rapidly growing concentration of charters with nearly two-thirds of statewide charter enrollment residing in the Christina, Red Clay Consolidated, and Colonial School Districts.⁶

Governance over the Wilmington education system is fragmented due to the high number of school districts and charter schools that serve students. Operating outside of the traditional school districts, the majority of charter schools in Wilmington have grown into a separate public education delivery system despite operating in the same geographic location as traditional school districts. The Red Clay Consolidated School District is the only district that authorizes charter schools and the only district that works with charter schools on an ongoing basis. This exception aside, few successful collaborations and little promotion of shared capacity of best practices exists for improving education for all Wilmington students.

Achieving greater collaboration and communication among charter schools and among charter and traditional district schools is a key component of more responsive governance within the City of Wilmington. The work of the committee promotes the idea that the community's schools should share best practices of how to best meet the needs of Wilmington students. The Charter and District Collaboration Committee evaluates national best practices and their applicability in Delaware to provide a foundation of collaboration. Additionally, the committee was tasked with developing and promoting strategies that facilitate collaboration among charters and districts in order to ensure that no matter which school Wilmington students attend, all students have access to quality education and have their needs met.

Redistricting

The consolidation of governance is a crucial step in the creation of responsive governance and improved student success in Wilmington. During the 2015–2016 school year, twenty-three separate governing units were responsible for delivering public education to over 11,500 Wilmington students with no unified plan, little collaboration, and no requirement for coordination.⁷ Streamlining traditional districts

⁴ Redistricting in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan, Wilmington Education Improvement Commission, Page 2-3

⁵ *Delaware Charter School Data*, Institute for Public Administration, 2013

⁶ Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2014–15 School Year

⁷ Redistricting in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan, Wilmington Education Improvement Commission, Page 1

responsible for Wilmington public education is a key component to consolidating responsibility and leadership. Additionally, the Redistricting Committee's work helps students and parents benefit from all the assets and opportunities in the system. The committee's work also maximizes the benefits of public investment in seeking overall improvement of public education.

The Redistricting Committee worked with districts to prepare a transition, resource, and implementation plan for redistricting the traditional schools that currently serve Wilmington students. Additionally, the committee collaborated with the Funding Student Success Committee to develop recommendations for funding the redistricting proposal, strengthening the funding base, and allocating funds to students in poverty, English language learners, and other students at risk.

Legislation approved in 2015 authorized the Delaware State Board of Education to change or alter the boundaries of school districts in northern New Castle County in a manner consistent with the redistricting recommendations made in the final report of the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee, provided the General Assembly passes and the Governor signs a Joint Resolution supporting the proposed changes. As per legislation, the following mandates were included in the Redistricting Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan:

(1) The orderly and minimally disruptive reassignment of students affected by the boundary change and the reassignment of governance responsibilities, (2) implications for educators, administrators, and other personnel that may lead to equitable adjustments to local collective bargaining agreements, (3) resources that will be required, from state, district, and local sources, to support the redistricting transition and provide for the effective ongoing education of all affected students, and for the support of schools with high concentrations of low income students and English Language Learners, (4) student transportation, (5) distribution of capital assets, and (6) engagement of educators, staff, parents, district personnel, and community members through-out the transition. (Senate Bill 122, 148th General Assembly)

Funding Student Success

It is crucial to strengthen Delaware's overall education finance structure in public education. Although Delaware spends a great deal on the public education system, the structure is insufficient and does not fully meet the needs of Wilmington students and other at-risk students across the state. More specifically, recommendations for improvement must be accompanied by the resources needed to better serve students, specifically the higher needs of low-income students, English language learners, and other students at risk. Delaware currently does not allocate funds in a way that most directly and effectively addresses the diverse and often complex needs of these students.

The Funding Student Success Committee was tasked with providing policy recommendations to improve the funding structure in Delaware's public education system and with creating strategies to address gaps in funding for Wilmington students. The committee worked closely with the Redistricting Committee to provide recommendations on how to fund the redistricting process and provide assistance to affected schools and impacted districts. The final report of the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee addressed the following key priorities for Funding Student Success: (1) the creation

of a weighted allocation formula for public school operating funds that responds to the added resource needs of schools with high concentrations of students in poverty, English language learners, and students who receive special education services, (2) an improved revenue base to support the overall costs of public education, (3) transitional resources to effectively implement district realignment, and (4) allocation of funding for additional programs and services such as early childhood programs, to meet the needs of low-income students.⁸ The Funding Committee used the key priorities identified by the Advisory Committee as a foundation to explore and recommend alternative funding strategies to better serve Wilmington students.

The Funding Committee produced specific recommendations, some of which are contingent upon the passage and approval of the redistricting transition, resource, and implementation plan. Furthermore, implementing the redistricting transition, resource, and implementation plan is contingent upon the provision of the resources needed to improve student outcomes. While the Funding Committee has provided recommendations, their work does not stop with these proposals. The Committee's work continues to support all other committees' work, as specific strategies and solutions for Wilmington students require funding suggestions and recommendations.

⁸ Wilmington Education Advisory Council (2015). Strengthening Wilmington Education: An Action Agenda. p. 4.

Part V: Redistricting and Funding Student Success

During the 2015–16 school year, the Commission’s primary focus was on redistricting and funding student success, a result of the tight timeline mandated in SB 122. While redistricting focused primarily on Wilmington and New Castle County, the Commission’s work in funding student success includes specific statewide support for improvements in schools with high concentrations of low-income students, English language learners, and other students at risk. After reviewing recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the Redistricting and Funding Student Success Committees developed sets of recommendations, which they brought to the Commission for review. In the end, the Commission adopted most of the recommendations of the committees, or chose to note where the Commission’s plan differed from the original recommendations of the initial Advisory Committee.

As stated earlier, the Redistricting Committee was focused on their responsibilities required by SB 122, working with the districts to prepare the transition, resource, and implementation plan. The Funding Student Success Committee was tasked with recommending policies that would fund the redistricting process; allocate funds for students in poverty, and English language learners, and other students at risk; strengthen the revenue base; and support the increased investment in early childhood education and workforce and college readiness. These committees included representatives from each of the affected five northern New Castle County school districts as well as key stakeholders, such as Delaware State Education Association (DSEA), Delaware Association of School Administrators (DASA), Red Clay Education Association (RCEA), and each of the school boards.

These two committees met weekly or biweekly for several months and developed the 178-page plan, “Redistricting in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan,” with over 500 pages of appendices and public comments. The Redistricting Committee hosted six formal public hearings for the receipt of public comment (one hearing was televised live) and collected public comment by email and mail from November 17, 2015, through January 14, 2016. This public input, as well as input made at Commission and committee meetings, was taken into consideration throughout redrafting.

The Commission approved the final plan and submitted it to the Delaware State Board of Education on December 15, 2015. Under the plan, students and schools in the Christina School District from the City of Wilmington would move to the Red Clay Consolidated School District effective July 1, 2018. The plan also called for initiating a statewide phase-in of a weighted unit for low-income students, English language learners, and basic special education grades K–3. This plan also included a number of additional recommendations for how improvements might be carried out and how to improve the school funding system for the City of Wilmington and Delaware as a whole.

Redistricting and Funding Recommendations

- Effective July 1, 2018, the boundaries of the Christina School District should be altered so that it no longer serves the City of Wilmington and should focus on serving the students in the western portion of the current district. The Christina Board of Education reviewed and approved by a

vote of 5–1–1 the framework for planning developed by the Christina administrative staff in collaboration with the staff of the Red Clay Consolidated School District. This framework can be found in the appendices of the Commission’s report titled *Solutions for Delaware Schools Vol. 1: Redistricting in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan*.

- Effective July 1, 2018, 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 Red Clay Consolidated School District Board of Education has voted 6–0 to support this change pending the allocation of funding needed for the effective education of its students, their continued engagement in the process, and an appropriate timeline for implementation. By a vote of 4–1, the Red Clay Consolidated School District Board of Education approved the interim framework for planning to be part of the Commission’s plan to be submitted to the State Board of Education. That plan and the accompanying transmittal letter are included in the appendices of the Commission’s report titled *Solutions for Delaware Schools Vol. 1: Redistricting in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan*.
- Effective July 1, 2018, the schools and students currently served by Christina School District in the City of Wilmington should be assigned to the Red Clay Consolidated School District.
- All students can choose to remain in their current schools as of the end of the 2017–18 school year until their programs are complete.
- The Christina and Red Clay Consolidated School Districts will continue to collaborate on the interim frameworks for implementation already approved by each of their Boards of Education. This collaboration will ensure the smooth, minimally disruptive transition of students, staff, and facilities.
- The Colonial and Brandywine School Boards of Education both voted to affirm their commitment to continue to serve students in the City of Wilmington within their current boundaries.
- The Commission is confident the Colonial School District can be a leader in expanding collaborations and new programs that will strengthen opportunities and support for Wilmington students. The district could expand upon existing collaborations, establish new partnerships that take advantage of existing choice patterns for its Wilmington students, and work with the Commission and other partners to provide families with information about the full range of options for meeting the needs of their children within the Colonial School District and in other nearby districts and charters. Comparable initiatives to expand collaborations and provide families with information about choice options should be undertaken by all districts and charters operating in Wilmington, and the Commission will support these efforts.

Funding Student Success

The enabling legislation stipulates that the Commission's plan will identify the state, district, and local resources that will be required to: (1) support the redistricting transition, (2) provide for the effective ongoing education of all the affected students, and (3) support schools with high concentrations of low-income students and English language learners.

The Funding Student Success Committee began by identifying the funding issues that need to be addressed in order to support redistricting. It found that some of these issues are immediate and resource-based, while others are structural. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of redistricting will require not just a quick fix, but a systemic approach. The committee recognized that many of its recommendations will, if implemented beyond City of Wilmington students, increase the ability of all schools, not just those affected by redistricting, to serve students and, as such, will need continued and increased input from stakeholders statewide.

The Commission's recommendations for funding student success address the key priorities identified in the final report of the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee and amended by the Funding Student Success Committee, as summarized below.

1. An allocation formula for public-school operating funds that responds to the added resource needs of schools with high percentages of low-income students, English language learners, and other students at risk.
2. An array of transition and capital resources needed to effectively implement the proposed district realignment.
3. A sufficient revenue base to support the overall rising costs of the public-education system.
4. An allocation of funding for the additional programs and services, such as high-quality early childhood programs, required to meet the needs of students in poverty.

The Funding Student Success Committee considered these and other factors that are critical to the effectiveness of redistricting in strengthening student learning. The Commission reaffirms the position of the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee that redistricting must be accompanied by the resources needed to better serve students and to fully address the needs of low-income students, English language learners, and other students at risk. In order to provide these resources, the Commission reaffirms the commitment that there should be no undue burden on taxpayers in the affected districts as a result of the process of redistricting.

The redistricting and funding recommendations also encompassed a timeline if the recommendations were approved during the legislative session. This timeline can be seen below.

Fiscal Year 2017: Planning Stage

1. Establish weighted-unit funding to address the needs of low-income students, English language learners (ELLs), and basic special education units for grades K–3. This recurrent funding should

begin with support for low-income students, English language learners, and basic special education units for grades K–3 in Red Clay Consolidated School District and the current Christina School District schools in the City of Wilmington—the schools impacted by redistricting—thereby providing the necessary and sufficient funding to proceed with redistricting. This recurrent funding should be expanded to include all City of Wilmington students and then statewide as rapidly as possible. A Wilmington Redistricting Transition Fund should be established with non-recurrent funds to support the planning and development of new models and proposals on facilities.

2. Epilogue language or legislation should designate the expansion of the low-income/ELL/special education unit over three years as described in fiscal years 2018 and 2019 below, leading to eventual statewide coverage.
3. Invest to sustain and accelerate improvements in early childhood education.
4. The Commission endorses House Bill 30 to target funding for basic special education units for grades K–3.

Fiscal Year 2018: Transition Stage

1. Recurrent funding of the low-income/ELL/special education unit is expanded to all Christina School District schools and continued for all Red Clay Consolidated School District schools.
2. Additional non-recurrent funds will be needed in the Wilmington Redistricting Transition Fund to support continued planning and development of new educational and program models as well as facilities configurations.
3. Capital funding for the reconfiguration of Red Clay Consolidated and Christina School Districts' schools located in the City of Wilmington and possible planning funds for a new Wilmington high school.
4. Initiate property tax reassessment process.
5. Authorization for impacted districts to make limited tax-rate adjustments effective for fiscal year 2019 to meet operating expenses.

Fiscal Year 2019: Implementation Stage

1. Recurrent funding of the low-income/ELL/special education unit expands beyond Red Clay Consolidated and Christina School Districts' schools to include Brandywine School District, Colonial School District, and all charter schools in the City of Wilmington and continues for all Red Clay Consolidated School and Christina School Districts' schools. Recurrent funding should expand to all schools statewide as rapidly as possible.
2. Capital funding for a new Wilmington high school or repurposed school configuration, to be determined during planning phase in fiscal year 2017.
3. Contingency funding for the adjustments needed in the New Castle County tax pool.

4. Impacted districts to make limited tax-rate adjustments to meet operating expenses.

Longer-term recommendations focus on strengthening the revenue base supporting public education at both the state and local levels, including property reassessment, and adjustments in the public education allocation system to fully address the needs of low-income students, English language learners, and other students at risk.

Public Engagement and State Actions on Redistricting

One of the Commission's principal priorities has been public engagement with parents, students, educators, and community members. All Commission and committee meetings have been open to the public, and members of the public have been encouraged to participate. The Commission also promoted public understanding of the Commission's work and the redistricting transition, resource, and implementation plan in the following ways:

- Created the basis for the public record for Delaware State Board of Education action that included opportunities for public comment electronically, in writing, or at six scheduled public hearings for which transcriptions were made available to the public.
- Engaged with over 2,000 participants through the Commission's Facebook page, *Solutions for Wilmington Schools*.
- Established the website www.solutionsfordelawareschools.com for the posting of all schedules and minutes of Commission and committee meetings in addition to all written materials and resources used by the Commission.
- Hosted town halls for parents and community members in each school district.
- Made presentations at the scheduled meetings of the boards of education of the four northern New Castle County districts assigned a portion of Wilmington students.
- Participated in presentations to numerous community organizations and groups, ranging from the Delaware State Education Association Executive Committee and Presidents to the Latino Summit sponsored by the Delaware Hispanic Commission.

Commission and State Board of Education Actions: December 2015 – March 2016

The Commission approved the redistricting transition, resource, and implementation plan on December 15, 2015, and presented the final version to the State Board of Education on December 17, 2015. The plan includes multiple recommendations, including but not limited to: the alteration of school district boundaries such that the City of Wilmington students currently served by the Christina School District are reassigned to the Red Clay Consolidated School District and the Colonial and Brandywine School Districts borders remain unaltered. The four school board presidents voted to affirm their commitment to these actions as members of the Commission. As seen in the redistricting transition, resource, and implementation plan, the school boards of both Red Clay and Christina voted to approve their respective frameworks for transition and planning. The proposed plan will consolidate more than

50% of Wilmington's students in a single school district, thereby enhancing both accountability and alignment of instructional programs. The Redistricting Committee's work and the affiliated proposal is part of a multi-step action agenda for improved student outcomes.

Prior to submitting the plan, representatives from the Commission met with the State Board of Education in September and October 2015, and attended a workshop held by the State Board on the Commission's plan in November. The Commission submitted a draft of the plan on November 17, 2015, which formed the basis for public comment and allowed any member of the public to provide feedback on the plan.

After submitting the plan in December, Commission representatives participated in the December, January, and February State Board meetings to answer questions on the plan. In addition, the Commission answered over fifty questions provided by the State Board of Education from December to February.

The State Board of Education took action on January 21, 2016, voting to return the plan to the Commission with its reasons for doing so. The Commission responded to these reasons with the submission of the *Addendum* to the Plan on February 11, 2016, that addressed some of the concerns of the State Board of Education.

On February 18, 2016, the State Board of Education took action on whether to approve the Commission's submitted transition, resource, and implementation plan on redistricting. The Board voted 3–4 on a motion to approve the plan as presented. The Board then voted 4–3 on a second motion to approve the plan with conditions, as stated in their letter dated February 23, 2016. On March 14, 2016, the Commission approved alternative language, recommended by Governor Jack Markell, for inclusion under item two of the Redistricting Resolution included in the Commission's redistricting transition, resource, and implementation plan. The Commission also approved a resolution stipulating the process for suspending and cancelling implementation of redistricting should the necessary and sufficient funding not be provided.

On March 17, 2016, the State Board of Education approved the Commission's plan, *Redistricting in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource and Implementation Plan* by a vote of 4–3.

General Assembly Actions

On May 5, 2016, House Joint Resolution 12 (HJR 12) was introduced in the Delaware House of Representatives. The prime sponsor was Representative Charles Potter, Jr., additional sponsors were Representative Sean Lynn and Senator Margaret Rose Henry, and co-sponsors Representatives Paul Baumbach, David Bentz, Stephanie Bolden, Gerald Brady, Earl Jaques, James Johnson, Helene Keeley, John Mitchell, Michael Mulrooney, Edward Osienski, W. Charles Paradee, John Viola, and Senators Robert Marshall, Harris McDowell, Nicole Poore, and Bryan Townsend. This legislation would confirm the State Board of Education's approval of redistricting, as laid out in the Commission's Plan. This legislation did not approve any of the other recommendations, including the funding measures, as laid

out in the plan; it only approved the change in district boundaries. On June 14, 2016, House Bill 424 (HB 424) was introduced in the House of Representatives, the Primary Sponsor was Representative Lynn, additional sponsors were Representatives Bolden, Keeley, Potter, Jr., and Senator Henry, and co-sponsor Representative Peter Schwartzkopf. This bill clarified that a vote to approve HJR 12 would authorize the State Board to proceed with redistricting but did not approve any revenue or spending measure proposed or recommended in the Commission's plan. House Amendment 1 to HJR 12 was also introduced to provide further clarification.

Both HJR 12 and HB 424 were released from the House Education Committee, HJR 12 on May 18, 2016, and HB 424 on June 21, 2016. Both bills were passed by the House of Representatives on June 22, 2016, HJR 12 by a vote of 23 Yes, 16 No, and 2 Absent, and HB 424 by a vote of 24 Yes, 15 No, and 2 Absent. House Amendment 1 to HJR 12 passed the House of Representatives by a voice vote. Both bills were assigned to the Senate Executive Committee on June 22, 2016. However, the Senate did not pass either bill. HRJ 12 was defeated on June 30, 2016, with a vote of 6 Yes, 15 No, and 0 Absent.

The 148th General Assembly proposed and passed two other bills in relation to the work of the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission: Senate Joint Resolution 17 (SRJ 17) and Senate Bill 300 (SB 300). SJR 17 was introduced on June 29, 2016, and was primarily sponsored by Senator Patricia Blevins with additional sponsorship from Senators Henry, Marshall, Townsend, McDowell, Peterson, Hall-Long, Bushweller, Ennis, and Representative Johnson. SJR 17 affirmed the decision of the Delaware State Board of Education to approve the plan of the Commission and authorized the continued work of the Commission. This bill also recognized that the redistricting transition, resource, and implementation plan would require the necessary and sufficient funding to achieve its goals and to be implemented. The resolution passed the General Assembly on the morning July 1, 2016. SJR 17 passed in the House of Representatives with 21 Yes, 18 No, and 2 Absent and passed in the Senate with 12 Yes, 9 No, and 0 Absent.

SB 300 was proposed on June 29, 2016, and was primarily sponsored by Senator Blevins with additional sponsorship from Senators Henry, Townsend, Peterson, Marshall, McDowell, Hall-Long, Poore, Bushweller, Ennis, and Representative Johnson. The House created and passed House Amendment 1 (HA 1) on July 1, 2016. SB 300 with HA 1 clarified that a vote by the General Assembly confirmed support for the State Board's approval of redistricting, but required the Commission to return to the legislature for final approval. It also clarified that the action by the General Assembly did not constitute approval of any particular revenue or spending measure proposed in the Commission's transition, resource, and implementation plan. This bill provided a \$200,000 supplemental appropriation to establish the Wilmington Redistricting Transition Fund, which can be used by the Commission to assess the fiscal impact of transitioning City of Wilmington students from the Christina School District to the Red Clay Consolidated School District. In response to this bill, the Commission created the Fiscal Impact Ad Hoc Committee that will work to assess the total fiscal impact of transitioning City of Wilmington students from the Christina School District to the Red Clay Consolidated School District and will produce a fiscal impact analysis to be reviewed by the Commission and then submitted to the General Assembly. SB 300 passed on July 1, 2016, in the House with 21 Yes, 18 No, and 2 Absent and in the Senate with 12 Yes, 9 No, and 0 Absent.

Commission Action: July 2016

On July 26, 2016, the Commission held a meeting at the Community Education Building. At the request of Chair Tony Allen, the Commission voted 16 Yes, 0 No, and 6 Absent to suspend the timetable for implementation of the plan for redistricting of the school districts located in New Castle County as set forth in the *Redistricting in City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan*. The suspension of the plan timetable responded to the request for further analysis of the fiscal impact of redistricting.

Part VI: Commission Operations and Objectives

Commission Operations

The Commission met ten times for official meetings from August 2015 to April 2016.⁹ The agendas and minutes for each of these meetings can be found in the resources section of the Commission's website, www.solutionsfordelawareschools.com. At each of the Commission's meetings, the committee co-chairs provide an update of committees' work, receiving feedback on on-going projects and gathering ideas to bring back to their respective committees. The Commission also has the responsibility of reviewing any recommendations reported from the committees for action.

In addition to the official public meetings of the Commission, the five committees held approximately 36 meetings that were open to the public. Agendas and minutes for each of these meetings can also be found on the committee pages of the Commission's website. Additionally, several of the committees broke into working groups that met between committee meetings. The first half of the year, the primary focus was on the Redistricting and Funding Student Success Committees, which, at times, met weekly, or biweekly, due to the time constraints to develop their recommendations.

Commission Objectives

While the Commission's official business for this year primarily revolved around the Redistricting and Funding Student Success Committees, the other three committees met and continued to work through each of their mandates. Their work was and continues to be crucial as it adds to the actions needed for the wholesome improvement of the education system in Wilmington and statewide. Their progress, and expectations for their work, can be found in the following sections.

Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty

The committee, with 25 members, representing different stakeholders of the education community in the City of Wilmington as well as the state, has worked to define goals and priorities based on its

⁹ August 25, 2015; September 15, 2015; October 20, 2015; November 17, 2015; December 9, 2015; December 15, 2015; February 2, 2016; February 24, 2016; March 14, 2016; April 26, 2016

charge. The members are focused on long-term efforts and actions that could be taken to impact needs in the short-term. The committee created three working groups to tackle each aspect of their charge: In-School Supports, Out-of-School Supports and Services, and Early Childhood. These groups will take the actions needed to accomplish the goals of the committee’s overall work plan.

Early on, the committee laid the foundation for the work to begin to address their goals. They wanted to build on what was already taking place in Wilmington schools and the community. They wanted to learn about best practices in other states and communities. They realized that professional development of the school and community providers was important to fostering evidence-based practice and cultural competency in helping children and families who are impacted by poverty and daily trauma in their lives. They wanted to engage families in an authentic way in the process.

The first step in the work of the committee was to assess the needs, gaps, and opportunities for services and supports in early childhood, in-school, and out-of-school settings needed to improve educational outcomes for Wilmington students. They have accomplished the following:

1. Hosted a meeting with senior district representatives to learn about the services and supports that the districts are providing to support student needs and the gaps they believe exist.
2. Conducted surveys with parents, students, and community members to collect data on the needs from their perspective and the opportunities for improvement.
3. Interviewed principals of the Wilmington traditional public schools to get their perspective on the needs, gaps, and the improvements they would make if they could “wave their magic wand.”
4. Brainstormed opportunities that the committee members would implement to make a positive difference in increasing the supports for Wilmington students.

Next the Committee analyzed the data collected and identified the common themes in the needs and gaps that should be addressed:

1. Better integration of services and linkages between schools and community, including improving the transitions for children between childcare and kindergarten and promoting early literacy.
2. More social work and behavioral health services and resources, including providing more services on-site in schools and increasing developmental screening for young children.
3. More emphasis on cultural competency, trauma-informed practice, and the impact of poverty, including providing more training for school staff and community providers on the best practices.
4. More family engagement, including encouraging families to register their children early and ensure that they attend school and arrive on time.

The next step in this process is that the committee will develop a more specific work plan with the groups responsible and timeline for completion during 2016–17.

While the committee has been working on its more specific work plan, it has been carrying out activities for short-term “wins.”

1. Partnered with the United Way of Delaware on the implementation and celebration of the first year of the “My Very Own Library” early literacy initiative.
2. Partnered with the City of Wilmington on the first Sixth Grade-Middle School Youth Transition Academy to help youth to move successfully to middle school in the fall of 2016.
3. Partnered with the Delaware Department of Education on a study of the best practices in community schools as a strategy for improving the integration of State and community services in school settings.
4. Partnered with the United Way of Delaware in engaging youth enrolled in the City’s School Youth Employment Program on developing their assets for positive development.
5. Explored how Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Title 1 funds could be used to promote more family engagement.
6. Completed research on best practices for integration of services for children and their families at the policy, systems, and governance levels.

The In-School-Supports subgroup has identified initial resources to address two primary goals. One is identification of what is working in schools and what resources are missing, as identified primarily by teachers and school leaders. The full committee hosted a representative from the four traditional school districts serving the City of Wilmington regarding what services are provided, but they are hoping to get a more comprehensive assessment of what is working and what is missing from school leaders and teachers. This analysis is beginning with a look at the 2013 results of the “Tell Delaware” survey in an effort to develop a survey that will take a comprehensive look at the resources available during the school day. This survey, like the “Tell Delaware” survey will look at all school types, including charter schools and vo-tech schools. The second goal of this subgroup is improving educator cultural competency. The subgroup’s first step is to look at the training and best practices that currently exist, including the Montgomery County, Md., Equity Initiatives Unit, which provides comprehensive educator cultural competency training and resources.

The Out-of-School Supports subgroup is working to identify the supports and services available to students and their families beyond the school day. They are looking at assets (what is currently happening and working well) and opportunities (what people want to see but currently do not have access to). They will also look at best practice models for the coordination of services for students and their families. Their first step is to survey parents on an ongoing basis at events throughout the summer to understand what they see as working well and what they would like to see going forward. These data will be analyzed to determine next steps for improving the system.

The Early Childhood subgroup is looking at gaps in the service of early childhood education, as well as ways to strengthen the connection between early childhood and K–12 education. The subgroup’s first step is to look at community groups to identify what techniques and resources are already available to determine recommendations. The subgroup will seek presentations of information from various groups, beginning with Project Launch, to gather information about the services provided and the efforts already underway.

In addition to the work of these subgroups, the committee is carrying out a research agenda with teams at the University of Delaware (UD) and the United Way of Delaware, coordinated by staff at the Institute for Public Administration. This work has three parts: asset mapping, policy and fiscal inventory, analysis of best practices for the coordination of services.

The goals of the asset mapping are twofold: (1) identify the community resources targeted to students in poverty and their families that exist in and out of schools, and (2) determine the funding sources for these resources. The initial phase of this research will be to look at resources that already collect this data or initiatives already underway and fill in the gaps in this research. The second step will be to identify the gaps in the resources available to these students and their families and inefficiencies in the system in order to develop recommendations for strengthening the system. Alongside this work, the United Way of Delaware of Delaware will be looking at best practices from their national partners for coordinating community supports.

KIDS COUNT in Delaware and the UD Center for Community Research & Service will be conducting an inventory and fiscal map of policies in service of low-income students and families in the City of Wilmington. They will review the 2009 recommendations from the Child Poverty Task Force and then begin a more detailed policy inventory. This inventory will be complete near the end of 2016 and will be analyzed for the development of a report with recommendations for the committee.

Expectations for 2016–17

- Implementation of initial steps to improve transitioning of students from childcare to kindergarten.
- Expansion of early literacy efforts with the My Very Own Library Project.
- Increased engagement of families in developmental screening of their young children and in campaigns to increase school attendance and reduce tardiness.
- Support for professional development for school and community providers with increased emphasis on cultural competency, including working with families in poverty and those experiencing trauma.
- Recommendations on the integration of services for children and their families, especially on social work and behavioral services in the school settings.
- Recommendations on alignment of policies impacting students and their families living in high communities.

Long-Term Expectations

- Decrease the number of gaps in the services being provided to children.
- Develop a more efficient system.
- Improve school climate.

- Improve student outcomes.
- Increase teacher retention.
- Meet the needs of more student.

Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement

The Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee was tasked with recommending policies to strengthen parent and family engagement in public education; support schools as community assets with allies from all sectors; and promote ongoing, effective, two-way communication with parents, educators, and community residents.

The committee began by identifying holes in what is currently being done to engage parents and families, as well as identifying barriers to effective engagement. Through the development of a work-plan, they have identified particular research goals, including defining successful engagement, effective means of communication, chronic absenteeism, welcoming schools, and the best ways to effectively reach all schools, especially those outside of the city that serve City of Wilmington students. This research will be completed by September 2016 to go alongside the vision statement for the committee, which follows three primary goals: communication, supportive environments, and empowerment.

In the summer of 2016, the committee began identifying schools and districts in Delaware or elsewhere that have established effective means of engagement. The committee began planning site visits to these locations to understand what effective engagement looks like and how this can be developed into recommendations for Wilmington and the state.

Expectations for 2016–17

- Definition of successful parent engagement based in research and observation of best practices.
- Development of resources for parents and families.
- Recommendations for both statewide and district-wide changes to improve engagement.
- Recommendations for changing how engagement is developed, particularly in schools outside the city where City of Wilmington students attend.

Long-Term Expectations

- Foster school atmospheres where parents feel welcome to participate and are empowered to advocate for their children.
- Improve the effectiveness of resources for families.
- Increase community buy-in to the education system.
- Increase coordinated engagement of families.

Charter and District Collaboration

The Charter and District Collaboration Committee was tasked with promoting shared capacity and collaboration among all schools, recommending the application of national best practices for collaboration, and supporting the development of a state plan.

On March 24, 2015, House Bill 56 (HB 56) was introduced by Representative Charles Potter, Jr., which put a moratorium on all new charter schools in Delaware until June 30, 2018, or until the State Board of Education develops a strategic plan. The bill states “The aforementioned strategic plan shall be based on a systematic evaluation of educational needs using national models and best practices that align with the public education system, such as the National Association of Charter School Authorizers guidelines.” This bill was signed into law on May 5, 2015. The Governor and the State Board of Education initiated a Statewide Review of Educational Opportunities (SREO) and published a report by Public Consulting Group (PCG) in December 2015. On May 20, 2016, Dan Rich, Commission Policy Director, and Kelly Sherretz, Commission Project Manager, submitted a memo to Susan Haberstroh and David Blowman of the Delaware Department of Education indicating concerns with the way the SREO was carried out and indicating the necessary steps to develop a comprehensive needs assessment that would satisfy the mandate of HB 56.

The committee began by working together to discuss some of the barriers to collaboration, acknowledging that this collaboration must be between and among all schools, no matter the type. They also acknowledged the many task forces that came before them and were unable to solve the challenges facing schools that wish to collaborate or to incentivize collaboration among schools that see each other primarily as competitors. They received a presentation from a member of the 2013 Promoting Charter-District Collaboration Task Force. These discussions allowed the committee to identify several barriers that exist. These barriers include:

- Competition, fostered by the funding allocation system.
- Funding allocation for collaboration.
- Identified commonalities between and among schools.
- Misconceptions about demographic make-up of schools.
- Time constraints on educators and school leaders.

The committee reviewed several sets of data. They first worked through the misconceptions about the demographic make-up of schools, identifying that there are many charter schools and traditional public schools that have similar demographic compositions. They also analyzed data that showed school growth, from fall to spring, for elementary schools that have over 60% of students that qualify for free or reduced lunch. This led to a discussion with the Redistricting Committee, who agreed that community-based collaboration is more beneficial to the students they collectively serve.

The committee has also identified several other recommendations, which will be further developed in the coming year. These include setting aside some professional development funding for

collaboration, introducing a statewide professional development day, and identifying other factors that stand in the way of collaboration.

Expectations for 2016–17

- Develop a professional development model for shared collaboration for all districts and charters that serve Wilmington students.
- Use national best practices for charter and district collaboration to create a list of recommendations to be submitted to the Commission.
- Draft a policy brief for the Commission and incoming gubernatorial administration, outlining the desirability of and challenges surrounding collaboration across public schools (and school sectors).

Long-Term Expectations

- Undertake data analysis that groups educators by residential census tracts of the students they teach to create a culture of community-based collaboration.
- Develop a sustainable collaboration model for charter and district schools.
- Foster more coordination of services between charters and districts that serve Wilmington students.
- Promote policy changes that incentivize collaboration among schools and school sectors.

Part VII: Wilmington Demographics and Public Schools

Below is a profile of Wilmington students and the schools they attend. The list of schools includes all schools that were open during the 2015–16 school year and served at least 15 Wilmington students. Note, the Delaware MET closed in January 2016, and Delaware College Preparatory Academy closed prior to the 2016–17 school year.

Figure Two: Public Schools Serving Wilmington Students, Fall 2015

Schools Located within City of Wilmington Limits			
District	Elementary	Middle	High
Brandywine	Harlan Elementary School	P.S. duPont Middle School	N/A
Christina	Bancroft Elementary School Elbert-Palmer Elementary School Pulaski Elementary School Stubbs Elementary School	Bayard Middle School	N/A
Colonial	N/A	N/A	N/A
Red Clay Consolidated	Delaware College Preparatory Academy**+ Highlands Elementary School Lewis Dual Language Elementary School Shortlidge Academy Warner Elementary School	Cab Calloway School of the Arts*	Delaware Military Academy** (not located within Wilmington) Cab Calloway School of the Arts* Charter School of Wilmington**
New Castle County Vocational Technical (NCC Vo-tech)	N/A	N/A	Howard High School of Technology
State-Authorized Charter Schools (Grade Levels Vary) within City of Wilmington Limits			
EastSide Charter School Edison Charter School First State Montessori Academy Freire Charter School		Great Oaks Charter School Kuumba Academy La Academia Antonia Alonso Prestige Academy The Delaware MET+	
Additional State-Authorized Charter Schools Serving Wilmington Students			
Delaware Academy of Public Safety Delaware Design Lab High School Early College High School at Delaware State University First State Military Academy		Gateway Lab School Las Américas ASPIRA Academy MOT Charter School Odyssey Charter School	

Source: Delaware Department of Education. (2015) School Profiles.

Notes: Independent governing units are bolded. *Magnet school. ** Charter schools authorized by Red Clay Consolidated School District. + Was open for all or part of the 2015–16 school year, but closed before the 2016–17 school year.

Most recent enrollment demographic data are available from the 2014–15 school year and include schools that closed prior to the current school year. As of 2015, there were 11,595 total Wilmington Students in the public school system. **Of those students, 74% identify as African American, 18% as Hispanic, 7% as white, and 83% as low-income.**

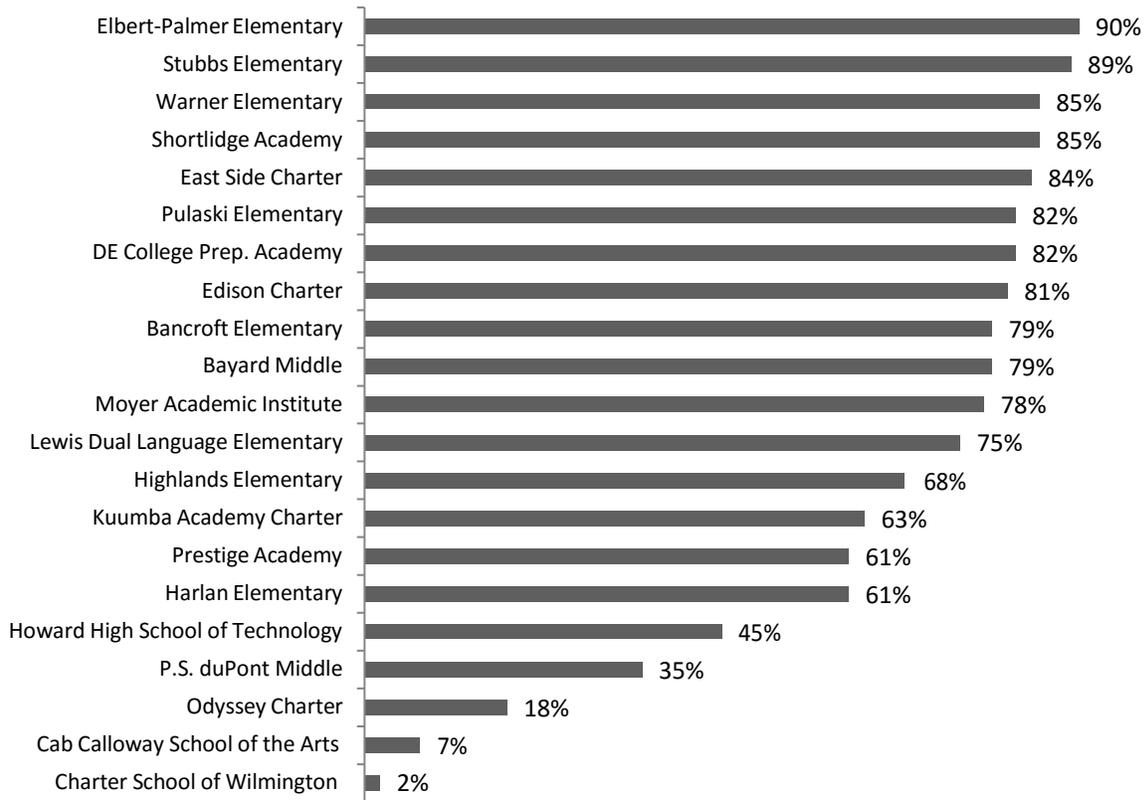
Figure Three: Wilmington Student Enrollment, 2014–15 School Year

Red Clay Consolidated School District*	3,744
Christina School District	2,481
Brandywine School District	1,989
NCC Vo-tech School District	643
Edison (Thomas A.) Charter School	516
EastSide Charter School	320
Kuumba Academy Charter School	302
Colonial School District	243
Family Foundations Academy	189
Reach Academy for Girls	169
Odyssey Charter School	158
Delaware College Preparatory Academy*	154
Prestige Academy	143
Moyer (Maurice J.) Academic Institute	143
Academia Antonia Alonso	130
Charter School of Wilmington*	64
First State Montessori Academy	59
Las Américas ASPIRA Academy	46
Delaware Academy of Public Safety and Security	39
Delaware Military Academy*	19
MOT Charter School	<15
Gateway Lab School	<15
Early College High School at Delaware State University (DSU)	<15
Silver Lake Elementary School (Appoquinimink School District)	<15
Middletown High School (Appoquinimink School District)	<15
Loss (Olive B.) Elementary School (Appoquinimink School District)	<15
(W. Reily) Brown Elementary School (Caesar Rodney School District)	<15
Dover High School (Capital School District)	<15

Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2014–15 School Year

Note: *Red Clay-authorized charter schools are listed separately.

Figure Four: Percentage of Low-Income Enrollment in Wilmington Schools in 2014



Source: Delaware Department of Education. (2014) School Profiles.

Part VIII: Wilmington Student Success Measures and Data Analysis

Important factors to improve educational outcomes for students include strengthening the leadership roles of districts and the capacity and performance of schools in ways that deliver improved teaching and learning. Other factors include community, home, and family supports that reinforce what takes place in the classroom. Congruently, consolidation of effective governance and collaboration among school entities both help to ensure quality education for all students. The work of all five committees of the Commission demonstrates the multi-dimensional issues that face the education system within the City of Wilmington. The work also emulates the comprehensive and collaborative approach necessary to achieve a shared vision and a strengthened commitment to all students within the system.

The overarching goal of the Commission is to improve student outcomes within the City of Wilmington and statewide. These outcomes are measured in both the short and long term as listed below.

Short-Term Outcomes

- Decrease disciplinary incident rates across schools.
- Grow participation in high-quality early childhood education programs.
- Increase the number and participation rate of high-quality in- and out-of-school programs that support developmental learning.
- Increased attendance, persistence, and engagement rates of students.
- Reduced student trauma in schools serving Wilmington students.

Long-Term Outcomes

- Increase access to opportunities now that result in productive lives presently and in the future.
- Improve college and workforce readiness.
- Increase graduation rates for schools that serve Wilmington students.
- Reduce youth incarceration and recidivism rates.
- Reduce achievement gaps in standardized test scores.

The following section seeks to provide a snapshot of the state of education in Delaware, particularly as it pertains to children in the City of Wilmington. The following figures are not meant as an indictment of the city's students, nor the districts that serve them. Rather, this snapshot provides a lens through which to view the goal of the Commission and the school districts and community stakeholders represented and affected by their work.

Student Proficiency

The most widely used measure of academic, teaching, and learning success is student performance on state standardized tests. The State of Delaware changed its standardized testing protocol in 2015 from the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) for all subjects to the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) for English Language Arts and Mathematics tests.

In the following analysis, proficiency categorization is determined by performance levels (1 being considered “Well Below Expectations,” 2 being “Below Expectations,” 3 being “Meets Expectations,” and 4 being “Advanced”) received by students as a result of their performance on state tests. The percentages reflect the proportion of students receiving a given performance level designation relative to the larger test-taking population.

The following subsections seek to provide comparative analysis of student performance data between students living in the City of Wilmington and those not living in Wilmington. This analysis separates student performance on assessments based on content area, highlighting the four major content areas measured by Delaware’s state standardized tests.

For the purposes of this report, the analysis below defines “Wilmington students” as K–12 students residing within the limits of the City of Wilmington, attending traditional, vo-tech, and charter schools across the state.

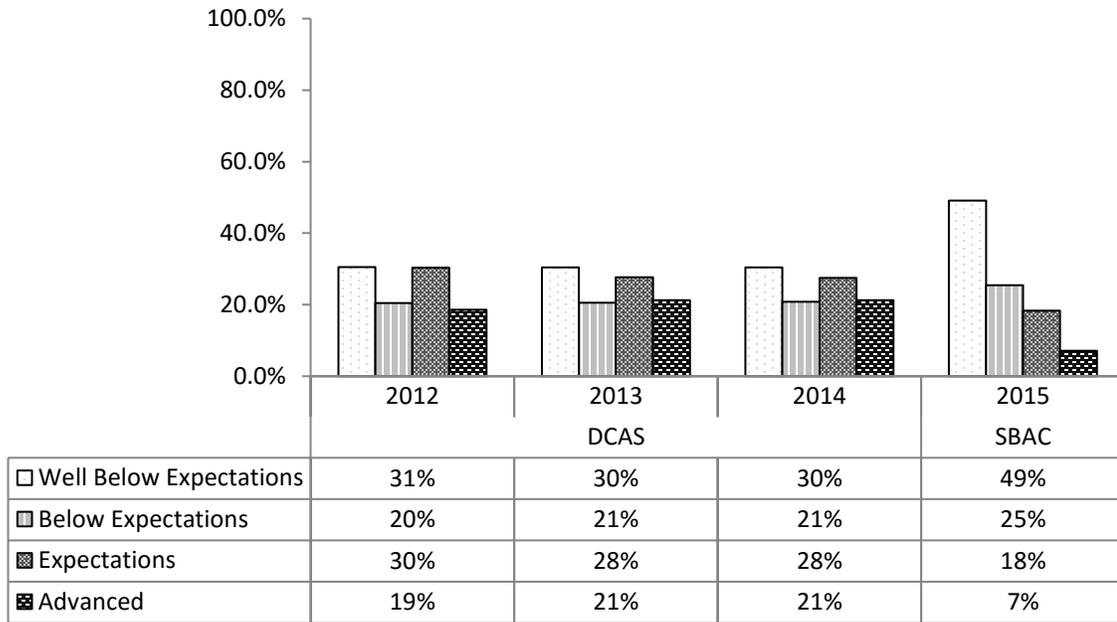
Additionally, “non-Wilmington students” is defined as K–12 students not residing within the limits of the City of Wilmington but attending traditional, vo-tech, and charter schools across the state.

All data are from the Delaware Department of Education Data Set received in 2015.

Student Proficiency in English Language Arts

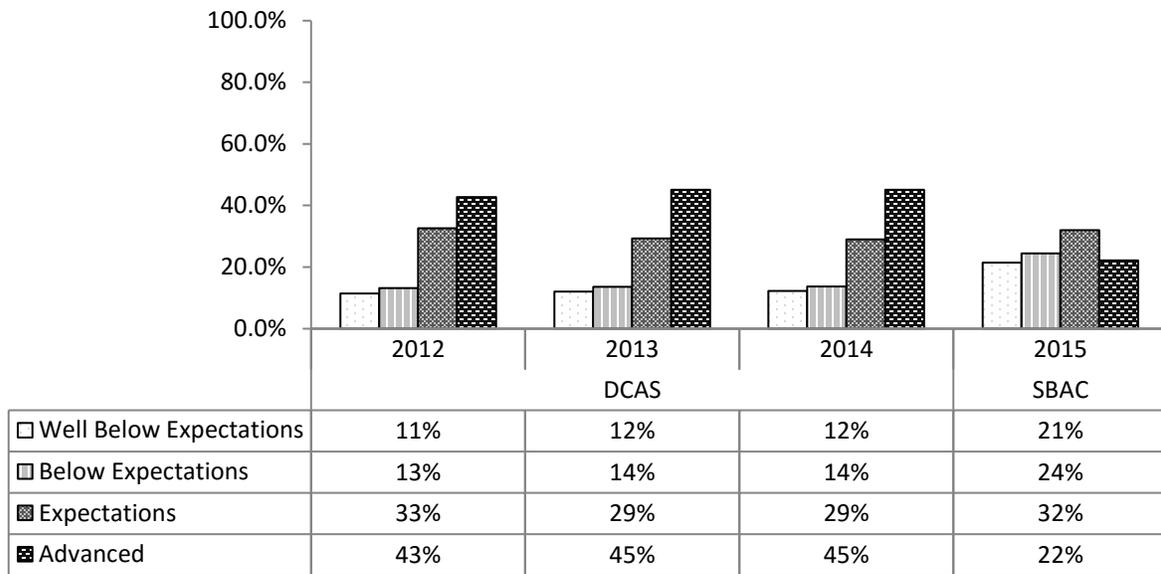
In this section, figures five, six, and seven examine student proficiency in English Language Arts for Wilmington students, non-Wilmington students, a comparison of both Wilmington and non-Wilmington students.

Figure Five: Student Proficiency in English Language Arts, Wilmington Students, 2012–15 (Grade Level Aggregated)



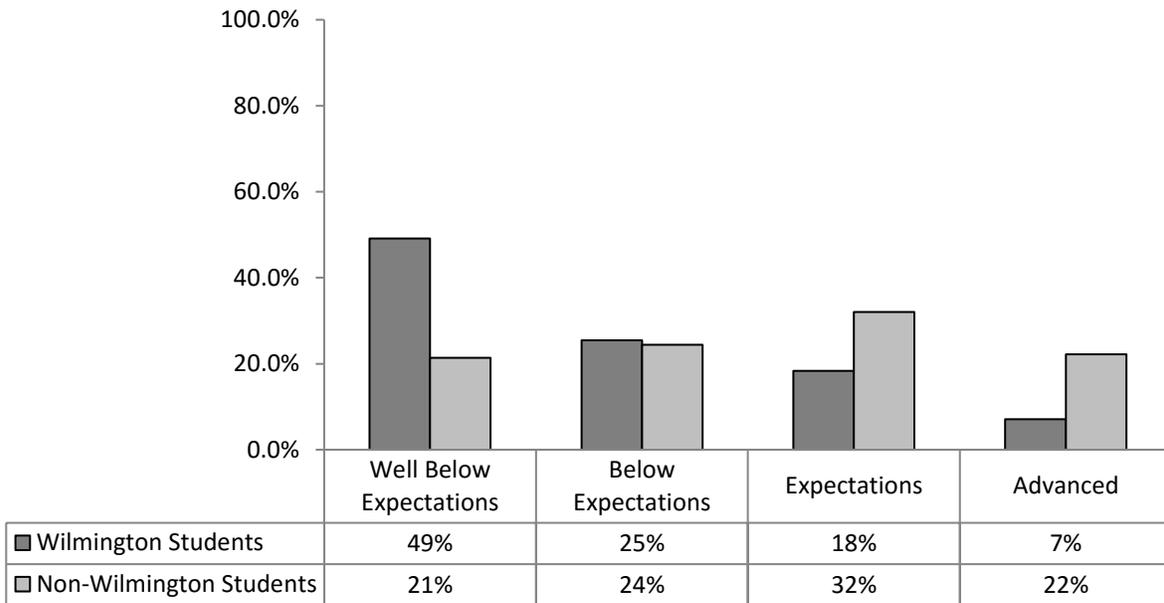
Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

Figure Six: Student Proficiency in English Language Arts, Non-Wilmington Students, 2012–15 (Grade Level Aggregated)



Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

Figure Seven: Student Proficiency in English Language Arts, Wilmington and Non-Wilmington Students, SBAC 2015 (Grade Level Aggregated)



Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

From 2012 to 2014, Wilmington students were consistent in their performance on state English Language Arts (ELA) tests, with just under half of the students being categorized as meets expectations or advanced. When compared to their non-Wilmington counterparts, Wilmington students fall noticeably short in DCAS performance. In 2012, a majority of non-Wilmington students (76%) were categorized as meets expectations or advanced in ELA. The same was true in 2013 (74%) and in 2014 (74%) of non-Wilmington students who were classified as meets expectations or advanced.

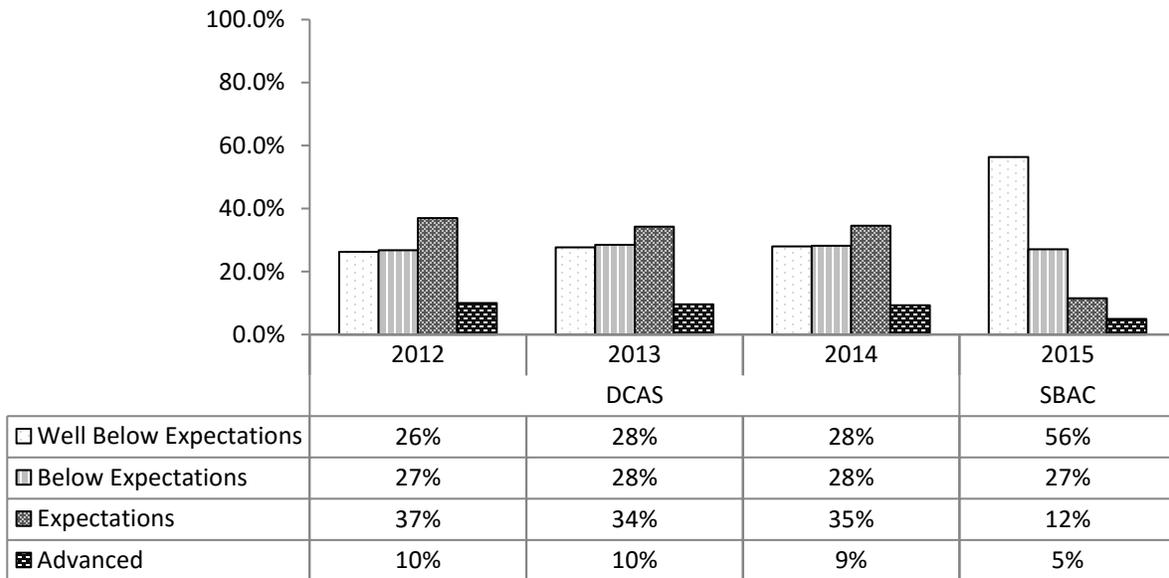
As noted in the introduction to this section, 2015 marked the beginning of Delaware’s participation in the Smarter Balanced Assessment program. In 2015, only 25% of Wilmington students performed at expectations or advanced. In contrast, 54% of non-Wilmington students performed at expectations or advanced.

When compared to their non-Wilmington peers, there is a noticeable difference in distribution as it pertains to student performance. While non-Wilmington results seem to become more representative of a typical bell curve in their distribution and representation among performance designations/groups, Wilmington students’ outputs have become more skewed since the introduction of the Smarter Balanced Assessment in 2015, and more Wilmington students seem to be represented among those failing to meet state standards.

Student Proficiency in Mathematics

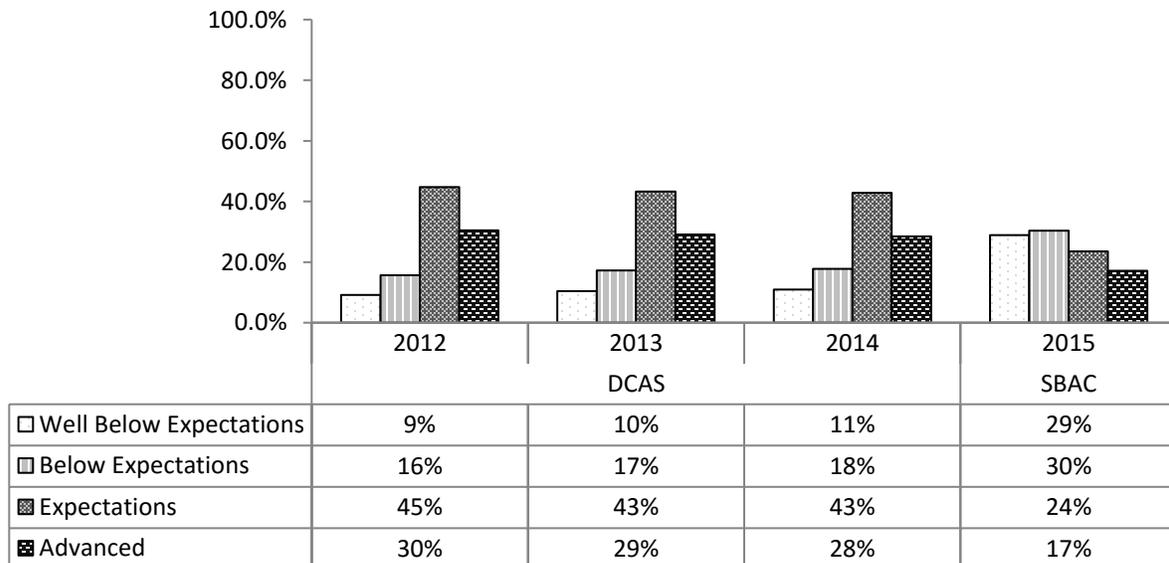
In this section, figures eight, nine, and ten examine student proficiency in Math for Wilmington students, non-Wilmington students, and a comparison of Wilmington and non-Wilmington students.

Figure Eight: Student Proficiency in Mathematics, Wilmington Students, 2012–15 (Grade Level Aggregated)



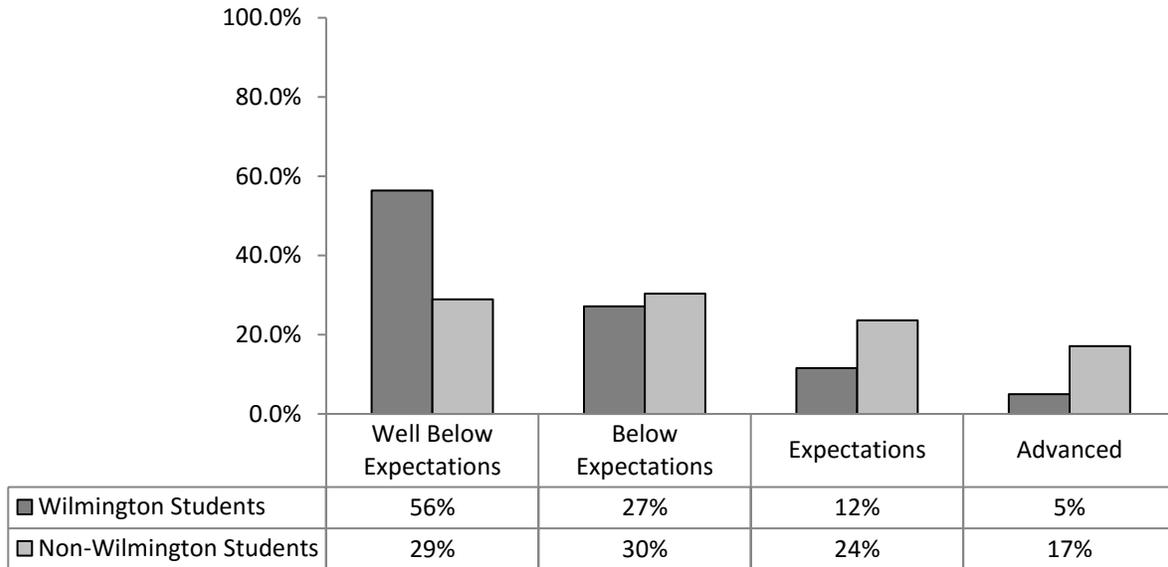
Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

Figure Nine: Student Proficiency in Mathematics, Non-Wilmington Students, 2012–15 (Grade Level Aggregated)



Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

Figure Ten: Student Proficiency in Mathematics, Wilmington and Non-Wilmington Students, SBAC 2015 (Grade Level Aggregated)



Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

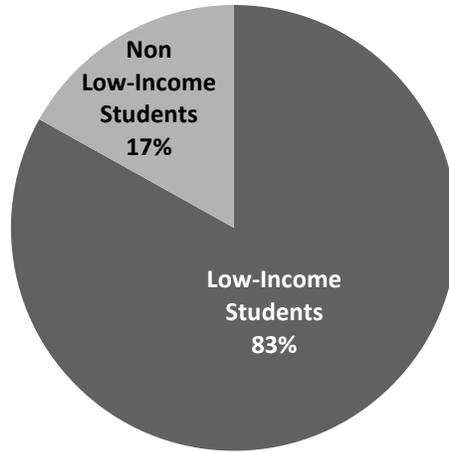
From 2012 to 2014, a majority of Wilmington students failed to meet state standards, with slightly less than half of the students performing at expectations or advanced on the math assessment each year. When compared to their non-Wilmington counterparts, Wilmington students again fall short on their DCAS performance. In 2012, a majority of non-Wilmington students (75%) were categorized as meets expectations or advanced in math. The same is true in 2013 (72%) and 2014 (72%) of non-Wilmington students who were classified as meets expectation or advanced.

Upon the introduction of the Smarter Balanced Assessment in 2015, 17% of Wilmington students performed at expectations or advanced compared to 41% of non-Wilmington students. This is a noticeable disparity in the proportion of students testing below standards with the proportion of Wilmington students failing to meet state standards in 2015 being 24 percentage points greater than that of non-Wilmington students.

Low-Income Students in Wilmington

This subsection examines student performance on state standardized assessments among the City of Wilmington’s low-income student population. Figure eleven shows the low-income student population in Wilmington as of 2015, and figures twelve and thirteen examine proficiency for low-income students in ELA and Math respectively.

Figure Eleven: Low-Income Student Population in Wilmington as of 2015



Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

Based upon the 2015 enrollment data, the student population from the City of Wilmington, approximately 83% of students are from low-income families.

Figure Twelve: Inter-District Student Proficiency Comparison, 2015 SBAC, ELA, Total, Low-Income, and Wilmington Low-Income Student Populations

District	Grade Level	Total Population		Low-Income Population		Difference	Low-Income City of Wilmington		Difference
		Students	Proficiency	Students	Proficiency		Students	Proficiency	
Brandywine	K-12	5,505	54%	2,311	36%	-18%	694	26%	-29%
Red Clay	K-12	8,375	48%	4,151	30%	-18%	1,413	18%	-30%
Christina	K-12	7,569	36%	4,531	28%	-8%	934	12%	-24%
Colonial	K-12	5,179	48%	3,088	41%	-7%	112	26%	-22%
NCC Vo-tech									
NCC Vo-tech	9-12	1,015	52%	425	49%	-2%	97	48%	-3%

Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

Note: Difference in both cases is calculated against the district or school-wide percent proficient.

Figure Thirteen: Inter-District Student Proficiency Comparison, 2015 SBAC, Mathematics, Total, Low-Income, and Wilmington Low-Income Student Populations

District	Grade Level	Total Population		Low-Income Population		Difference	Low-Income City of Wilmington		Difference
		Students	Proficiency	Students	Proficiency		Students	Proficiency	
Brandywine	K-12	5,497	42%	2,297	24%	-18%	682	13%	-29%
Red Clay	K-12	8,591	37%	4,288	19%	-18%	1,454	11%	-26%
Christina	K-12	7,678	29%	4,588	22%	-7%	956	9%	-20%
Colonial	K-12	5,167	30%	3,082	26%	-5%	112	17%	-13%
NCC Vo-tech									
NCC Vo-tech	9-12	998	15%	414	14%	-2%	96	8%	-7%

Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

Note: Difference in both cases is calculated against the district or school-wide percent proficient.

Figure Fourteen: 2015 ELA SBAC Proficiency, School-Wide Compared with Low-Income and Wilmington Low-Income Student Performance

District	Grade Level	School-Wide		Low-Income		Diff.	Low-Income City of Wilmington		Diff.
		Students	Proficiency	Students	Proficiency		Students	Proficiency	
Charter School of Wilmington	9–12	244	98%	18	94%	-3%	*	*	*
Delaware Academy of Public Safety and Security	9–12	126	54%	17	35%	-19%	*	*	*
Delaware Military Academy	9–12	68	21%	21	24%	3%	*	*	*
Prestige Academy	5–8	216	18%	216	18%	0%	127	15%	-3%
Gateway Lab School	3–8	188	15%	85	11%	-5%	*	*	*
EastSide Charter School	K–8	246	20%	214	20%	0%	162	17%	-3%
Edison Charter School	K–8	460	34%	389	31%	-3%	268	29%	-5%
Family Foundations	K–8	441	37%	258	33%	-4%	79	30%	-6%
Las Américas ASPIRA Academy	K–8	300	51%	114	35%	-16%	20	25%	-26%
Kuumba Academy Charter School	K–7	222	45%	151	40%	-4%	101	40%	-5%
Odyssey	K–7	525	78%	168	61%	-16%	40	50%	-28%
Delaware College Prep	K–5	52	6%	38	3%	-3%	30	0%	-6%

Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

*Fewer than 15 students

Note: Difference in both cases is calculated against the district or school-wide percent proficient.

Figure Fifteen: 2015 Mathematics SBAC Proficiency: School-Wide Compared with Low-Income and Wilmington Low-Income Student Performance

School	Grade Level	School-Wide		Low-Income		Diff.	Low-Income City of Wilmington		Diff.
		Students	Proficiency	Students	Proficiency		Students	Proficiency	
Charter School of Wilmington	9–12	244	96%	18	94%	-2%	*	*	*
Delaware Academy of Public Safety and Security	9–12	127	28%	17	0%	-28%	*	*	*
Delaware Military Academy	9–12	68	7%	21	0%	-7%	*	*	*
Prestige Academy	5–8	216	13%	216	13%	0%	124	11%	-2%
Gateway Lab School	3–8	189	5%	85	2%	-2%	*	*	*
EastSide Charter School	K–8	248	23%	216	22%	-1%	164	18%	-5%
Edison Charter School	K–8	454	21%	385	19%	-1%	264	20%	-1%
Family Foundations	K–8	440	29%	257	23%	-6%	78	17%	-12%
Las Américas ASPIRA Academy	K–8	300	41%	114	28%	-13%	20	25%	-16%
Kuumba Academy Charter School	K–7	223	40%	152	38%	-2%	102	40%	0%
Odyssey	K–7	525	70%	168	56%	-14%	40	38%	-32%
Delaware College Prep	K–5	53	8%	39	8%	0%	31	6%	-1%

Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

*Fewer than 15 students

Note: Difference in both cases is calculated against the district or school-wide percent proficient.

City of Wilmington children, most of them poor, black or Latino, still have educational outcomes far below those of students across the county and across the state. Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) results from 2012–14 confirm that the majority of low-income students living in the City of Wilmington are not proficient in ELA. For all districts and for all but two charters, the performance of low-income students is below the performance of students for the district or charter as a whole. Moreover, in all districts and most charters, the performance for low-income students living in the City of Wilmington is significantly worse than the performance of low-income students across the district or charters.

When comparing performance of low-income students on the SBAC exam in ELA, the proportion of students from low-income families from the City of Wilmington proficiency was markedly lower than

students district-wide in ELA. These differences were much more pronounced when considering rates of proficiency between low-income students from Wilmington and district rates, with proficiency rates among low-income Wilmington students being more than 20 points lower than those of the district's total population.

Similar disparities were found in comparisons of performance of low-income students to district populations on mathematics. The rates of proficiency among students of low-income families and communities attending public schools in all of the school districts serving the City of Wilmington were considerably lower than rates district-wide. While the differences in proficiency rates were not as pronounced when compared to ELA results, rates of math proficiency between low-income students from Wilmington and district rates were relatively low, with proficiency rates among low-income Wilmington students being at least 13 points lower than those of the district's total population.

When considering the student performance of students attending charter schools in the City of Wilmington, schools having student populations in which 45% or more of the total student population are students of low-income families had less than 30% of their students meet state standards in mathematics. When considering the performance of Wilmington students attending charter schools, it was found that schools having student populations in which 45% or more of the total student population are students of low-income families had less than 40% of their students meet state standards in ELA.

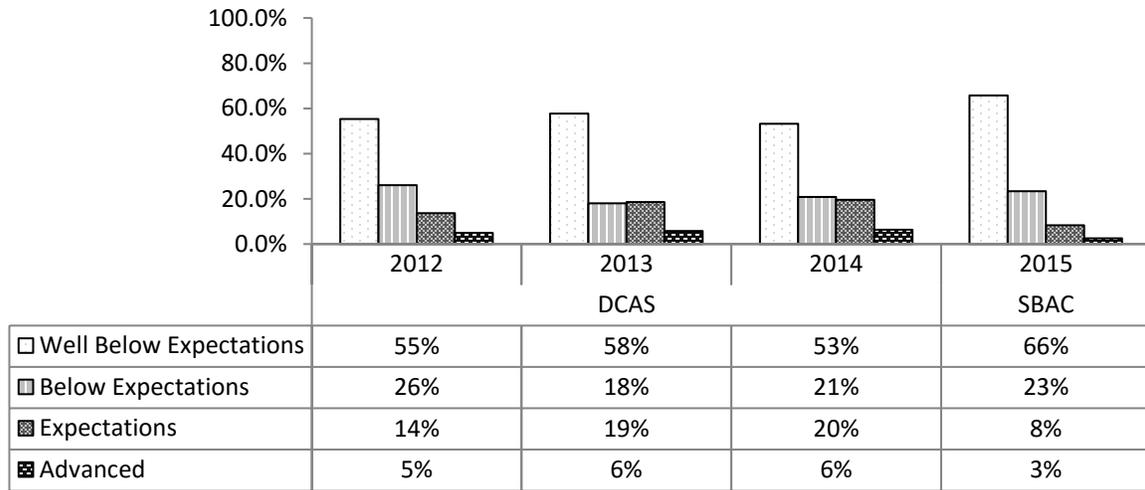
Other Subgroups Examined

The following section examines performance of English language learners and students with special needs. The trends do not change: Wilmington students are performing lower than their non-Wilmington counterparts.

English Language Learners

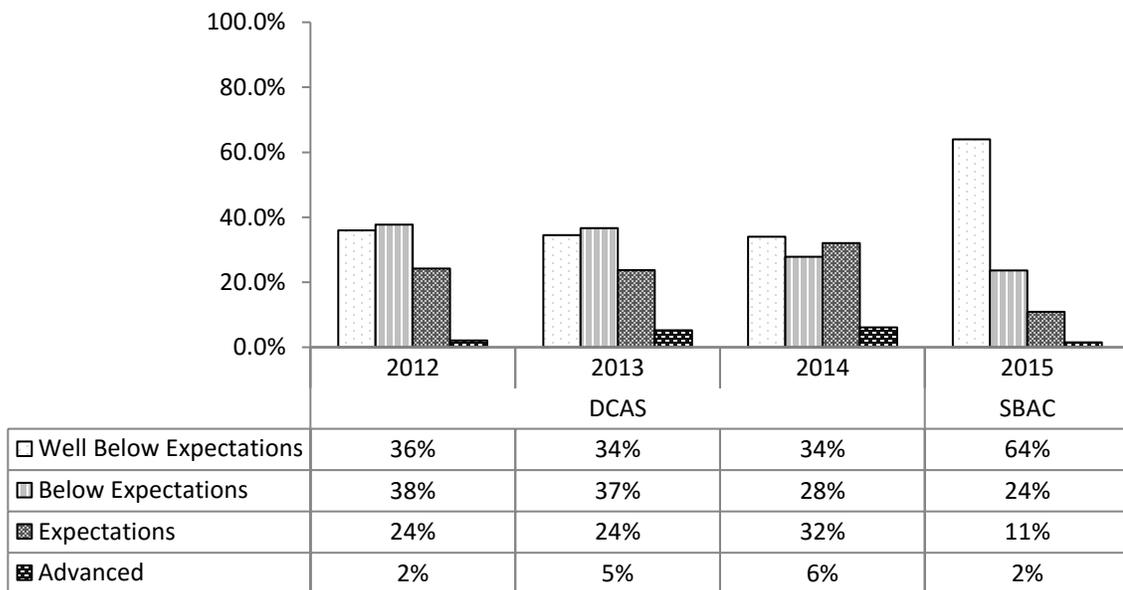
English language learners have a language other than English as their primary language. Based upon 2015 enrollment data, it was found that one out of every ten English language learning students in Delaware lives in the City of Wilmington.

Figure Sixteen: Student Proficiency in English Language Arts, Wilmington English Language Learners, 2012–15 (Grade Level Aggregated)



Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

Figure Seventeen: Student Proficiency in Mathematics, Wilmington English Language Learners, 2012–15 (Grade Level Aggregated)



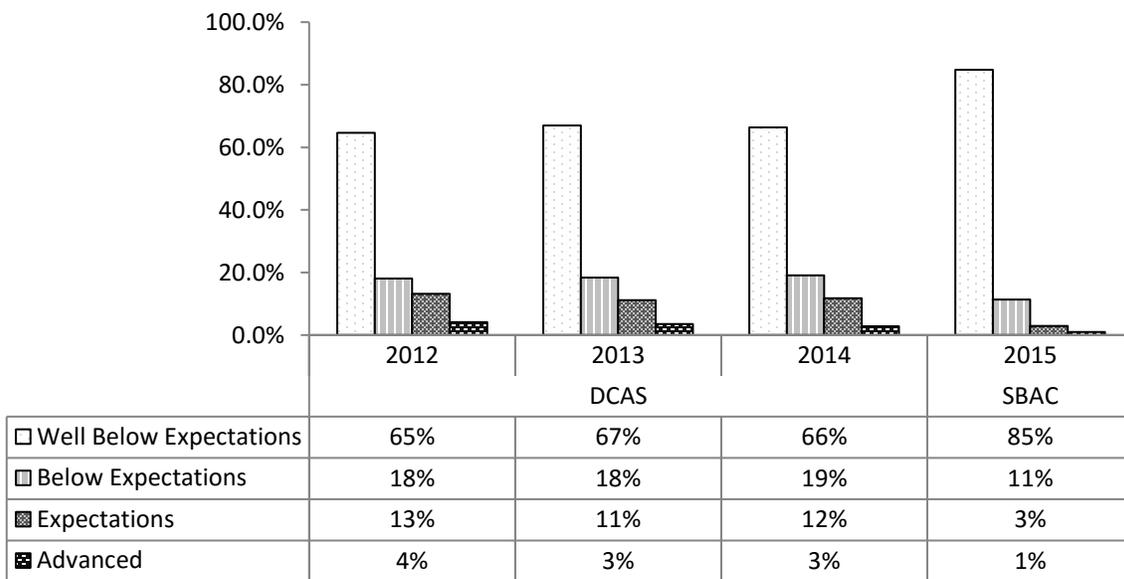
Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

Wilmington’s English language learners (ELLs), like the other demographic groups of the City of Wilmington considered in this report, had a significant majority of its population (74% or more) perform below proficiency on ELA assessments from 2012 through 2015. On the state math assessments in 2015, approximately 88% of ELLs in Wilmington performed well below or below expectations.

Students with Special Needs

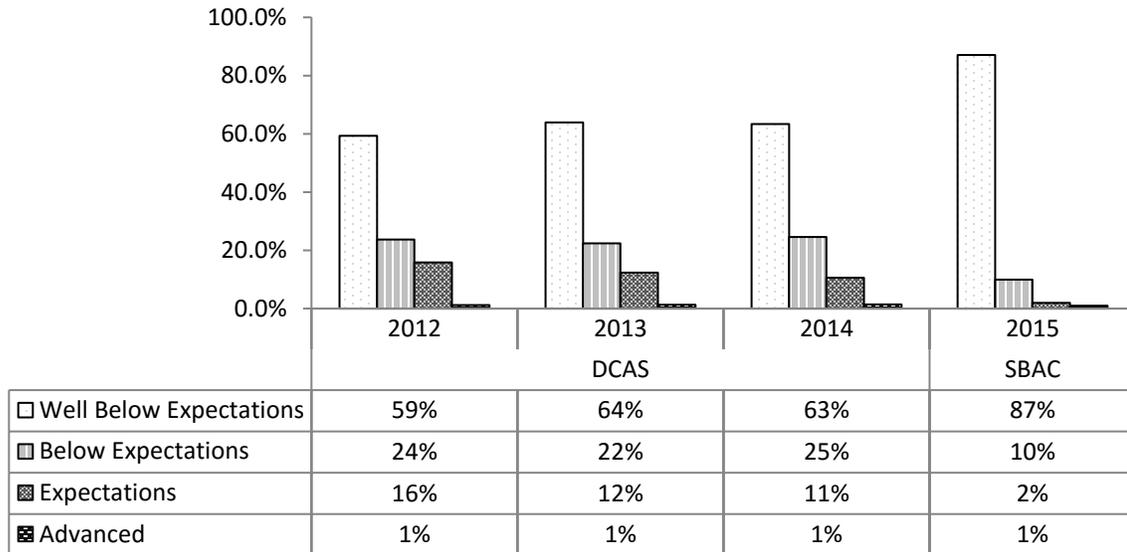
This section examines Wilmington students with special needs performance on state standardized assessment. One out of nine students with special needs in Delaware lives in the City of Wilmington.

Figure Eighteen: Student Proficiency in English Language Arts, Wilmington Students with Special Needs, 2012–15 (Grade Level Aggregated)



Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

Figure Nineteen: Student Proficiency in Mathematics, Wilmington Students with Special Needs, 2012–15 (Grade Level Aggregated)



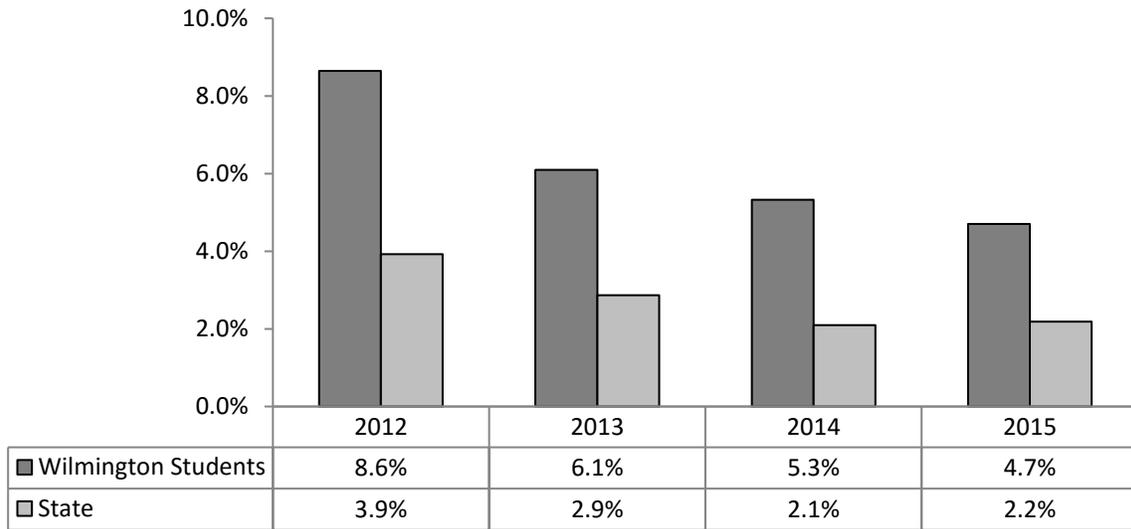
Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

When examining performance on state tests by Wilmington students with special needs between 2012 and 2014, more than 83% of Wilmington students with special needs failed to meet state standards in ELA; and nearly the entire population (96%) failed to meet state standards in 2015. There were similar trends in results on the math assessment, with more than 80% of Wilmington students with special needs testing below proficiency from 2012 through 2014. Much like the population’s performance in ELA, there was an increase in the proportion of Wilmington students with special needs performing below proficiency on state tests in mathematics in 2015.

Dropout Rates

An alternative indicator of students’ academic success is attrition. The most commonly used measure of attrition in schools is the dropout rate, which is measured by calculating the proportion of students of a given cohort that opt to discontinue their formal education. In Delaware, students can decide to drop out of school at the age of 16 with permission from their parents, or at the age of majority should parental permission not be available. In the following analysis dropout rates were calculated as the proportion of students of a given group or demographic that has opted to discontinue their formal education. The following section examines dropout rates of Wilmington students compared to state, state low-income, and non-Wilmington students.

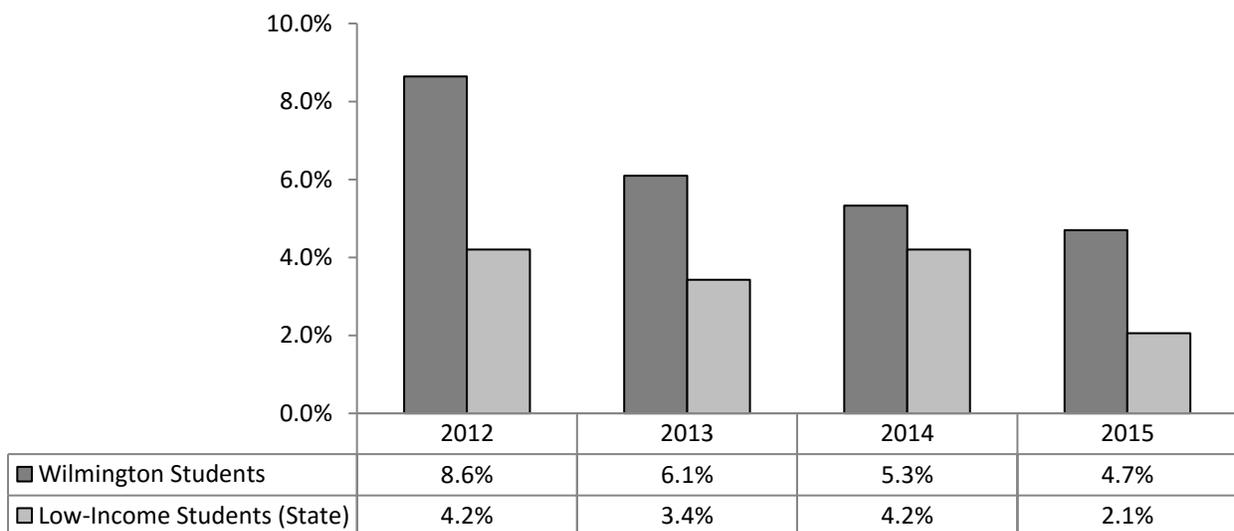
Figure Twenty: High-School Dropout Rates, Delaware Students and Wilmington Students, 2012–15 (Grade Level Aggregated)



Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

From 2012 to 2015, there has been a noticeable decline in the dropout rate, but the dropout rate for Wilmington students has been consistently higher than the state. Trends in high-school dropout rates among Wilmington high-school students were consistent with statewide trends for such rates; showing noticeable declines during that period. While state high-school dropout rates slightly increased in 2015, the City of Wilmington maintained its downward trend.

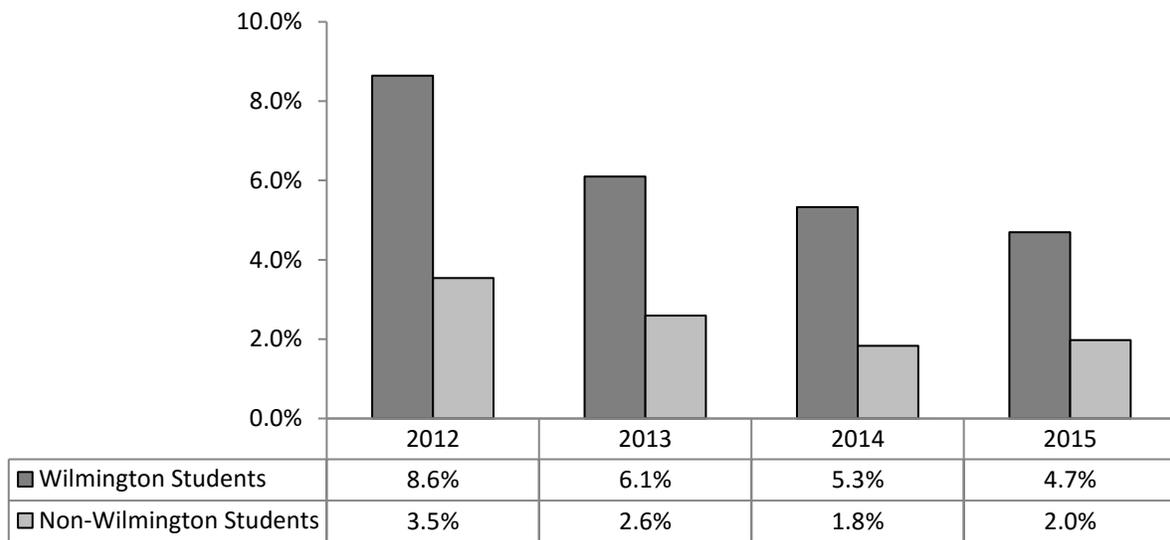
Figure Twenty-One: High-School Dropout Rates, Delaware Low-Income Students and Wilmington Students, 2012–15 (Grade Level Aggregated)



Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

When comparing the high-school dropout rates of Wilmington high-school students compared to low-income high-school students across the state of Delaware from 2012 through 2015, Wilmington student’s experienced noticeably higher dropout rates. Delaware’s low-income high-school student population left school at rates that fluctuated between 2% and 4.2% in the same years. Dropout rates among Wilmington students declined steadily during that time, falling at an average rate of approximately 1% per year. The same trend holds true when comparing Wilmington Students to their non-Wilmington peers.

Figure Twenty-Two: High-School Dropout Rates, Wilmington Students and Non-Wilmington Students, 2012-2015 (Grade Level Aggregated)

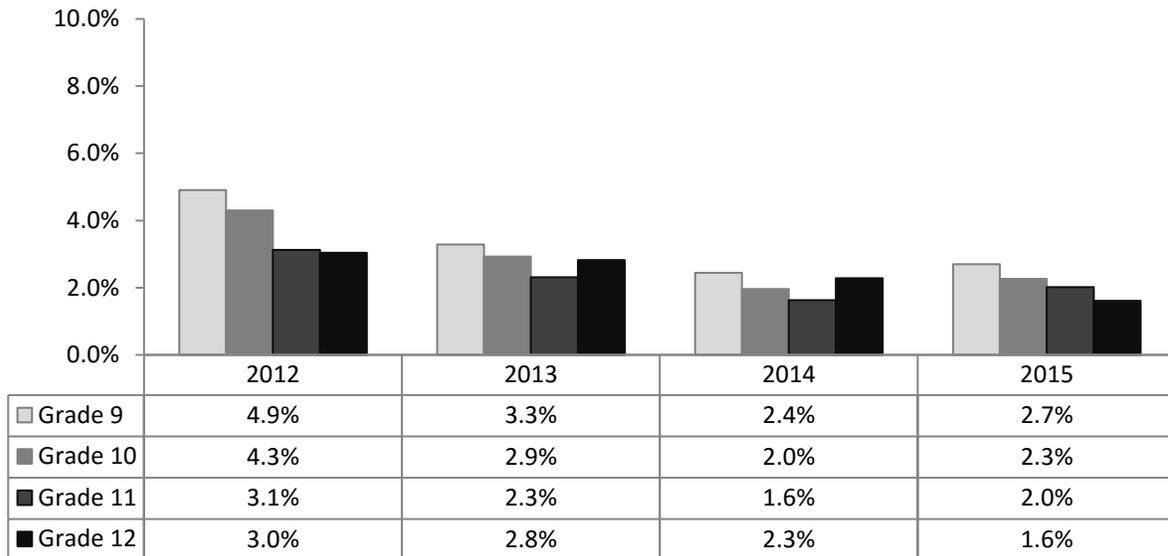


Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

To determine which groups of students are more likely to be represented among the population of students that drop out of school, student grade levels were examined. While the grade levels being considered in this subsection focus on high-school dropout rates, data exist for students dropping out of school in grades 7 and 8. In the data available, the largest number of seventh-grade students opting to drop out of school was 179 in the 2014–15 academic year, a statewide rate of 1.8%. The largest numbers of such students in eighth grade was 213 in 2011–12 academic year, a statewide rate of 2.2%. For the purpose of this analysis, only grades 9–12 are included in figure twenty-three.

As mentioned in the previous subsection, high-school dropout rates have been steadily declining since 2012. When grouped according to grade level, it was found that ninth grade students were consistently the largest group dropping out of high school.

Figure Twenty-Three: High-School Dropout Rates, Statewide by Grade Level, 2012–15



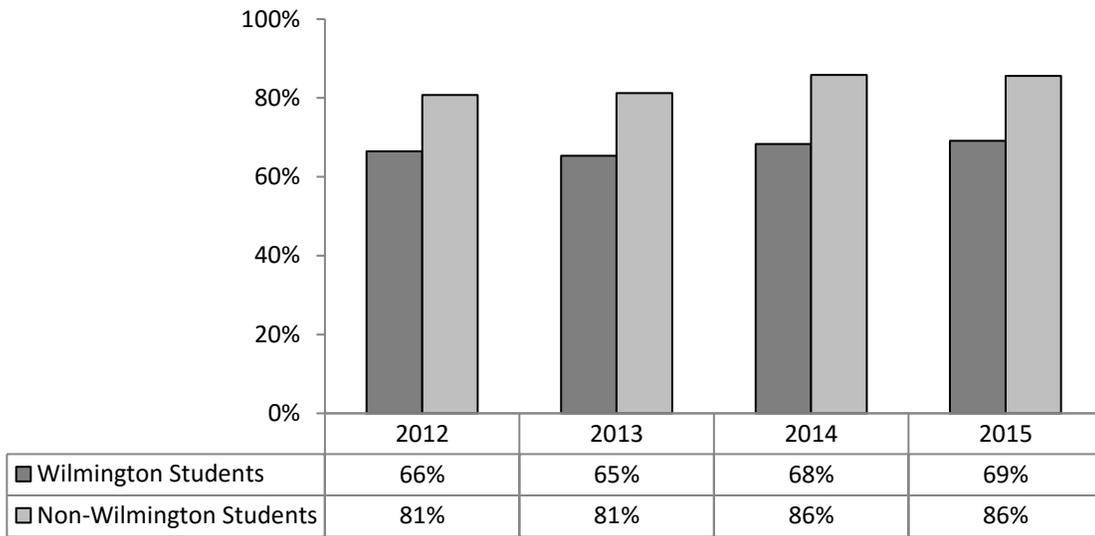
Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

Graduation Rates

Another metric of student success is the rate of school completion among students within classes, or cohorts. This report calculates and defines cohort and graduation rate as per the definition given in Section 1111 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), used by the U.S. Department of Education (US DOE). The ESEA and US DOE define graduation rate as being the “percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years.” Cohort, for the purposes of this report, will be defined as the collective of students entering ninth grade expected to graduate after completing four years of academic coursework. Cohorts are referenced as being classes of a given year. Graduation data are adjusted to include students who transferred and moved into a cohort and to exclude students that leave a cohort.

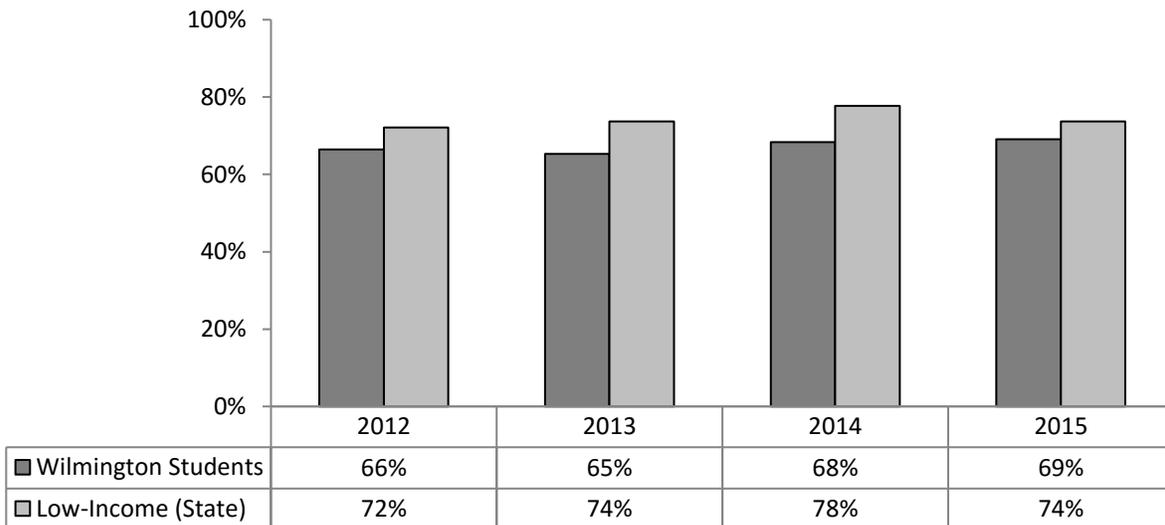
The graduation rates for all students have increased slightly between 2012 and 2015, but there is still a considerable difference between Wilmington students and their peers. When examining the non-Wilmington rates from 2012 through 2015 and comparing them to those of Wilmington high-school students, the differences remained relatively consistent over the four-year period. Graduation rate comparisons between Wilmington and non-Wilmington students found that rates for students of the City of Wilmington were, on average, 15.5 percentage points lower than those of non-Wilmington students, as shown in figure twenty-four. Figure twenty-five shows the difference between the graduation rates of Wilmington students and Delaware’s low-income student population.

Figure Twenty-Four: High-School Graduation Rates, Wilmington Students and Non-Wilmington Students Comparison, 2012–15



Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

Figure Twenty-Five: High-School Graduation Rates, Delaware Low-Income Students and Wilmington Students Comparison, 2012–15



Source: Delaware Department of Education Data Set, 2015.

For Future Editions

The Wilmington Education Improvement Commission will submit an annual report each year until the Commission sunsets on June 30, 2021. This year's report analyzed data that were available to the Commission, but there are several factors that should be included in future annual reports as data become available. These data points include:

- Attendance
- College and career readiness
- Discipline rates analyzed by subgroups
- Graduation rates inclusive of English language learners (which was not available for this report)
- School choice

This list is expected to grow and change as the process of the Commission unfolds over the next few years. In the future, the Commission will hope to have enrollment data for the year that is studied as well as the previous year to match the achievement data produced.

Part IX: Commission Funding and Resources

For the period of July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016, the work of the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission was supported by funding from public and private sources and from contributed services from many institutions and individuals. Support funding included contributed professional services provided by University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA) staff, in-kind and pro-bono services and contributions from other institutions and individuals, grants and donations, and a contract with IPA from the Delaware State Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The following section describes the types of services and the cost for each type of service.

IPA Contract with OMB

A \$100,000 State contract between IPA and OMB provided funding for the provision of staff services to the Commission. The scope of work for the execution of the contract is as follows.

The University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA) will provide research, organizational, and operational support services to the Governor's Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC) under contract with the State's Office of Management and Budget.

Services:

- Work with the chair and vice-chairs of WEIC, IPA will support the general operation of the Commission including planning, scheduling, agenda-setting, coordination with WEIC committees, and participation in and follow-up on meetings with government, education, and community leaders and engagement with students, parents, teachers and the public.
- Coordinate Commission organization, including the management of meeting logistics, records, communications and follow-up on decisions.
- Conduct research and analysis in support of the Commission and its committees.
- Writing and production of reports, including the redistricting planning report to be presented to the State Board of Education.
- Support for the communication and outreach activities during periods of public comment on the preparation and dissemination of WEIC recommendations.
- Develop and produce implementation plans for WEIC recommendations, including administrative support for WEIC committees and liaison with collaborating school districts, charter schools, state agencies, and other organizations.

Funding was used for staff salaries and benefits, student stipends, production of documents, reports, and presentation materials for the Commission and its committees, and costs for public meetings and transcriptions of public hearings. All funds were used for direct expenses and the university did not charge overhead or other indirect costs.

Contributed Professional Services by the University of Delaware

The contributions of the Project Director Dan Rich, IPA Director Jerome Lewis, Professor Elizabeth Farley-Ripple, and other UD faculty and senior professional staff were supported as part of the public service mission of the university and have been paid by the university. In addition to services supported by the state contract, IPA also contributed staff and student services to the Commission as part of their public service mission. The university also charged no overhead or other indirect costs. The university's contributed resources were in excess of \$210,000.

Contributed Services from Other Institutions and Individuals

Contributions of in-kind and pro-bono support from private and nonprofit partners supplemented the work of the Commission. These resources include legal services from The Bifferato Firm, P.A., other administrative support from Tipton Communications, and research support from policy advisors. These contributed resources were valued at nearly \$250,000.

Grants and Donations

The Commission received a total of \$125,000 through grants and donations to their work. The following describes each and the amount contributed.

Brooks Fellowship

The \$5,000 contribution from the Brooks Fellowship supported administrative costs for the Commission that were not covered by the OMB contract. This funding also helped cover printing expenses.

Fund for Urban Education

The contribution from the Fund for Urban Education is reflected as a 10-year commitment of a total of \$100,000 to support the work of the Commission. The contributors to the Fund for Urban Education are Dr. Quinetta Roberson and Dr. Tony Allen with a matching contribution from Bank of America.

Laffey-McHugh Foundation

A \$20,000 grant from the Laffey-McHugh Foundation for the creation and publication of the books *Strengthening Wilmington Education: An Action Agenda* and *Solutions for Delaware Schools Vol. 1*.

In addition to the contributions listed above, thousands of hours were contributed from other people involved in the work. The Commission wishes to thank the Red Clay Consolidated and Christina School Districts for the substantial effort and time they put into this work; without their support the work would not have been completed. The Commission would also like to acknowledge the important contributions that the Brandywine, Colonial, and New Castle County Vo-Tech School Districts made to this collaborative effort. Finally, the work of the commission and committee members has been invaluable. The commitment from all who have contributed and worked to increase educational achievement for students in Wilmington and ultimately Delaware needs to be recognized as well.

Commission and Committee Membership

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission Members

August 2015 – June 2016

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Angela Wilson

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Burtie Watson, District and School Services, Red
Clay Consolidated School District