

Council Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 7, 2026

Meeting held at Red Clay District Office, 1502 Spruce Avenue, Wilmington, DE 19805 and via Zoom

Public Session

- Helen Anderson chaired and opened the meeting at 6:03 pm
- Welcome and Housekeeping provided by Helen Anderson
- Council Roll Call provided by Helen Anderson
 - **Attendees:** Helen Anderson, AJe English, Dorrell Green, Deirdra Joyner, Lisa Lawson, Alex Najemy and Deirdra Joyner joined late at 6:14pm. Minutes from the Nov & Dec meeting were approved.
 - **Public Comment:**
 - Non
 - **Partnership Updates:**
 - **Out-of-School Time Update**
 - Monthly invoices from partners would need to be accompanied by monthly reports, ensuring clarity on reporting expectations.
 - Each partner is expected to attend at least one council meeting in the spring to give an in-person update on their work.
 - A total of 32 submissions were received, with seven contracts finalized and one still under negotiation due to shifts in focus for the proposal.
 - There would still be opportunities for those who submitted proposals but were not selected, particularly for summer learning programs.

Old Business:

- **Strategic Planning Update:**
 - In the strategic planning update, Dr. Burgos reported that the Empower Schools team alongside WLC is conducting SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis at each of the nine schools involved with the Wilmington Learning Collaborative.
 - The strategic planning retreat is scheduled for February 18th, with plans to gather information necessary for a productive session.

- The need to consolidate findings and insights from the analyses to guide future planning and decision-making was emphasized.

New Business:

- **Budget Update**

- Fiscal Year Allocations: The WLC received appropriations totaling approximately \$20.2 million for programmatic purposes over multiple fiscal years. Up to December 31, 2025, about \$17,149,096 million had been made available for district spending, with \$10,994,962 million spent to date, indicating a 64% utilization rate.
- Spend Down Plans: Problems related to spending down the appropriated funds from previous years were discussed. Unspent funds from fiscal years could potentially revert back to the state unless spent. The need for districts to finalize their spend down plans by the end of June was emphasized to avoid losing these resources.
- Budget Allocation Details: A breakdown was provided for specific school districts, including Red Clay, Christina, and Brandywine, noting how each district spent their allocated budget and the focus areas of their expenditures, which often revolved around school-driven innovation and out-of-school time programs.
- Operating Budget: The WLC's operating budget request totaled \$15.4 million, but only \$9.2 million had been allocated so far. The budget covers essential needs such as salaries, contractual services, legal fees, and operational costs.
- Future Planning: The operating budget discussions indicate an ongoing need to streamline financial processes and ensure effective communication with district CFOs regarding variances, transfers, and expenditures.

- **Report to General Assembly**

- Collaboration Among Districts: The three districts involved in the Wilmington Learning Collaborative worked together to compile data into a single spreadsheet that consolidates information from all nine schools. This collaborative effort is aimed at ensuring that the report reflects comprehensive and accurate data.

- Pending Data: Some smaller pieces of data, particularly related to teacher retention and leadership retention, are still outstanding. Dr. Burgos highlighted the importance of obtaining this information in a timely manner, encouraging superintendents to facilitate the collection of necessary data from their respective human resources teams.
 - Narrative Writing and Data Formatting: The report requires narrative writing and formatting to present the collected data effectively. The need for clarity and thoroughness in this aspect was emphasized as it will help convey the status and impact of the collaborative efforts.
 - Regular Reporting: Dr. Burgos indicated that this is the first report of its kind but that subsequent reports will also be required every few months, including one due in April. The intention is to generate constructive feedback from the General Assembly that can help inform future actions and strategies.
- **Office Lease**
 - During the meeting, Dr. Burgos addressed the upcoming office lease for the Wilmington Learning Collaborative, which is set to expire at the end of February. The existing office space at the DSU Riverfront Building poses challenges, particularly because it closes at 5 PM, making it difficult for the WLC team to host evening events.
 - Council member Anderson also expressed some concerns about the building and supported the idea of finding a new location that would better accommodate the needs of the Wilmington Learning Collaborative.
 - Dr. Burgos indicated that she would bring proposals and contracts for the new office space to the next meeting for review.

MOU Discussion

- Concerns were raised about the Red Clay Consolidated Board's actions regarding the WLC MOU on December 17th.
- A quick meeting resulted in a potential vote to allow districts to opt out of the MOU without prior discussions.
- Council member Anderson expressed frustration over decisions that affect WLC children being made without necessary conversations.
- Emphasized that the MOU should prioritize discussions involving all stakeholders before any opt-outs.

- Dr. Burgos had been providing reports, but there were concerns about whether this information was sufficient for stakeholders.
- Council member Anderson stressed the importance of advocating for Wilmington children's needs over personal agendas.

Adjournment

Motion by Helen to adjourn, seconded by Dr. Dorrell Green. Unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.