

WCCA Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes

May 12, 2021

❖ Indicates a vote is needed

Donecia Santana called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM.

Present: Linda Carter, Amy Phillips, Kimberly Siefert, Meghan Arnold, Margit Nelson, Katie Robinson, Donecia Santana, Amy Smith, Vicki Huntley, David White, Rachel Walker, Amanda Vanduyne, Elizabeth Whitten, Manuel Davila, Wanda Busse, Darlene Smith, Emily Edmunds, Kristy Johnson, Bridgett Librado, Dan Edwards

❖ Review and Approve Minutes from April 2021 meeting - A motion to approve the minutes was made by Amanda Vanduyne and seconded by Katie Robinson. There were not enough members present for a quorum, so an electronic vote was sent out after the meeting. The following members cast their votes electronically and the April 2021 minutes were approved with a quorum: Donecia Santana, Emily Bethea, Simone Wertenberger, Loree Kelly, and Pearl Debellott.

New Business:

❖ Outdoor Learning Environment (OLE) Video and Updates – Amy Smith
Amy presented the WCCA Google shared website that was created as an informational resource and platform that introduces OLE and WCCA's OLE development plans. Amy walked Policy Council through the various parts of the website, sharing photos of examples of various OLE components and explaining what an OLE is, what materials it may consist of, and how it can positively impact children and their physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development as well as learning outcomes. One of the characteristics associated with OLEs is to exchange man-made, close-ended materials (e.g., traditional playground equipment) for open-ended, natural materials, resulting in an aesthetically pleasing and calming environment. The website also contains an OLE position statement, details and photos from the King Creek pilot OLE site, information about how the OLE experience carries over into the classroom, and showcases OLE ideas such as mud kitchens and outdoor music areas utilizing natural and recycled materials. The site also explores the meaning of "reasonable risk" and how it encompasses opportunities for children to safely explore natural environments. The children (as well as staff and parents) have embraced the OLE at King Creek enthusiastically and are enjoying connecting with nature and helping to plant trees and vegetables, discovering birds' nests and playing with natural building blocks. The NC Forest Service donated 250 white pine seedlings, which were distributed to families as well as planted at some WCCA center sites. A video was also presented that showed children playing in the OLE area at King Creek, reconnecting with nature, and it was mentioned that even the infant age group is enjoying the space and natural materials. Both staff and parents/community volunteers have been helping with not just set-up and planting but also watering. A five-year plan has been developed to fund and create more OLE areas at other WCCA sites. A motion to approve the OLE project was made by Amanda Vanduyne and seconded by Katie Robinson. There were not enough members present for a quorum, so an electronic vote was sent out after the meeting. The following members cast their votes

electronically and the OLE project was approved with a quorum: Donecia Santana, Emily Bethea, Simone Wertenberger, Loree Kelly, and Pearl Debellott.

❖ Self-Assessment Timeline – Amy Phillips

Amy presented a timeline for completing a Children’s Services program self-assessment during the summer of 2021 (beginning on June 7), which is a change from the previous schedule of mid-program year. Going forward the self-assessments will be done in the summer, following the same processes as before. This new schedule will correspond to the natural break between program years and data collection cycles, allowing WCCA to review the previous program year data and develop key recommendations for the upcoming program year. A motion to approve the self-assessment timeline was made by Amanda Vanduyne and seconded by Katie Robinson. There were not enough members present for a quorum, so an electronic vote was sent out after the meeting. The following members cast their votes electronically and the self-assessment timeline was approved with a quorum: Donecia Santana, Emily Bethea, Simone Wertenberger, Loree Kelly, and Pearl Debellott.

Reports:

Chief Executive Officer’s Report – David White

- Discussions are ongoing with Brevard College for building a childcare center. A potential site near College Walk has been identified; Memorandums of Understanding have been drawn up on both sides, but negotiations continue. WCCA would like to own the building, but the college believes that their Board of Directors may not agree to that. An alternate plan would then entail building a facility on land that WCCA already owns in Brevard, and WCCA would provide space therein for some Brevard College teaching staff and administration of the WCCA early childhood education internship program. The Pisgah Health Foundation has provided funds to extend the internship program into Fall 2021; students have expressed appreciation and positive reviews of the internship and collaboration.
- Recruitment for new, qualified staff is always a challenge, but now with the planned expansions, the need is even greater, and the WCCA HR team, Board member Shannon Perry, and Children’s Services staff have all been diligently researching and implementing many different strategies for recruitment, including a new tool known as Appcast.
- As Medicaid transformation continues, WCCA/Apple Country Transit has signed a contract with ModivCare to provide Medicaid transportation in Henderson County effective July 2021, with the goal of improving quality and safety. WCCA hopes to secure one more contract with a different Medicaid transportation provider in the near future as well. A grant has been submitted to the Sisters of Mercy Foundation to acquire another vehicle to provide this service. WCCA is also engaging the services of attorney Rocky Cabagnet as fractional general counsel, which entails utilizing the attorney’s expertise and services on an ongoing, part-time basis at an affordable fixed-price rate for nonprofits.

Chief Financial Officer’s Report – Ibby Whitten

- Financials: April’s financial transactions will not be closed out until May 15, so instead of the usual financial reports, Ibby presented an agency-wide dashboard that gave an overview of the company financial data. The performance card showed income, cash, and fundraising amounts. Donations from foundations totaled \$85,527 while private donations amounted to \$13,100. Net income totaled \$485,469, and Ibby noted that depreciation will occur through year end, which will reduce this figure. There was an unrestricted cash balance of \$1.2 million, which is the usual amount at any given time. Program service line data indicates whether there is a surplus or deficit (in terms of income and

percentage of budget). Children's Services is running a deficit due to the expected decrease in CACFP reimbursement (\$130,000 loss in CACFP funding), but emergency funding in the amount of \$71,000 will help to reduce the deficit. The monthly administrative cost pays for things such as salaries for administrative departments and staff (e.g., CEO, Finance, HR) as well as consulting, marketing, and advertising costs, and usually runs about \$95,000-120,000 per month, with costs being higher in months that have three payrolls. IDCs (indirect costs allocations) are a normal part of Children's Services costs, and the federal government determines the rate of IDC. WCCA has a \$1.4 million total for the year, which is low for an agency of its size; IDCs for most agencies are around 20%, but for WCCA the figure is below 10%, which contributes to donors having confidence in the agency thereby encouraging donations. Ibbey asked the Policy Council attendees if they would prefer to see the monthly financial reports in the dashboard format instead of the report format that has been utilized previously, and everyone agreed that they preferred the new format. Ibbey also asked for volunteers willing to give future input about the preferred method and format for reporting financial information to the Council.

- Credit Card Expenditure Report: This data is not available yet for the month of April due to the early scheduling of the Policy Council meeting this month. Ibbey will finalize the usual financial reports after May 15.

Enrollment/Attendance Report – Kimberly Siefert

- WCCA will plan to offer summer care at Sugar Hill and Hillview, as well as extended care for EHS participants from 2:30-5:30 PM. Spring Break impacted the attendance numbers for April. Additionally, many parents continue to be cautious due to COVID and are keeping children at home. Other reasons for lower attendance in both EHS and HS programs, as well as CCP sites, included illness (both COVID and non-COVID-related) and families being out of town; even so, a few HS sites had attendance above 85%. There was one absence for an unknown reason, and the Family Advocate reached out and is providing support to that family.

CCP Report – Kristy Johnson

- Kristy presented a written update to the Policy Council, examining progress toward goals for both the EHS and CCP programs, and noting that reporting around goal outcomes has been made to the Office of Head Start. Goals and objectives continue to focus on increasing the education levels of staff and implementing curriculum to fidelity, with curriculum to fidelity scores and the level of quality being assessed presently. Support and training is being offered to the CCP sites staff in these objectives, including a full-day training that occurred on April 19. The mentoring program pilot is moving forward successfully at five CCP sites; a professional learning community, comprising one mentor from each site, will meet on May 13. Site supervisors are being asked to take ownership of ensuring fidelity and holding teachers accountable. Solid plans for the next program year have been created with the goal of developing parent committees. Other objectives include implementing trauma informed training and care, focusing on behavioral health needs, and continuing to encourage early and regular dental care for children. One of the most immediate and urgent priorities is finding qualified EHS staff.

USDA Meal and Snack Report – Meghan Arnold

- The number of meals being served has increased a little, thus CACFP reimbursement has increased slightly. The children at our Etowah site are being fed at no cost, thus WCCA is claiming only snacks for CACFP reimbursement. Meghan presented the data for meals served in March and April, the numbers were as expected. Meghan noted that WCCA has been fortunate compared with other HS

programs for which she has seen data; for example, some sites have had to get waivers because they were unable to find/provide certain food items.

Program Director's Report – Linda Carter

- Ten classrooms were shut down in April due to lack of staff (too few substitutes are available compared to pre-COVID times). The \$164,058 in COVID relief funding that WCCA had applied for was approved on April 27.
- The paper road closure at Tebeau Drive was approved; the Hendersonville Board of Adjustment approved our proposed improvements to the Tebeau site; site planning work is moving forward with the architects and engineers. We are continuing discussions with Sunny View Elementary for using classroom space in their school for the EHS expansion, and a Memorandum of Agreement will be reviewed by the Polk County School Board in June. The building we had identified in Forest City to be used for the EHS expansion into Rutherford County is no longer available to us, but we have obtained a lease for a different facility in Forest City and renovations are being planned. The final work on the Etowah site parking lot should be completed soon.
- The job title of Home Visitors will be changing to Parent Educators as a result of implementing the Parents as Teachers (PAT) curriculum; full implementation of the curriculum will come in July; Training in the 0-3 age group curriculum has taken place and the training in curriculum for the 3-5 year olds will occur this month.
- A Memorandum of Agreement is being created with Henderson County Public Schools that will address supporting families experiencing homelessness. WCCA is looking at ways to collaborate with the YMCA that would address wellness opportunities for families and staff. Management and recordkeeping for our company fleet has been transitioned to online processes. Margit Nelson is working to reactivate the Rotary Readers program with a goal of restarting it in August. Children's Services staff have been diligently preparing for the Office of Head Start Focus Area 1 review that takes place the week of May 17. Children's artwork has been displayed at our thrift store, Bargain Hendo. Due to the EHS expansion, recruitment of staff is now a huge priority and every staff member is being encouraged to help with recruitment efforts.

Program Support Services – Amy Phillips

- The 10% enrollment requirement for IDEA-qualified children has not been met in the CCP & EHS programs, so a waiver has been submitted, and we are working on plans for next year to serve more qualified children. IEPs and IFSPs are increasing and we're supporting those children and families, but we need to identify more children with special needs.
- The number of developmental and behavioral screenings being completed has been affected by enrollment numbers as the program year winds down.
- Coaching sessions continue to support and increase the quality level of teaching staff; class observations are focusing on teaching curriculum to fidelity, while determining what the goals for next year should be and what training is needed by staff in order to reach fidelity.
- Dental home numbers continue to increase, as the health staff partner with Family Advocates to contact and motivate parents. A partnership with Bearwallow Valley Farms (and funding aid from ASAP) will provide farm kits (fresh food) to families over the next two months.
- New staff: Early Intervention Coordinator, Susan Davis-Strauss
- Professional Development: An Unconscious Bias training was held for supervisor/management staff in April; April 19 was a staff professional development day that included a training for CCP teachers that dealt with curriculum fidelity and building teacher-child relationships, Outdoor Learning Environment training for all teaching staff, and a relationship-based competencies training for Family

Services staff. Upcoming training includes: PAT, and supervisor training (Behavioral-based Interviewing and *Dare to Lead* book study).

- The program calendars for 2021-2022 have been created, there is one for each county; each calendar is the same except for the months of March and April due to differences in the spring break schedules. Each calendar is consistent, however, in terms of having the same number of professional development (PD) hours (PD half-days scheduled for certain Wednesdays) and having the same number of classroom hours for children.

NC PreK / Head Start Update – Amy Smith

- Teachers are finalizing paperwork and preparing for the end of the program year. Staff placement for the 2021-22 program year has begun and will be based on this year's performance and evaluations, co-teacher compatibility, credentials, and site staffing needs.
- Kindergarten readiness efforts: WCCA helped to assemble 1100 kits for Henderson County students that included information, resources, materials, and activities for families to use with their children over the summer to prepare for Kindergarten entry; WCCA led the effort to assemble 400 similar kits for Transylvania County.
- Kindergarten Q&A Video: Henderson County Public School staff and WCCA staff answered questions posed by families regarding Kindergarten transition in a panel format session that was recorded and distributed to families, with both English and Spanish versions available.
- WCCA received a donation of 250 white pine seedlings from the NC Forest Service to celebrate Arbor Day. The seedlings were distributed to families as well as planted at WCCA sites, and the story was publicized by WSPA and WLOS.
- April 26 was a successful volunteer day for the OLE pilot project at King Creek Children's Center with volunteers planting trees and shrubs and constructing raised garden beds. More volunteer days will be scheduled. There is a five-year plan for replicating the King Creek OLE project to other WCCA sites with a goal of 75% completion for the existing and new sites, including budgeting, funding, and organizational development.

Next meeting date: June 16, 2021. **This will be our last meeting of the school year. Meetings will resume in September 2021. Dates will go out at the beginning of our next school year.**

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by Donecia Santana at 2:50 PM.