

WCCA Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes

June 16, 2021

❖ Indicates a vote is needed

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

Present: Linda Carter, Amy Phillips, Kimberly Siefert, Margit Nelson, Katie Robinson, Donecia Santana, Rachel Walker, Amanda Vanduyne, David White, Bridgett Librado, Dan Edwards, Darlene Smith, Kristy Johnson, Pearl Debellott, Simone Wertenberger, Ibbly Whitten

❖ Review and Approve Minutes from May 2021 meeting - A motion to approve the minutes was made by Pearl Debellott and seconded by Amanda Vanduyne. 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 May 2021 minutes were approved with a quorum: Natasha Perkins, Emily Bethea, Loree Kelly, and Eva Alvarez.

New Business: There was no new business.

Training: The Role of the Family Advocate

Kimberly Siefert presented a PowerPoint that explained the role and responsibilities of the Family Advocates, including an emphasis on family engagement as it relates to collaborating with parents, children, and staff, working toward family-set goals, and creating connections between families and program staff. Some of the Family Advocates' duties include visiting each classroom and the child's home, providing translation, organizing family engagement activities, helping the family to establish goals, supporting child attendance, and connecting families to needed resources.

Reports:

Chief Executive Officer's Report – David White

- Best of Blue Ridge 2021: WCCA employees nominated the organization to be included in the voting for the annual Hendersonville Times-News "Best of Blue Ridge" contest in the nonprofit category. The companies with the most nominations advance to a voting round in July. WCCA actually placed within the top five nominations in several categories, including the benefits program, company culture, and overall leadership. We will be communicating with you soon, encouraging you to vote. Being nominated and chosen as one of the best employers in the area would benefit our recruitment efforts.
- COVID Vaccination: WCCA continues to encourage staff to receive the COVID vaccine, and as an incentive, the WCCA Board of Directors approved a plan that will award 40 hours of "Wellness PTO" (paid time off) to every employee who receives the full vaccine by October 1, 2021.
- Polk County Facility: The Dogwood Trust has asked WCCA to apply for \$183,000 in funding that would go towards the cost of building a future child care site in Polk County.
- Brevard College: The internship collaboration between WCCA and Brevard College (BC) continues to be mutually beneficial, with five college students participating so far and one of the interns being

profiled in a local newspaper. Interest in the early childhood education program at BC has increased, thanks in part to the internship program. The internship program will be extended through at least May 2022 using grant funds provided by the Pisgah Health Foundation. Originally WCCA planned to build a child care center on the BC campus that would serve 45-55 children. Soil and site testing was done, building plans were drawn up, the BC Board reviewed plans, both WCCA and BC drafted MOUs, but BC desired to own the new site and wanted to lease the building and land to WCCA, while WCCA was asked to do most of the funding work for the project, which was not in the best interest of WCCA. Thus, WCCA presented an alternate plan that would entail WCCA building the new facility on 18 acres of property that it already owns in Brevard surrounding the current Hillview child care site, which is located 1.2 miles from BC. Utilizing some of the remaining Pisgah Health Foundation grant money, plans are therefore being developed in conjunction with Tamara Peacock Architects to build a center there that would replace the current Hillview facility and would be able to serve approximately 100 children and would provide space for BC interns and faculty as well.

- WCCA is engaging the services of attorney Rocky Cabagnot 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. Rocky was formerly the CEO of the Salisbury/Rowan Community Action Agency and brings valuable experience and expertise in the areas of Head Start administration, program compliance, and nonprofit best practices.

Chief Financial Officer's Report – Ibbby Whitten

- Financials: WCCA's fiscal year will end on June 30. There are two grants whose coverage dates differ from our fiscal year dates: The CCP grant and the CACFP grant. Grant program expenditures are tracking on budget, at 100% for the 10-month programs (NC Pre-K) and at about 90% for 12-month programs (HS/EHS, EHS CCP), though the EHS expenditures are a bit below budget at 76%. Not all training costs have come in, thus that budget is somewhat underspent but should even out by the end of June. WCCA has applied for \$71,000 in emergency funds from CACFP that would reduce the operating deficit (~\$180,000) in this program that is due to food and kitchen staff salary costs being higher than reimbursement from the grant, which is based on the number of meals served which has been smaller due to COVID-related reduced enrollment. COVID fund spending is also below budget, and WCCA plans to add additional COVID expenditures for new teaching strategy software, communication upgrades, the summer care program, and renovations at the Tebeau site as well as expenses resulting from COVID-related absences and site closures. We are hoping to receive \$770,000 in further COVID (American Rescue Plan) funds over the next two years, which will help with the cost of recruitment, staffing (particularly teachers and substitutes), renovations, start up costs, etc. Ibbby continues to work on developing new ideas for easy-to-understand and informational dashboard/performance card reports for Policy Council. Please provide any suggestions of what you might like to see on future reports.
- Credit Card Expenditure Report: Total credit card spending for the month totaled \$7072, with the majority of expenses coming from playground/OLE supplies and recruiting. Recruitment expense has increased exponentially due to a qualified labor shortage with expenditures such as job ads (including Appcast/social media, HOLA Carolina, Indeed, etc.) and job fairs. Due to WCCA's expansion and the labor shortage, ample recruitment costs will be factored into ongoing budgets.

Enrollment/Attendance Report – Kimberly Siefert

- This month, our CCP sites had 4 out of 6 with attendance lower than 85%, our EHS sites had 5 out of 6 with attendance lower than 85%, and HS sites had 8 out of 13 with attendance lower than 85%. We noticed the same trends for absences across all programs: transportation due to the gas shortage, sickness, and COVID related absences. We finished the year under enrolled, but we have seen an

increase in applications over the past month. We have 93 on the waitlist for next year. We started our Head Start summer program at Sugar Hill and Hillview on June 14, and we are excited to be moving back to a normal schedule.

CCP Report – Kristy Johnson

- Education of Staff: Multiple employees are making progress toward their CDA certification; WCCA has now been authorized to move forward with getting teacher portfolios reviewed.
- Fidelity: The mentoring program is contributing to the focus on achieving fidelity; coaches have collected baseline fidelity data; site supervisors are being trained in fidelity modeling/monitoring, how to understand data and how to hold teachers accountable.
- Discussions continue surrounding trauma informed training and practices.
- New classroom space is being configured at Little Blessings and at Hillview. The summer program (Camp WOW) has started and includes fun educational activities, such as field trips. There is still a great need for more staff with a lot of time and effort being focused on recruitment activities.

USDA Meal and Snack Report – Rachel Walker presenting for Meghan Arnold

- Rachel presented an overview of the May reimbursement numbers for meals and snacks provided by CACFP funding, with the notation that the Etowah site is still receiving their breakfasts and lunches at no cost from the Henderson County Public School system, thus they are not billed to CACFP.

Program Director's Report – Linda Carter

- As of June 14, centers are back to a normal schedule with wraparound care extended hours. Two summer care classrooms for ages 3-5 (called Camp WOW) are operating, one at Sugar Hill and one at Hillview and are partially funded by a donor and by COVID funds.
- Facilities: The Hendersonville Board of Adjustments approved the proposed Tebeau renovations; Peacock Architects site drawings are 90% complete and requests for quotes from contractors are being sent out. A private-pay billing rate for four EHS child care slots at Sunny View has been provided to Polk County Public School employees, and renovation work on the classrooms at the site started on June 15, with hopes for licensing to be completed in August. Odom Engineering presented preliminary renovation drawings for the Forest City facility; once they are finalized, requests for quotes will be submitted to contractors.
- The Outdoor Learning Environment (OLE) at the King Creek center has really taken shape with boulders, a natural materials teepee, raised vegetable beds, and more. American Rescue Plan funding will help to develop OLEs at ten other WCCA sites and at CCP sites.
- We are in the process of hiring an Assistant Area Manager to help Area Manager Wanda Busse with oversight and management of the Henderson County stand-alone and public school sites. We are also recruiting for multiple HS and NC Pre-K lead teacher positions for the coming school year.
- Our current NC Pre-K staff were surveyed to gauge capacity to participate in an "NC Pre-K Summer Learning Program" brought forth by DCDEE on May 17th. We are unable to participate in the program due to the last minute announcement not giving us adequate planning time. There would be difficulty in meeting the outlined program parameters, teacher credential requirements and having insufficient staff.
- Parent Educators (formerly Home Visitors) completed the second Parents as Teachers (PAT) training and are set to implement the PAT curriculum starting July 1. Family Advocates completed their second home visits for the year. A bilingual ERSEA (enrollment) Specialist was hired: Margaret Hannon, who transferred over from an EHS teacher position.
- Kimberly Siefert is leaving WCCA effective June 30 as she is moving out of the area; we are recruiting and interviewing to fill the Family Services Manager position.

- The ERSEA Policies and Procedures have been finalized with help from outside consultant FFF. Kiki Jackson was promoted from the Home Based Coordinator role to become the ERSEA Coordinator, where she will be supervising three enrollment specialists.
- Meghan and Rachel have completed all CACFP reviews, with no issues or concerns identified. They will work over the summer to ensure that each classroom is ready to meet requirements.
- Policies and Procedures are being fine-tuned for Family Advocate staff and with ChildPlus to ensure uniform practices and that we are able to capture data and run accurate reports.
- Kathleen McDavid was just hired as the CCP Coordinator to assist with establishing CCP family child care homes in Transylvania County.
- Family Advocates (FA) will be moving their offices to the center locations as onsite office space has been created for them. The FAs will thus now report to the respective site supervisor and will have a dedicated coach. Due to this change in structure, the FA Coordinator position that was held by Vicki Huntley was recently eliminated. The change is being made based on research and in an effort to remove barriers that impact the work of the FAs; this is really the best model that will facilitate teamwork and family engagement for the FAs and other staff. Families will only benefit from the change.
- The substitute teacher pool has been impacted by COVID but is improving somewhat with eleven active substitutes; the sub pool can be useful as a pipeline for transitioning employees into other full-time roles.
- The Children's Advisory Committee members were unable to meet as planned in May, so they were sent a video presentation by Ibbey Whitten regarding financial data pertaining to the Columbus site.
- Margit Nelson gave a presentation to the Rotary Readers Club in May; when the COVID regulations allow it, the plan is to restart this volunteer program.
- Children's Services staff presented information and were interviewed for the Head Start Focus Area One (FA1) Survey the week of May 17; all staff did an excellent job, and now we are preparing for the FA2 audit next year.

Program Support Services – Amy Phillips

- We are still not quite meeting the 10% requirement for Early Intervention services, and a waiver has therefore been submitted, though two more children at CCP sites have been identified.
- The number of developmental and behavioral screenings being completed has been affected by enrollment numbers and other hurdles as the program year winds down, though there was an increase in screenings being done at CCP sites.
- Coaching sessions continue to support and increase the quality level of teaching staff; class observations have been done at preschool sites; fidelity data will be pulled together by the end of June which will help us determine how we can support staff in reaching fidelity and will help us plan what our focus needs to be next year and what type of professional development activities are needed. Teaching staff in several classrooms did reach a high score of 5 in May in terms of measuring overall quality. We have been looking at the configuration of teaching teams for next year and may reconfigure some teams in order to complement individual strengths and promote staff development.
- The measure for medical homes for children is at almost 100% for every program, indicating significant improvement in that area. A high percentage of the growth assessments have also been completed, while vision and hearing screenings continue to gradually improve.
- Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) and Bearwallow Farms have provided 180 children/families with fresh produce bags direct from the farm.
- We have been making good progress in assisting teaching staff who need to earn their minimum CDA license requirement by finding education specialists who have been able to collaborate with us. Seven staff have completed the Family Development Credential (FDC) class.

NC Pre-K / Head Start Update – Amy Smith

- Amy Smith was not in attendance, but Linda Carter covered Amy's agenda items as part of her Program Director's Report (see above).

Next meeting date: TBD – September 2021. Dates will go out at the beginning of our next school year.

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by Pearl Debellott and seconded by Simone Wertenberger. The meeting was adjourned by Donecia Santana at 2:38 PM.