

WCCA Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes

September 15, 2021

❖ Indicates a vote is required

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

Present: Linda Carter, Amy Phillips, Margit Nelson, Donecia Santana, Rachel Walker, Amanda Vanduyne, David White, Bridgett Librado, Dan Edwards, Simone Wertenberger, Ibby Whitten, Bobby Kimmons, Amy Smith

Establish a Quorum - There were not enough community partners or family representatives present to be able to establish a quorum, thus items needing a quorum will be sent out electronically for a vote.

❖ Review and Approve Minutes from June 2021 meeting - A motion to approve the minutes was made by Amanda Vanduyne and seconded by Simone Wertenberger. 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: Katie Robinson. Since a quorum was not reached, the June 2021 Minutes will be added to the October Policy Council agenda for approval.

New Business:

❖ **Self-Assessment _ Amy Phillips**

Amy presented the WCCA Self-Assessment (SA) process beginning in the winter of 2020-21 with an overview of the planning, ongoing monitoring, data collection, analyzing, and dialoging phases. WCCA's SA process team includes participation and input from community partners. The 20-21 SA focused on staff education levels, family engagement, enrollment processes, and referral services. The SA process was then shifted to a summer start time to prepare for the new school year, with a focus on finding qualified staff, creating safe and inclusive environments, and motivating family engagement. The SA team came up with recommendations and an action plan that included staff training and development, communication processes, family engagement tools, digital presence improvement, and community partnership focus. Simone Wertenberger made a motion to approve and Amanda Vanduyne seconded the motion. The following members cast their votes electronically: Katie Robinson. Since a quorum was not reached, the Self-Assessment will be added to the October Policy Council agenda for approval.

❖ **CDA Pipeline Program _ Amy Phillips**

One of the actions stemming from the Self-Assessment is to create an in-house plan or pipeline for hiring and educating staff to attain a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, since this is the minimum requirement for Head Start/Early Head Start teaching staff. Candidates can start at any level (e.g., volunteer, trainee, substitute, afterschool) and WCCA will design a pathway and assist candidates with attaining the CDA. Amanda Vanduyne motioned to approve the CDA Pipeline Program and Simone Wertenberger seconded the motion. The following members cast their votes electronically: Katie

Robinson. Since a quorum was not reached, the CDA Pipeline will be added to the October Policy Council agenda for approval.

❖ **COVID – CAP Memos _ Bobby Kimmons**

Bobby presented two memos; the first one clarifies that Wellness and COVID Vaccination PTO must be used as time off only (there will be no cash payout). The second memo is an updated COVID-19 guidance document that is 80% the same as the previous COVID guidance; there are minor CDC changes and cleaning recommendations emphasizing a renewed focus on safety that have been incorporated into the guidelines. Amanda Vanduyne motioned to approve and Simone Wertenberger seconded. The following members cast their votes electronically: Katie Robinson. Since a quorum was not reached, the COVID CAP Memos will be added to the October Policy Council agenda for approval.

Policy Council Representatives Updates - Linda Carter

Family Advocates have been working to establish Parent Committees at the sites; we hope to present those and the new officers and Policy Council parent representatives in October. We will seek a parent representative to serve as the Policy Council secretary (official vote is needed only on the officers).

Reports:

Chief Financial Officer's Report - Ibby Whitten

- Financials: The financial numbers are from July and all expenditures are tracking on budget or below a bit, at 8%. COVID expenditures, including PPE, sanitation, training, and facilities, will be covered by the ARA grant. Henderson County Public Schools are providing free meals for WCCA enrolled children for the school year, which should help reduce losses previously experienced in the food program. Ibby would like to create an easy-to-read dashboard report for Policy Council and would like input and collaboration from Policy Council members regarding what they want to see and what formats they would like. Overall reimbursements exceed expenses currently.
- Credit Card Expenditure Report: July and August credit card spending was about \$5000 and will increase for the latter part of August as the new school year starts; onsite training accounted for the majority of the expense.

Chief Executive Officer's Report – David White

- Starting 9/30 unvaccinated employees will be tested weekly at WCCA's expense. 63% of employees have been vaccinated; WCCA has offered a PTO incentive for getting the vaccine. WCCA is watching closely what happens with the infrastructure bill currently making its way through the federal government; it remains to be seen how the passage of this bill could help Children's Services (the childcare system in general needs major updating in the areas of staffing, funding, salary). WCCA continues to be diligent with COVID precautions in the workplace.
- WCCA's Housing Department and Senior Services are mostly back to pre-pandemic levels of normalcy; some re-configurations have been done in how work tasks are accomplished. The Transportation Department is still being affected by COVID, but staffing is manageable, the transport routes are running normally, and Medicaid transportation has been added. Jeff Roper was promoted to Transportation Director.

- Children's Services is understaffed despite ongoing aggressive recruitment efforts. The NC Pre-K program has been fully funded through November. Child enrollment in all programs is below full enrollment.

Enrollment/Attendance Report – Margit Nelson

- The enrollment and attendance numbers for August are below the full level but as expected relative to the current situation; under enrollment is a by-product of COVID and parent choice.

USDA Meal and Snack Report – Margit Nelson

- Margit presented the numbers of breakfasts, lunches and snacks served in August, which were as expected. Henderson and Polk County students are receiving free breakfast and lunch provided by the school systems for the 2021-2022 school year.

Program Director's Report and EHS/CCP Report – Linda Carter

- Losses in the CACFP meal program have been substantial due to COVID-related low enrollment, but the net loss totaled only ~\$6,000 after COVID and Head Start funding we used to offset the loss, per the Finance Dept. Henderson County Public Schools are providing free meals to WCCA students this school year and WCCA is billing the CACFP program for snacks, formula, and baby food. WCCA will continue buying teachers' meals. The meals will be from the public schools at a very reduced rate. The positions of two cooks were eliminated as a result of the change.
- All areas and levels of Children's Services are currently in need of staff; there are 29 job vacancies (not including staff for the new sites under renovation). Nine classrooms were closed in August due to understaffing and/or low enrollment and COVID issues. We are extremely grateful to all employees for their dedication and perseverance.
- Facilities: Quotes for renovation work on the Tebeau site have been received and are being reviewed by Tim Camp - Facilities & Safety Director and Elizabeth Whitten., awaiting a decision on Tebeau for moving forward with the project. Quotes for Forest City also received and the project was modified to reduce costs and sent back out for work quotes. The new Sunny View Early Head Start site was licensed and classes started on 9/13.
- Family Services: The FS Manager job has been eliminated and a FS Coordinator position added to supervise the Parent Educators. Meghan Arnold will take over management of ERSEA and Home Based services. The Family Services Coordinator who will oversee the home based program and staff and will coordinate family engagement activities. Gina Dowd was hired as a Recruitment and Volunteer Coordinator. The Family Advocates received training in community and family engagement procedures. WCCA needs to hire bilingual FAs urgently.
- WCCA's CCP partners are busy managing COVID issues; they are also not fully enrolled. The mentorship program is successfully supporting new teachers. WCCA needs to hire EHS staff for the Hillview and Etowah sites.
- The required Program Information Reports (PIR) have been completed for all three grants. We are refining some processes in the ChildPlus platform to accurately capture and facilitate data reporting.
- We are working on completing the CACFP application and will submit it by the end of September.
- WCCA held a job fair on August 10 in Brevard and one at Blue Ridge Community College in July; both fairs were successful in identifying good CDA candidates.

- Tim Camp was hired as the new Facilities and Safety Director and has been doing walkthroughs at the sites in preparation for the FA2 survey. Various committees have been meeting in preparation for the FA2 survey scheduled in early 2022.

Program Support Services – Amy Phillips

- Amy reported on the number of IDEA-qualified students being served, which is slightly below the required level but expected since the new school year has just begun. Required screenings and first home visits are being done with completion percentages on track. Informal coaching is being done; there were 280 contacts in August. Each classroom is being monitored for progress in reaching curriculum fidelity. Head Start and NC PreK saw some gaps in the Use and Assessment values, which will be targeted with coaching with the goal of seeing improvement in six months.
- The education level of staff is trending up which is encouraging.
- Comprehensive pre-service training was held for a week-and-a-half in August for all staff including a conference day with 23 class/training options for staff to select their own learning. There will also be two professional development days in September.

NC Pre-K / Head Start Report – Amy Smith

- The state will be using a modified childcare environment assessment and reflective self-study process during the pandemic (ECERS-R and ITERS-R).
- The 2021-2022 Family Handbook has been updated, translated into Spanish, and distributed through the sites to families, with a focus on health and safety procedure updates.
- Staff in the NC PreK program will participate in a state-funded, intensive early literacy training for teachers called LETRS, which will start in January 2022.

Next meeting dates: October 20th
November 17th
December 15th
January 19th
February 16th
March 23rd (week after Spring Break)
April 20th
May 18th
June 15th

Virtual Meeting TIMES TBD by Committee

The Policy Council will meet at 1:30 PM virtually for the October 20 meeting. Once new parent representatives are recruited to participate in the Policy Council, we will discuss in future meetings the meeting time that would work best for the Council members.

Comments and Questions: There were no comments or questions.

- ❖ Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by Simone Wertenberger and seconded by Simone Wertenberger. The meeting was adjourned by Donecia Santana at 2:47 PM.