

WNCSource Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes April 20, 2022

❖ Indicates a vote is required

Donecia Santana called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

Present: Kasheiva Jackson, Meghan Arnold, Pearl Saddler, David White, Donecia Santana, Adriana Abee, Amy Phillips, Itzel Palacios, Bridgett Librado, Amy Smith, Margit Nelson, Dan Edwards, Terri Bowman, Diane Nelson, Linda Carter, Shannon Marlowe, Marlene Brown, Zaida Gomez, Kristian Robinson, Maria Guadalupe, Heidi Jordan, Jessica Ownbey, Yadira Ortiz-Castillo, Dylan Allanson, Yessica Garcia, Ibbby Whitten

Establish a Quorum - It was determined that there were enough members present to constitute a quorum. Items needing a quorum will be voted on during the meeting.

❖ Review and Approve Minutes from the March 2022 meeting: A motion to approve the minutes was made by Shannon Marlowe and seconded by Diane Nelson. The March 2022 minutes were unanimously approved.

Announcement for Parent Representatives- Margit Nelson

Margit announced that any parent representative who attends the Policy Council meeting will receive a \$15 McDonald's gift card. Parents in attendance will provide their address in the chat box to Dan Edwards who will mail them the gift card.

New Business:

❖ **Carry-over Grant Funds Request, Grant #04CH011737 - Ibbby Whitten**

Due to the staffing shortage and the resulting lower child enrollment numbers, there are unspent EHS/HS grant funds that were awarded to WNCSource previously for which we will submit a request to retain unused funding in the amount of \$651,582 from the 2021 (Year 2) grant year that would support construction, staff training, and equipment/furnishings costs as well as employee retention initiatives and activities. A motion to approve the Carry-over Funds Request for grant #04CH011737 was made by Shannon Marlowe and seconded by Diane Nelson. The motion was unanimously approved.

❖ **Carry-over Grant Funds Request, Grant #04HP000443 - Ibbby Whitten**

Due to the staffing shortage and the resulting lower child enrollment numbers, there are unspent EHS Expansion grant funds that were awarded to WNCSource previously for which we will submit a request to retain unused funding in the amount of \$652,968 from March 2021 that would support Family Child Care Home start-up costs, new childcare center start-up costs, and all costs associated with the CDA Training Program including salaries and tuition. A motion to approve the Carry-over

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Funds Request for grant #04HP000443 was made by Shannon Marlowe and seconded by Itzel Palacios. The motion was unanimously approved.

Reports:

Chief Executive Officer's Report - David White

- The transportation department is now fully staffed. The employee recruitment and retention taskforce has brainstormed several great initiatives and has had multiple successes, hiring several new employees in Children's Services and within the CDA Trainee program which is also giving current Head Start parents an opportunity to gain employment and start a new career. WNCSource is using every available resource to recruit, including digital platform collaborations such as with WSPA-TV. WNCSource is also focusing on employee retention and appreciation events, which has resulted in less staff turnover recently.
- Best of Blue Ridge - WNCSource was chosen as the "Best" in three 3 categories in 2021 in this local competition; we will nominate ourselves also for 2022.

Chief Financial Officer's Report - Ibbby Whitten

- Financials and Credit Card Expenditure Reports: This report covers the financial information for both February and March. We are tracking below budget on all grants due to staff shortages which impacts enrollment and classroom closures. We will submit the approved carry-over requests to the Office of Head Start. We have received around \$455,000 in stabilization funds from the state which are awarded quarterly and regulated by the state in terms of how the money must be spent; thus far we have used funds to help pay for COVID-related losses, costs associated with the CDA Trainee Program, employee stipends for working wraparound hours, retention and wellness activities, and mental health training. We continue to experience losses in the CACFP food program (this is typical, but the losses are lower now due to Henderson County Public Schools providing part of the food for our programs) as well as losses in the NC Pre-K program due to closed classrooms. Credit card costs totaled approximately \$10,000 for February and March, with costs stemming mainly from training, tuition, and supplies.

Enrollment Report – Kasheiva Jackson

- Enrollment during March across all programs was at 43%, due mainly to classroom closures due to staffing shortages; 280 children are on the waitlist. The graph that was presented showed the enrollment percentage for each individual program. 70 new applications for enrollment were received during March.

Attendance Report - Meghan Arnold

- Attendance rates in March remained steady between 74% and 81% for all programs except EHS Expansion which had a 98% attendance rate. Absences were mainly due to parent decisions and illness, with a significant decrease in COVID-related absences.

Family Services - Meghan Arnold

- The completion rate for Family Partnership Agreement (FPA) forms has increased by 50% for currently enrolled students, thanks to the hard work of our Family Advocates, many of whom are still fairly new. The FPAs help families set goals that are worked on over the course of the year. 85% of Family Strengths and Needs Assessments have been completed, which

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represents a 9% increase during March; these are usually completed at the initial home visit, but staffing shortages as well as COVID have affected completion times and rates.

Program Support Services Report – Amy Phillips

- Professional Development: We have been very focused on training and professional development for our staff: Four management team members completed the “Build Your Bounce” trainer program to support employee wellness. We have also been accepted into a wellness initiative run by UCLA that helps Head Start centers develop a systems approach to staff wellness. Six employees will be going to the NHSA Conference with Amy P being one of the conference presenters. There are a couple of half-days coming up that will allow time for home visits, family conferences, child assessments, and wellness activities, as well as mental health/burnout training and an I.D.E.A. disabilities training. The Employee Assistance Network is also always available as a resource for employee wellness and support.

EHS Program Manager’s Report – Pearl Saddler

- Various inspections are occurring at centers: Etowah and Flat Rock received superior ratings for health/sanitation inspections; Sugar Hill underwent a licensing inspection; both Etowah and Sugar Hill have Modified ITERS Assessments coming up.
- Hillview families were able to participate in a PBS Rootle Roadster event. Several EHS staff attended ITS-SIDS training, and Family Advocates were trained in maintaining quality family engagement. The Sunny View site completed their Modified ITERS Assessment and received their permanent license, however the site has closed temporarily due to staffing shortages.

HS/NC Pre-K Program Manager’s Report – Amy Smith

- The Outdoor Learning Environments (OLE) continue to evolve and grow, providing much enjoyment and promoting sensory learning for the children.
- LETRS training continues for NC Pre-K teachers who are obtaining comprehensive knowledge and strategies in literacy instruction for young learners.
- We are thankful to have CDA trainees and other interns working in centers, providing extra help (non-ratio) while they prepare for a career in early childhood education.

Program Director’s Report – Linda Carter

- Nine classrooms were closed at varying times in March due to lack of staff.
- Facilities: We are waiting for final approval to build the new center in Columbus. The new Tebeau and Forest City site remodeling projects are moving forward. OLE shade structures are being constructed at the centers. The floors at all centers in Henderson County received a professional cleaning. Parent bulletin boards are being installed at school sites for the posting of calendars, important messages and Policy Council minutes.
- We are forming a community partnership with Blue Ridge Literacy Council (BRLC) to collaborate on providing recruitment support, language training and assistance to our non-English speaking families. BRLC will prioritize tutoring for parents seeking employment including our CDA training program.
- Staffing Updates: We had five new hires and six departures in March, though fortunately the situation is improving with the hiring rate in April being greater than the departure rate. Dylan Allanson is our new Health and Nutrition Coordinator and Yadira Ortiz-Castillo is a new Family Advocate. We currently have 74 open positions in Children’s Services, and recruitment efforts are continuing to be our major focus, including the CDA trainee program.

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Comments and Questions / Any updates from parent representatives: There were no additional questions or comments. There was one update from the CCP program parent representative Kristian: Laurie's Childcare center is using grant money to expand its playground area, which will greatly benefit the children.

❖ **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn was made by Shannon Marlowe and seconded by Diane Nelson. The meeting was adjourned by Donecia Santana at 10:00 AM.

Next virtual meeting dates: May 18
 June 15