

## WNCSource Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes March 22, 2023

\* Indicates a vote is required

Kim Wilson called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM.

**Present:** Kathleen McDavid, Dan Edwards, Amy Phillips, Kim Wilson, Amy Smith, Paige Bronson, Jeanette Rodriguez, Dylan Allanson, Linda Carter, David White, Veronica Galvan-de-Unda, Donecia Santana, Maria Guadalupe Zamudio, Kiki Jackson, Patty Burgess, Eric Hoffman, Lavonna Ruth, Adriana Abee, Margit Nelson, Yecenia Sandoval, Kristian Toro, Jissel Zamudio, Yessica Araujo, Kiara Gash, Jennifer Arellano, Elide Gonzalez, Laura Durham, Bridgett Librado, Erin Outlaw

**Establish a Quorum** - It was determined that there were enough members present to constitute a quorum. Items needing a vote were voted on and approved with a quorum during the meeting.

\* Review and Approve Minutes from the February 15, 2023 meeting: A motion to approve the minutes was made by Donecia Santana and seconded by Laura Durham, and the February 15, 2023 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 \$20 McDonald's gift card in lieu of breakfast typically provided at in person meetings. Parents in attendance will provide their address in the chat box to Dan Edwards who will mail them the gift card.

Kim Wilson took a moment to thank those who were able to attend the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Columbus Children's Center on March 10, which will provide greatly needed services to children and families in Polk County once it's open. She shared that many people in the local community are thankful and excited for the support that the center will provide.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **COVID-19 Testing for Unvaccinated Staff - Linda Carter \***

- The Office of Head Start (OHS) mandate requiring all staff to be COVID vaccinated will allow employees with a documented religious or medical exemption to work onsite provided that they are tested weekly for COVID. The Board of Directors has approved moving forward with the attached, thoroughly researched and crafted policy and procedure for testing exempted employees every Monday morning. Children's Services has 3 current employees who have been working remotely and would fall under this process. This would also allow us to potentially hire new staff with approved vaccination exemptions. Several staff at various locations are being trained to administer the tests. The policy outlines detailed instructions for testing and the procedure to be implemented if a positive test result occurs (exclusion from work). A motion to approve this COVID-19 testing process for unvaccinated staff was

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made by Donecia Santana and seconded by Laura Durham, and the COVID-19 testing process was unanimously approved.

**CCP Grant Refunding Application - Linda Carter \***

- WNCSource will be submitting an application to the Office of Head Start requesting funding continuation for Grant #04HP000306 to fund the budget for Child Care Partnership (CCP) program services, including Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) and goals for the 2023-2024 program year (Year 5 [final year] of the grant cycle). The total amount will fund daily services in center-based slots for 80 Early Head Start students/families. The requested funds of \$2,143,244 include \$1,679,045 in federal base funding, \$35,550 for T/TA plus \$428,649 as a 20% non-federal share match (which comes mainly from donations of needed goods/services/volunteer time or state/other grant funds). A motion to approve the CCP Grant Refunding Application request was made by Jennifer Arellano and seconded by Laura Durham, and the CCP Grant Refunding Application request was unanimously approved.

**EHS Expansion Grant Refunding Application - Linda Carter \***

- WNCSource will be submitting an application to the Office of Head Start requesting funding continuation for Grant #04HP000443 to fund the budget for EHS Expansion program services (including T/TA) and goals for the 2023-2024 program year (Year 3 of the grant cycle). The total amount will fund daily services in center-based slots or Family Child Care Homes for 99 EHS students/families. The requested funds of \$2,853,566 include \$2,228,624 in federal base funding, \$54,229 for T/TA plus \$570,713 as a 20% non-federal share match (which comes mainly from donations of needed goods/services/volunteer time or state/other grant funds). A motion to approve the EHS Expansion Refunding Application request was made by Jennifer Arellano and seconded by Donecia Santana, and the Expansion Refunding Application request was unanimously approved.

**COLA and Quality Improvement Funding Applications, All 3 Grants - Linda Carter \***

- WNCSource will be submitting applications to the Office of Head Start requesting a 5.6% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and QI funding for all three grants. All staff will receive the 5.6% COLA increase. The QI funds will also be used for pay rate increases (mainly for staff who did not receive an increase from the change of scope in January), and in answer to a question from Jennifer A, Linda stressed that there will be a focus on achieving fairness and equity while also taking into account seniority/length of employment and education levels in order to ensure that every employee is paid at the appropriate rate. QI funds will also be used to offset rising costs in the CACFP food program, in workers compensation, and in other areas of the program that have been particularly affected by inflation.

For the primary HS/EHS Grant 04CH011737, COLA in the amounts of \$138,196 for HS and \$179,676 for EHS is requested; while for QI, funding in the amounts of \$52,359 for HS and \$50,599 for EHS is being requested. A motion to approve the COLA/QI Funding Application

request for the HS/EHS Grant (04CH011737) was made by Jennifer Arellano and seconded by Laura Durham, and the COLA/QI Funding Application request was unanimously approved.

For the CCP (EHS) Grant 04HP000306, the total COLA amount being requested is \$94,027 along with QI funding of \$33,733. A motion to approve the COLA/QI Funding Application request for the CCP Grant (04HP000306) was made by Laura Durham and seconded by Donecia Santana, and the COLA/QI Funding Application request was unanimously approved.

For the Expansion (EHS) Grant 04HP000443, the total COLA amount being requested is \$124,803 along with QI funding of \$41,744. A motion to approve the COLA/QI Funding Application request for the EHS Expansion Grant (04HP000443) was made by Donecia Santana and seconded by Laura Durham, and the COLA/QI Funding Application request was unanimously approved.

Typically, a COLA increase would be effective at the start of the new fiscal year (July 1), but WNCSource would like approval to request from OHS that the COLA funding for staff become effective on 5/1/23. A motion to approve requesting a 5/1/23 start date from OHS for the COLA funds was made by Laura Durham and seconded by Donecia Santana, and the 5/1/23 effective date COLA funding request was unanimously approved.

#### **Training/Technical Assistance Plans: EHS Expansion Grant and CCP Grant - Amy Phillips \***

- The proposed 2023-2024 T/TA Plans for Expansion Grant #04HP000443 and CCP Grant #04HP000306 were presented and included a request for government funds of \$54,229 to be used for training and technical assistance for the EHS Expansion program and a request for government funds of \$35,550 to be used for T/TA for the CCP program. The plan and requested funds will ensure that staff, families, and governing bodies (Policy Council, Board, parent committees) receive the skills and knowledge needed to fulfill their roles through a variety of both individual and group training modalities. Additionally, all staff participate annually in training areas that are required by the Office of Head Start (OHS) and the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education. We provide a comprehensive orientation program for new staff as well as job role-specific professional development opportunities that equip staff to successfully fulfill their responsibilities, thereby ensuring the success of our students and programs.

Training plans specific to the Expansion Grant will support our program goals in the areas of teacher certification and site leader credential pathways; staff education and development including National Head Start external training events, ChildPlus software and data training, Triple P certification, and Communities of Practice; implementation of curriculum to fidelity; and diversity and inclusion. A motion to approve the Training/Technical Assistance Plan for the EHS Expansion Grant was made by Laura Durham and seconded by Donecia Santana, and the Expansion Grant Training/Technical Assistance Plan was unanimously approved.

Training plans specific to the CCP Grant will support our program goals in the areas of school readiness by promoting teacher education and certification (and site leader credential program); implementation of curriculum to fidelity through the use of Teaching Strategies certified trainers and internal mentors; trauma resilience through Conscious Discipline training; family engagement by using multiple strategies including utilizing Family Development Model-trained staff. A motion to approve the Training/Technical Assistance Plan for the CCP Grant was made by Laura Durham and seconded by Donecia Santana, and the CCP Grant Training/Technical Assistance Plan was unanimously approved.

## REPORTS:

### Chief Executive Officer's Report - David White

- Recruiting and Retaining Employees: In spite of WNCSource increasing compensation and providing retention bonuses, finding and retaining qualified staff continues to be a major challenge (indeed for all HS agencies nationwide). Therefore, we will be engaging an outside consulting company (that has researched this issue and presented data at a regional HS Board meeting recently) at a cost of \$8000 who will survey current and former staff, conduct focus groups and recommend strategies to increase hiring and reduce turnover.
- Testing for Unvaccinated Employees: Linda Carter has already reviewed this subject during the "New Business" section of this meeting.

### Chief Financial Officer's Report - Erin Outlaw for Ibbby Whitten

- Financials and Credit Card Expenditure Reports: February's expenses were below budget due to lower enrollment and teacher shortages; all grants should be at 67%, but range from 35%-59% except for the Expansion grant which is at 31% of the fiscal year-to-date budget. Carryover grant funds will be requested soon. February's credit card spending was \$4,880, with most of the expense coming from training and professional development.

### Program Director's Report – Linda Carter

- We are collaborating with Hands of Hope in Rutherford County to serve pregnant mothers and were able to have a joint training session with their staff in February.
- The new Tebeau site passed all inspections and received their license in early March.
- All policies and procedures are being collaboratively reviewed and updated.
- We are participating in Trauma Resilient Communities (TRC) training in coordination with the Crossnore organization that will continue throughout the coming few years.
- Anna Williams, a full-time recruiter was hired on March 8 and has already made an impact.
- Under-Enrollment Plan: A detailed, multi-faceted action plan was submitted to OHS with the goal of reaching a 97% student enrollment rate by February 2024; updates will be provided to the Policy Council on a regular basis.
- OHS is piloting a new process for doing CLASS (a classroom assessment scoring system) observations via video beginning March 9 and ending May 1.
- There were five one-day, one-class closures during February due to lack of staff; one room at Flat Rock moved to King Creek on February 20. We've had no recent COVID-related closures.
- Staff: Since the last meeting, we have hired 0 new staff members and lost 6 employees.
- Facilities: The Sunny View and Main Street sites will close due to lack of staff; we hope to reopen the Fletcher site for the coming school year. Floor cleaning will occur at all sites.

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### **Enrollment Report – Kasheiva Jackson**

- All sites are under-enrolled due to teacher shortages: The center-based EHS enrollment rate is 45%, home-based EHS is at 50%, EHS Expansion is at 13%, EHS/CCP is at 62%; HS enrollment is 44%, NC Pre-K is at 56%. 297 children are on the waitlist.

### **Attendance Report - Kasheiva Jackson**

- February average daily attendance: The average attendance rate goal is 85%: EHS was at 79%, CCP at 79%, HS at 80%, and NCPK at 81%. Most of the absences were due to non-COVID illnesses or the decision of the parent to keep the child at home (only 3.1% were related to COVID).

### **Education and Child Development Report – Lavonna Ruth**

- Child Development: At the mid-February assessment, development growth percentages in all categories increased, showing steady progress of children in meeting age expectations for the majority of children (80% and above in social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, and literacy, with 78% in math). Staff collaborated in “community of practice” sessions to assess what contributes to growth and development, and parent engagement was determined to be a critical component.
- Family Engagement: 194 initial home visits have been completed so far this program year. 54 second home visits have been completed so far with 49 due and being scheduled. 129 parent conferences have been completed, with 40 due in the near future.
- Coaching: 256 coaching contacts were made since the last update, with 24 intensive coaching sessions being completed. Curriculum fidelity checklists were completed for CCP classrooms in February, and HS/NCPK fidelity checklists will finish up in March.
- Parent Educator Home Visit Rating: The quality of the home visiting program was assessed in February on a scale of 1 to 7, with the Parent Educator home visit practices scoring a 6 and family engagement scoring at 5.33.

### **Early Intervention Report - Patty Burgess**

- Disabilities: 12 referrals have been initiated with 8 more pending, plus support plans that may lead to referrals increased to 9, resulting in 13% of funded HS enrollment and 7% of funded EHS enrollment being served. Resources continue to be shared with parents one-on-one and with teachers as well as during ASQ completion.
- Development & Behavior Screenings: 289 ASQ screenings have been completed and newly enrolled students are being scheduled promptly.
- Mental Health: One consultant and two staff continue to provide behavioral intervention support for children and families, ranging from 1 child (at Dana, Forest City) to 15 (SH).
- EI Updates: The EI team made 129 site visits. 30 children are receiving private therapy. Tools, strategies, and resources are being provided to teachers and parents; individualized support is being provided to students and referrals are being made to a variety of services and agencies in the community. Patty met with all site supervisors and attended IEP meetings.

### **Nutrition and Health Services Report - Dylan Allanson**

- 100% of children have medical homes; 28 children had well child checks and 7 had dental visits in January. The health team continues to prioritize communication with site staff and families in an effort to schedule provider appointments and update health statuses.

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- Dental: Coordinating dental homes and dental screenings are a major focus for the Health Team, with 112 screenings completed and 16 of those being abnormal and referred for follow-up and treatment. 85% of children over age 1 now have dental homes.
- CACFP: The report of meals and snacks served in January per site reflects the lower student enrollment numbers; January reimbursement for food costs requested from the CACFP program totaled \$22,323.

#### **Family Services Report - Eric Hoffman**

- Family Strengths and Needs Assessments increased to a 91% completion rate in February. 227 families are now connected to the Ready Rosie parent curriculum, with 160 families actively participating and giving positive feedback. There were over 140 video views in the last month, providing extra learning opportunities for families.

#### **Early Head Start Report - Pearl Saddler**

- An update was provided to Policy Council members from the Operation Report via email since Pearl was unable to attend and present virtually.

#### **CCP (Partnership) Report - Kathleen McDavid**

- The CCP team meetings are changing from weekly to monthly, and the monthly CCP Director meetings focus on providing program updates to the CCP sites as well as in-depth training on policies and procedures. Partnership, FCCH recruitment and enrollment efforts continue, with two potential new FCCH partners working on licensing processes.

#### **HS/NC Pre-K Program Manager's Report – Amy Smith**

- The new Tebeau center received its temporary license on 3/6/23, the six month window has begun for hiring staff and enrolling children. Outdoor Learning Environments are gearing up for spring planting at all sites. Kindergarten transition meetings have begun with families, providing support and information and building on Kindergarten readiness activities that have taken place throughout the year.

#### **Professional Development - Amy Phillips**

- Several small group trainings occurred during January and February on a more local or site-based level, as well as an all-staff session in January focused on transitions and learning about the CACFP program, and one in February learning about Conscious Discipline.

#### **Comments and Questions / Any updates from parent representatives:**

Laura D commented that Forest City is having their ITERS inspection today; she gave positive comments about the staff and program there. Kristian T (Sugar Hill) asked about the drop-off procedure (inside vs. outside the building), and Bridgett Librado answered that the other organization that we share the building with has requested that parents remain outside for now (until the next school year). Elide G (King Creek) stated that her Family Advocate (Yessica) is always responsive and helpful and the teachers have helped her child a lot. Elide also asked earlier if the grant refunding process would open up more EHS slots for children on the waitlist, and Linda Carter explained the challenges involved with staff shortages and the many measures that the grant monies help fund to address the lack of staff and resulting classroom closures, including the trainee and apprenticeship programs which offer a long-term solution (rather than immediate). Also the

Expansion grant funds go toward opening new centers such as the Tebeau site. There were no further comments or questions.

\* **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn was made by Laura Durham and seconded by Donecia Santana. The meeting was adjourned by Kim Wilson at 10:38 AM.

**Next virtual meeting date:** April 19 at 9:00 AM

**Future Meeting Schedule:** May 17 ■ June 7