

**WNCSource Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes  
September 21, 2023**

\* Indicates a vote is required

Kim Wilson called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

**Present:** Carolyn Chandler, Veronica Galvan-de-Unda, Yamili Olvera, Margit Nelson, Candice Freeman, Amy Phillips, Candy Doncevic, Kim Wilson, Kathleen McDavid, Yessica Araujo, Jen Scroggs, Kiki Jackson, David White, Shannon Marlowe, Mary Hanson, Miranda Dudney, Kayla Hernandez, Andrea Paniagua, Jissel Zamudio, Yessenia Garcia, Elizabeth Whitten, Maria G Zamudio, Kristian Toro, Amy Smith, Heather Brewer-Jones, Linda Carter, Eric Hoffman, Jeanette Rodriguez, Michelle Flynn, Angie Davis, Dylan Allanson, Jessica Ownbey, Jennie Lee, Heather Gordon, Dan Edwards

**Establish a Quorum** - It was determined that there were enough members present to constitute a quorum at the beginning of the meeting, so all items needing a vote were voted on and approved with a quorum during the meeting.

\* Review and Approve Minutes from the June 7, 2023 meeting: A motion to approve the minutes was made by Shannon Marlowe and seconded by Carolyn Chandler, and the June 7, 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. Parents in attendance should provide their address in the chat box to Dan Edwards who will mail them the gift card.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Policy Council Officers Nomination - Linda Carter**

- It's time to elect a Policy Council Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary for the 2023-24 program year. Members and officers who were seated last year typically continue serving until we can elect and seat new members and officers in October. Many of the parent representatives have already been elected at each individual site for this year and a few new community members have agreed to participate this year in addition to last year's returning community partners. The following officer nominations have been made: Jessica Ownbey (HCPS) for Chair, Rachel Walker (Impact Health) for Vice Chair, and Carolyn Chandler (guardian of current EHS student) for Secretary. If anyone else is interested in serving or would like to nominate a different candidate, please contact Dan Edwards to make your wishes known. Officer nominations will be voted on at the October Policy Council meeting.

*CHILDREN'S SERVICES • HOUSING • TRANSPORTATION • OLDER ADULT SERVICES*

*Working with communities and partners, WNCSource improves people's lives by creating pathways to self-reliance and healthier living*

**220 King Creek Blvd. • PO Box 685 • Hendersonville, NC 28793-0685 • Ph. 828-693-1711 • Fax 828-697-4277**

### **Changes in Scope \* - Linda Carter**

- Earlier this year the Office of Head Start issued an announcement that sites which had an enrollment rate below 85% (which includes WNCSource) would need to try to reach 97% enrollment by February 2024. We submitted an under enrollment action plan to OHS in March 2023 and have been working diligently (and with input from OHS) using multiple strategies to try to increase staffing and enrollment. However, in spite of implementing those strategies and experiencing a modest level of improvement, the challenge of maintaining full staffing continues, which impacts our ability to reach full enrollment for all sites. Thus we would like to request from the OHS a reduction in the number of funded enrollment slots for our primary HS/EHS grant (04CH011737) and our EHS Expansion grant (04HP000443). This proposal would reduce the available enrollment slots assigned to us by OHS while ideally maintaining the same funding amounts. Our Finance team will review and assess the budget needed to fund all aspects of the proposal. The change in scope will propose strategies to optimize staff recruitment and retention, thereby ensuring that we can serve as many children as possible by maximizing the number of open classrooms, as well as strategies to provide needed services to families. Possible strategies that may be funded would include but are not limited to: covering apprenticeship program expenses, adding Family Advocate positions in order to reduce high caseloads, continuing retention/referral/hiring bonuses, allowing current 12-month teachers to work 10 months if desired by adding summer staff, adding teacher aides to assist with the increasing amount of challenging behaviors, and implementing transportation (bussing) in Transylvania and Henderson Counties. Linda presented a detailed spreadsheet with staffing, enrollment, and classroom data that outlined both the current situation and the proposed changes, including financial projections. The proposed enrollment slot reductions would primarily affect classrooms that are already closed due to a lack of staff, thereby minimizing the impact on families currently being served. The proposal also includes removing all home-based slots and converting the current Parent Educator position to a Family Advocate role. We are requesting a reduction of 24 (home-based) slots in the EHS program (from 120 to 96 slots), 48 in the Expansion EHS program (from 99 to 51 slots), and 49 in the HS program (from 185 to 136 slots). A motion to approve the change in scope as presented for the primary HS/EHS grant was made by Shannon Marlowe and Yamili Hernandez seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. A motion to approve the change in scope as presented for the EHS expansion grant was made by Shannon Marlowe and Carolyn Chandler seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **Community Assessment Update - Eric Hoffman**

- Eric presented slides with detailed community demographic data, comparing data from January 2022 with more current information. Some highlighted data includes: Of the approximately 13,000 children in our service area, 2,360 are eligible for HS based on income, which is a 10% decrease from January 2022. We served 27 homeless children in the last program year. Over 11% of enrolled children have a disability. Deaths from substance abuse have increased every year over the past

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES • HOUSING • TRANSPORTATION • OLDER ADULT SERVICES**

*Working with communities and partners, WNCSource improves people's lives by creating pathways to self-reliance and healthier living*

**220 King Creek Blvd. • PO Box 685 • Hendersonville, NC 28793-0685 • Ph. 828-693-1711 • Fax 828-697-4277**

three years. The poverty rate has decreased across our entire service area. Health outcomes and food security rates have worsened (except in Transylvania County). Inflation: all living costs have increased by 4-10% including transportation and housing.

- Children's Services programs: There are 119 licensed child care centers in our service area and 73% accept child care subsidies.
- Economic Workforce Factors: Staff vacancies in early childhood are higher now nationwide than ever before, with poor compensation and lack of qualified candidates being the main reasons.
- Goals and Outlook: We are prioritizing staff recruitment and retention, as well as building strong community partnerships. We're brainstorming ways to provide transportation for families, as well as focusing on addressing challenging behaviors and increasing support for families' mental health.

#### **Self Assessment Report - Eric Hoffman**

- Head Start requires programs to perform an annual internal review that analyzes data, sets a timeline, collaborates with staff and community members/agency partners, determines any needed improvements, develops an action plan, seeks approval from the Policy Council and Board, and then implements the plan and recommendations. Starting in May 2023, internal staff have been meeting to discuss program data and outcomes, collaborating with three supporting agencies, and surveying teaching staff as well as 123 families. Survey topics for teachers included retention as it relates to compensation, challenging behaviors and creating manageable classrooms, and staff mental health and wellness. Families were surveyed about barriers that affect consistent attendance, and communication with center teachers and staff.
- Program Strengths: Staff wellness initiatives, positive staff relationships with families, opportunities for individualized staff training, focus on trauma informed care.
- Potential Areas for Improvement: Increase family presence in classrooms and social events, diversify the workforce and classrooms, create more manageable classrooms, add classroom support and resources to meet the needs of children with challenging behaviors.
- Key Recommendations: Support staff wellness while continuing to implement strategies to alleviate the staff shortage, train staff on trauma informed care and diversity, revise selection criteria and enrollment placement to alleviate stress for teachers and children, and focus on communication with families especially regarding consistent attendance, child safety, referral support, and community resources.

#### **Primary HS/EHS Grant Carry Over Funds Request \* - Ibby Whitten**

- At the end of the 2022-2023 fiscal year, we had unspent grant funds of \$1.1 million, which we will request from OHS to carry those funds over to the 2023-2024 grant year. Unspent operating funds of \$1,124,376 are requested to be used for staff recruitment and retention, teacher apprenticeship program expenses, replacement of old HVAC units and vehicles, and facility repairs, furnishings, and landscaping. A

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES • HOUSING • TRANSPORTATION • OLDER ADULT SERVICES**

*Working with communities and partners, WNCSource improves people's lives by creating pathways to self-reliance and healthier living*

**220 King Creek Blvd. • PO Box 685 • Hendersonville, NC 28793-0685 • Ph. 828-693-1711 • Fax 828-697-4277**

motion to approve the Carry Over Funds request to OHS was made by Carolyn Chandler and Andrea Paniagua seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

## **REPORTS:**

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

- We have partnered with BRCC for an early childhood education apprenticeship program. We currently have 5 apprentices doing coursework at BRCC while being employed full time at WNCSource and "learning on the job."
- Staff appreciate the wellness program, which awards points for employees taking care of their health which they can then use towards earning PTO. Our healthcare costs are lower than the average for companies our size. We spend \$38,000 on the wellness plan (including a free medical clinic for staff) but realize a cost savings of about \$124,000 annually.
- Our thrift store Bargain Hendo has been closed since June for retaining wall repairs.
- Full Enrollment Initiative: OHS provided training for staff and Board members on governance and the Full Enrollment Initiative in July. Several new classrooms will hopefully open this fall, including rooms at our new Tebeau site and a new room within Edneyville Elementary.
- Columbus Child Care Center: Work has begun on the new site with projected opening in late 2024.

### **Chief Financial Officer's Report - Ibbby Whitten**

- Financials for August 2023: Current expenses are below budgeted for the fiscal year for all programs. Expenses are low due to lack of staff and lower enrollment. As teachers and children are added, expenses should level out. We received some NCPK funds to be used to update classrooms.
- Credit Card for August: \$15,702 with the majority of expenses coming from maintenance, staff travel, and training.

### **Program Director's Report – Linda Carter**

- New program year Open Houses were a success. An All Staff training was held on 8/21. BRCC Apprentices have been assigned to work in classrooms and are doing a great job. We are working to open classrooms in Fletcher and Edneyville.
- Classroom Closures: Four rooms experienced 1-day closures due to staffing, and one room was closed on 8/29 for a maintenance issue.
- Staff Updates: Eight staff departed, and eleven new employees were hired in August.

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

- All sites are under-enrolled due to teacher shortages: The center-based EHS enrollment rate is 47%, home-based EHS is at 50%, EHS Expansion is at 25%, EHS/CCP is at 76%; HS enrollment is 56%, NC Pre-K is at 57%. 223 children are waitlisted, with most being on the HS program waitlist.

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES • HOUSING • TRANSPORTATION • OLDER ADULT SERVICES**

*Working with communities and partners, WNCSource improves people's lives by creating pathways to self-reliance and healthier living*

**220 King Creek Blvd. • PO Box 685 • Hendersonville, NC 28793-0685 • Ph. 828-693-1711 • Fax 828-697-4277**

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

- August average daily attendance: The average attendance rate goal is 85%. EHS was at 79%, CCP at 83%, HS at 82%, and NCPK at 85%. During the period 7/21-8/30, most of the 642 absences were due to non-COVID illnesses or parents' decision. There were 27 COVID-related absences.
- Funded vs. Actual Enrollment: Enrollment percentages from August 2022 were presented and compared with percentages from August 2023, showing that while actual enrollment has increased - particularly in the HS and EHS-Expansion areas, all programs are still well below funded enrollment requirements.

### **Education and Child Development Report – Amy Phillips**

- Amy presented school readiness data graphics from last year's three checkpoints, and growth was seen from the fall to the spring. As some children drop and new children enroll, often it's not the same children being assessed, which affects the growth rates. The growth reports demonstrate growth patterns by categories, with the lowest area being phonological awareness, so we will focus on building knowledge and skills gleaned from the LETRS program (reading, spelling, language skills) in our classrooms. The largest group we serve is 4-year olds, and more than 50% of those have not been in a child care center previously and thus have lower skill sets, but almost all of them meet or exceed expectations by the end of the year.

### **Early Intervention Report - Amy Phillips**

- Disabilities: Each program requires us to serve 10% of our funded enrollment with children who qualify for an IEP or IFSP. Currently, 9% of funded HS enrollment, 8% of funded CCP enrollment, 2% of funded Expansion enrollment, and 5% of funded EHS enrollment are receiving disabilities services, with diagnosed disabilities that include autism; health, speech, or language impairment; and developmental delay. The percentage rates of the actual number of enrolled students being served is higher and exceeds 10% in all programs except the Expansion grant program which is at 7%.
- 164 children have received development and behavior screening as of the end of August, with areas of need being identified and strategies/resources provided to both teachers and parents. 49 children have a "referral recommended" status, parents are being supported as they request referrals, and some children will be reevaluated after the first checkpoint.

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

- Well child check status (physicals): 95% of EHS, 90% of CCP, and 99% of HS child physicals are up-to-date. We are working with center staff and sending reminders to families to ensure children receive check-ups consistently.
- Dental status: All families have been screened during health enrollment calls for dental exam status and dental homes, and referrals are made as needed.
- Vision and Hearing Referral Status: The health team is currently completing initial screenings for this program year, prioritizing new students but also updating returning students; failed screenings result in referrals to medical providers.

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES • HOUSING • TRANSPORTATION • OLDER ADULT SERVICES**

*Working with communities and partners, WNCSource improves people's lives by creating pathways to self-reliance and healthier living*

**220 King Creek Blvd. • PO Box 685 • Hendersonville, NC 28793-0685 • Ph. 828-693-1711 • Fax 828-697-4277**



- CACFP July reimbursement was \$2,922. The amount is lower during the summer due to only EHS rooms being open and Henderson County Public Schools providing free lunches to the children. Henderson County Public Schools continues to provide breakfast and lunch to the sites during the school year.
- The county Cooperative Extension office will present nutrition classes at two centers this fall. Farm visits are being arranged. We're trying to get WIC to come to the sites for biannual eligibility assessments (these are done during enrollment screening also). The health team will conduct health-related licensing audits in classrooms during October to ensure compliance with HS regulations. Blue Ridge Health will conduct dental screenings in classrooms, which is especially needed for those children without dental homes.

#### **Family Services Report - Kasheiva Jackson**

- Parenting Curriculum: 726 families (both historical and current) are connected to the Ready Rosie school readiness and parent engagement curriculum, with 108 currently enrolled regular users. Recently viewed videos include *Show Your Love*, *Active Listening*, and *Reading Strategies*. Targeted outcomes for this program include positive parent-child relationships, and families as lifelong learners and educators.

#### **HS/NC Pre-K Report - Amy Smith**

- HS and NCPK classrooms will focus on early literacy skill development in preparation for kindergarten, as well as on social emotional development using a trauma informed mindset and forming positive relationships.
- Vacancies: Recruitment and interviews are continuing in an effort to fill vacant lead teacher and teacher assistant positions.
- Successful open houses were held at all sites, opening communication channels between staff and families.

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

- Both rooms are open at Little Red; new FCCH site God's Gifts is fully enrolled; Laurie's and Kids Kingdom are fully enrolled; Little Blessings will be closing (or possibly sold to a new provider); new CCP partner Little Bright Minds has four of eight slots filled; Above and Beyond (new FCCH site) has closed due to a licensing issue and those students were able to be transferred to our site in Forest City.
- We were able to provide new CCP partners with laptops and I-pads for EHS classrooms.

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

- Our coaches have led training for teachers that should ensure successful routines and relationships for the program year. A Professional Development Coordinator started today. All staff attended two days of PreService training (8/21 and 9/5).

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

Kristian Toro let everyone know that supervisor Kelly Pittman is moving to the Flat Rock site.

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES • HOUSING • TRANSPORTATION • OLDER ADULT SERVICES**

*Working with communities and partners, WNCSource improves people's lives by creating pathways to self-reliance and healthier living*

**220 King Creek Blvd. • PO Box 685 • Hendersonville, NC 28793-0685 • Ph. 828-693-1711 • Fax 828-697-4277**

Juan Unda is now the site supervisor and Allison Reynolds is the new assistant supervisor at Sugar Hill. The Storehouse is putting together "Blessings in Boxes" to help families provide Christmas gifts to their children. Check with HCPS or the Storehouse for sign-up details, sites and dates. Also you can sign up with The Storehouse between October 9-12 for Angel Tree. There were no further comments or questions.

\* **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn was made by Kristian Toro and seconded by Carolyn Chandler. The meeting was adjourned by Kim Wilson at 10:48 AM.

**Next hybrid (in-person/virtual) meeting date: Thursday, October 19 at 9:00 AM**