

**WNCSource Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes  
November 16, 2023**

\* Indicates a vote is required

Jessica Ownbey called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM.

**Present:** Hunter Weatherford, Kasheiva Jackson, Linda Carter, Heather Brewer-Jones, Natalie Daugherty, Dan Edwards, Jennie Lee, Amy Phillips, Kathleen McDavid, Amy Smith, Kristian Toro, Jessica Ownbey, Margit Nelson, Candy Doncevic, Caitlin Cole-Ekman, Jissel Zamudio, David White, Eric Hoffman, Andrea Paniagua, Mary Hanson, Morgan Carbajal, Yecenia Sandoval, Elizabeth Whitten, Bridgett Librado, Rachel Walker, Natasha Levi Perkins, Jazmin Mejia, Veronica Galvan-de-Unda, Candice Freeman, Amy Smith, Litz Zaldivar, Shannon Marlowe, Angie Davis, Lisa Brown

**Establish a Quorum** - It was determined that there were not enough members present to constitute a quorum. Items needing a vote will be sent out electronically for voting in addition to the attendees who will vote during the meeting.

\* Review and Approve Minutes from the October 19, 2023 meeting: A motion to approve the minutes was made by Natasha Perkins and seconded by Kristian Toro, and approved by all attendees present at the meeting. Additionally, parent members Laura Durham Tillotson, Miranda Dudney, and Danielle Richardson voted their approvals via email after the meeting, thereby reaching a quorum. The October 19, 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:**

**Self-Assessment Action Plan \* - Eric Hoffman**

- WNCSource staff completed the annual self-assessment over the summer, evaluating program strengths and needs, as well as identifying areas of improvement that we intend to focus our efforts on during the program year. One of the identified key recommendations is supporting staff in the classroom through hiring after-school caregivers and structuring enrollment and placement of children in ways that provide equitable and manageable classrooms for both teachers and students. A second recommendation is to provide training and activities for all staff that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion while focusing on becoming trauma informed. The

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final action recommendation looks at improving communication between staff and families especially during enrollment and orientation processes as well as with attendance and absence issues. Shannon Marlowe motioned to approve the Self-Assessment Action Plan, Natasha Perkins seconded the motion, and all attendees present at the meeting approved the motion. Additionally, parent members Laura Durham Tillotson, Miranda Dudney, and Danielle Richardson voted their approvals via email after the meeting, thereby reaching a quorum. The Self-Assessment Action Plan was unanimously approved.

#### **Training on Program Structure, Services, and Performance Standards - Amy Phillips**

- Amy presented information about the origin and history of the Head Start program, as well as how the program is structured, the regulations (Performance Standards) that guide the program operations, and the various programs and services that are offered. Each local Head Start grantee/program is provided a framework of guidelines to follow and implements best practices for their program based on the composition and needs of their community with input from a governing body (Board of Directors), a Policy Council, and management staff. Head Start services support families in many ways and teach and prepare children to be successful in school and ultimately in life. The Office of Head Start website <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/> can be accessed to provide more information.

#### **ERSEA Training - Kasheiva Jackson**

- Kasheiva presented an overview of the role, responsibilities, and processes covered by ERSEA within the Head Start program, with a focus on determining, verifying and documenting eligibility for HS services. The ERSEA team manages Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance of children/families in the program. Kasheiva answered a question from Jessica about alternate methods of verifying identification (age) information of applicants and supporting parents in obtaining birth documentation for their children.

#### **Carry Over Funds Request, CCP Grant \* - Elizabeth Whitten**

- Due to the staffing shortage and the resulting lower child enrollment numbers, there are unspent CCP grant (04HP000306) funds that were awarded to WNCSource from the 2022-23 (Year 4) grant year for which we will submit a request to retain the unused funding in the amount of \$378,316 that would support personnel (including employee retention initiatives), classroom supplies, and capital improvements such as facility maintenance/repair costs. Andrea Paniagua made a motion to approve the CCP grant carry over funds request, Kristian Toro seconded the motion, and all attendees present at the meeting approved the motion. Additionally, parent members Laura Durham Tillotson, Miranda Dudney, and Danielle Richardson voted their approvals via email after the meeting, thereby reaching a quorum. The CCP grant carry over funds request was unanimously approved.

### **Carry Over Funds Request, EHS-IV Expansion Grant \* - Elizabeth Whitten**

- Due to the staffing shortage and the resulting lower child enrollment numbers, there are unspent EHS-IV Expansion grant (04HP000443) funds that were awarded to WNCSource from the 2021-22 and 2022-23 (Years 1 and 2) grant years for which we will submit a request to retain the unused funding in the amount of \$2,074,727 that would be used to construct a permanent childcare facility in Rutherford County on donated land in order to replace the current leased facility whose small size is not ideal. Shannon Marlowe motioned to approve the EHS-IV grant carry over funds request, Jennie Lee and Lisa Brown seconded the motion, and all attendees present at the meeting approved the motion. Additionally, parent members Laura Durham Tillotson, Miranda Dudney, and Danielle Richardson voted their approvals via email after the meeting, thereby reaching a quorum. The EHS-IV grant carry over funds request was unanimously approved.

### **REPORTS:**

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

- Office of Head Start Announcement: OHS has just announced a proposal to update the Performance Standards with the goal of improving compensation and benefits, more fully integrating mental health services within programs, and setting maximum FA caseloads, among other things. It remains to be seen if adequate funding will be available to support the proposed changes. Input from grantees and the public is solicited.
- Helping Hands Developmental Daycare (DD) Program: The Helping Hands agency that provides DD services for children ages 3-5 for the HCPS system will soon be closing due to financial issues, and WNCSource has been asked to take over management of the program. Tentative plans are in place to transition DD students and staff (who wish to make the transition) to WNCSource at the end of January 2024, utilizing available classroom space in our Tebeau center.

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

- Financials, September 2023: Current expenses are 4-7% below budgeted expense (expected 25%) for the fiscal year due to staff shortages which cause lower enrollment numbers. We are required to fundraise a 20% match of the federal grants funds that we receive.
- Credit Card Expense, September 2023: The majority of the \$5390.92 expense came from the purchase of program supplies.

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

- Our new Diversity-Equity-Inclusion Committee is meeting regularly and brainstorming ideas and plans for the coming months. Current initial plans include DEI training for staff and the introduction of multicultural foods at scheduled meetings and events.
- Helping Hands DD transition: We will need their staff to stay on; three teaching staff

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are required per 18 children; plan would be to use two classrooms at our Tebeau site for the developmental day students (half of enrolled children would be required to have an IEP, half would not have an IEP to promote inclusivity). Projected transition date is the last week of January, in which HH would be shut down and classrooms set-up at Tebeau. Services would begin at Tebeau on February 5th. Our HR will do an informational session for HH staff on November 17th.

- Classroom Closures: Three classrooms at various sites experienced closure days during October due to lack of staff.
- Staffing: Nine staff were hired in October and two staff departed. Several after school staff have been hired recently with several others in the onboarding process. After school staff is needed especially in Transylvania County.
- Facilities: We are getting closer to opening a classroom within Edneyville Elementary School. The new child care site construction in Columbus is progressing well.

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

- All sites are under-enrolled due to teacher shortages: The center-based EHS enrollment rate is 54%, home-based EHS is at 45%, EHS Expansion is at 26%, EHS/CCP is at 80%, HS enrollment is 69%, NC Pre-K is at 63%. 111 children are waitlisted, with most being on the HS program waitlist.

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

- October average daily attendance: The average attendance rate goal is 85%. EHS was at 83%, CCP at 83%, HS at 85%, and NCPK at 85%. During the period 9/28-10/26, most of the 1009 absences were due to illness/injury, including 16 COVID-related.

#### **Education and Child Development Report – Candy Doncevic**

- Family Engagement: 248 children have had a home visit with their teachers, which helps build trust and community. Ten classrooms and 100 families are using the *My Family* app to access curriculum resources, such as Mighty Minutes and Modeled Moment investigational videos. Activities are sent home with children whose families are not using the app.
- Coaching: Coaches are using the *Coaching to Fidelity* app and observing in classrooms to determine needs and support for the implementation of curriculum. 12 teaching staff are receiving intensive coaching, 12 are receiving standard coaching, and two are self-coaching.

#### **Early Intervention Report - Mary Hanson**

- 314 children have received development and behavior screening as of the end of October, with areas of need being identified and strategies/resources provided to both teachers and parents. 95 children have a “referral recommended” status (with needs being either developmental, behavioral, or both). Parents are being supported as they request referrals, and some children will be reevaluated after the first checkpoint. 40 children are scheduled to have ASQs completed within the required 45-day timeframe.

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- **Disabilities:** Each program requires us to serve 10% of our funded enrollment with children who qualify for an IEP or IFSP. Currently, 6% of funded HS enrollment, 10% of funded CCP enrollment, 1% of funded Expansion enrollment, and 9% 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 4%. 18 children have an early alert and are being supported and monitored for developmental needs.
- **Mental Health:** 7% of enrolled children (24) received support in October for mental or behavioral health needs. 160 behavior incidents were logged during the month for 36 children in 13 classrooms. Six children with an early alert are being supported and monitored for behavioral needs.

#### **Nutrition and Health Services Report - Caitlin Cole-Ekman**

- **Well child check status (physicals):** 76% of EHS, 86% of CCP, and 86% 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. Approximately 90 children over the age of one don't have a dental home, and the health team is working to confirm dental homes for all children by November 30. We're incentivizing families to schedule dental exams by raffling off gift cards. Kristian Toro commented that a lot of local dentists are not accepting new patients due to staffing shortages. The Health Team will advocate for and support families by contacting local dentists as needed.
- CACFP meals reimbursement for September was \$31,662.

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

- Families participated in a family engagement event in October that allowed them to paint, eat, and socialize with their children and other families.
- **ReadyRosie:** 185 families are connected to this parenting curriculum that provides multiple activities and resources for learning outside the classroom.

#### **EHS Report - Bridgett Librado**

- The Etowah and Hillview sites had fall festivals/fire prevention events.
- Additional teaching staff have been hired for the Forest City and Sugar Hill sites.
- A parent meeting on October 6 provided training in pedestrian safety and reviewed topics from the previous Policy Council meeting.
- Child care sites are open for after school (2:30-5:30 PM) care. Please contact your site's supervisor or DSS for information about potential child care subsidy vouchers.
- Forest City families had fun helping to put in plants outside the facility.

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

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- Early Literacy Development/Letterland: We have begun introducing the Letterland multisensory program in our classrooms, which teaches phonics and foundational literacy skills using a fun, story-based approach and a variety of activities.
- Fire Safety: The Hendersonville Fire Department presented a comprehensive training at the King Creek site for children and parents over two days in October.

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

- God's Gifts Family Child Care home has opened and partnered with WNCSource.
- CCP sites God's Gifts, Little Blessings, and Laurie's are fully enrolled. Little Red has eight of ten slots filled, Kids Kingdom has eleven of twelve slots filled, and Little Bright Minds has four of eight slots filled (waiting for existing children to age out before we can enroll more).
- Work continues to recruit new Family Child Care Homes in Transylvania County.

#### **Professional Development - Hunter Weatherford**

- All CCP teachers participated in a daylong curriculum training on October 20.
- Four teacher apprentices continue to take classes while also getting hands-on work experience at our centers.
- Eight staff will attend a Family Engagement conference in December.

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

Kristian commented that a new EHS classroom will be opening at Sugar Hill.

There were no further comments or questions.

\* **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn was made by Kristian Toro and seconded by Jennie Lee. The meeting was adjourned by Jessica Ownbey at 10:42 AM.

**Next hybrid (in-person/virtual) meeting date: Thursday, January 18 at 9:00 AM**