

**WNCSource Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes
January 18, 2024**

* Indicates a vote is required

Jessica Ownbey called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM.

Present: Amy Phillips, Mary Hanson, Jissel Zamudio, Jazmin Mejia, Linda Carter, Kristian Toro, Fatima Garcia Aleman, Bridgett Librado, David White, Heather Brewer-Jones, Hunter Weatherford, Kasheiva Jackson, Litz Zaldivar, Shannon Marlowe, Amy Smith, Jennie Lee, Candy Doncevic, Jessica Ownbey, Jen Scroggs, Dan Edwards, Rachel Walker, Margit Nelson, Caitlin Cole-Ekman, Yessenia Garcia, Yecenia Sandoval, Lisa Brown, Josadry Sanchez, Elizabeth Whitten, Angie Davis, Natasha Perkins, Celeste Oviedo

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

* Review and Approve Minutes from the November 16, 2023 meeting: A motion to approve the minutes was made by Natasha Perkins and seconded by Kristian Toro, and the November 16, 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:

Disabilities Update/Waiver Request (Expansion Grant) - Amy Phillips *

- Head Start expects that at least 10% of enrolled children in each grant program will have a disability / individualized education plan (IEP). Oftentimes children are first diagnosed with a disability only after they become part of a HS program and are monitored and evaluated in the classroom. The qualification requirements have recently changed so that the percentage is based on cumulative enrollment. The percentage of enrolled children at WNCSource with a disability exceeds 10% in all grants except for the Expansion grant. That grant has had lower overall enrollment numbers largely due to the pandemic, and the children in that program are younger EHS (0-3 year olds) students, who typically are less likely to be diagnosed with a disability until they can be properly screened and collaboration with parents can be established. We have effective policies and procedures in place to diagnose children with potential disabilities as early as possible. We will be submitting this request to the Office of Head Start, asking for a waiver of the expectation for the affected

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Expansion grant. This request will also go before the WNCSource Board of Directors for approval. A motion to approve the disabilities waiver request for the Expansion grant was made by Natasha Perkins and seconded by Shannon Marlowe, and the waiver request was unanimously approved.

REPORTS:

Chief Executive Officer's Report - David White

- WNCSource HS services in 2024 will be shaped by the outcomes resulting from our requested Changes in Scope and Under Enrollment Plan. A few priorities for this year include: developing a new strategic plan, continuing to implement trauma resilience initiatives, reaching full staffing and full enrollment, opening the EHS facility in Polk County, and investing in affordable housing units in Transylvania County.
- Comments on the HS Notice of Proposed Rulemaking will be accepted through January 19.

Chief Financial Officer's Report - Elizabeth Whitten

- Financials, November 2023: Current grant expenses should be at 40% of total budgeted expense, and the HS/EHS and CCP grants are on target, while the EHS Expansion is a little below budget, due to staffing shortages and closed classrooms.
- Credit Card Expense, November 2023: The majority of the \$19,360 expense came from the purchase of program supplies as well as staff travel and education.

Program Director's Report – Linda Carter

- CCP Update: Little Blessings is under new ownership and is called Rosman Kid City USA and will continue to partner with WNCSource. We also have a new partnership with a Kid City location that has opened in Pisgah Forest.
- New Health and Nutrition Coordinator Caitlin Cole-Ekman (internal promotion) brings a wealth of experience to the program and has done an outstanding job already.
- Family Advocates and Site Supervisors attended a full day of collaborative training.
- Classroom Closures: Besides scheduled holidays and teacher workdays, there were eight single classroom closure days due to a lack of staff.
- Staff Update: 16 employees were hired during November-December, and six employees left WNCSource. 40 positions are currently vacant.
- Wrap Around Staff: We continue to hire part-time staff who are dedicated solely to after school care in all counties. Seven are currently working in Henderson County.
- Program Instruction: Any member of the public is welcome to submit comments to the OHS regarding the proposed rulemaking around HS workforce and programming.

Enrollment Report – Kasheiva Jackson

- All sites are under-enrolled due to teacher shortages: The center-based EHS enrollment rate is 67%, home-based EHS is at 50%, EHS Expansion is at 26%, EHS/CCP is at 81%, HS enrollment is 74%, NC Pre-K is at 66%. 139 children are

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waitlisted, with most being on the HS program waitlist.

Attendance Report - Kasheiva Jackson

- December average daily attendance: The average attendance rate goal is 85%. EHS was at 70%, CCP at 78%, HS at 78%, and NCPK at 79%. During the period 12/1-12/19, most of the 909 absences were due to illness/injury, including 38 COVID-related.

Education and Child Development Report – Candy Doncevic

- Fall 2023 Checkpoint Data: 327 of 341 children from 36 classrooms at 18 sites had GOLD data available at the Fall checkpoint. 173 of those children are in their first year in the program, with 67% having English as the primary language and 32% having Spanish.
- Areas of development that are assessed at checkpoints include: social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and math. Overall, more children were at the “meets or exceeds expectations” level than those who were “below expectations.”

Early Intervention Report - Mary Hanson

- 343 children have received development and behavior screening as of the end of December, with areas of need being identified and strategies/resources provided to both teachers and parents. 131 children have a “referral recommended” status (with needs being either developmental, behavioral, or both). Parents are being supported as they request referrals, and other referrals result from classroom monitoring and teacher reporting. 20 children are scheduled to have ASQs completed within the required 45-day timeframe.
- Disabilities: Each grant requires us to serve 10% of our cumulative enrollment with children who qualify for an IEP or IFSP. Currently, 14% of EHS and HS enrollment, 12% of CCP enrollment, and 6% of Expansion enrollment are receiving disabilities services.
- Mental Health: 10% of enrolled children (40) received support in November and December for mental or behavioral health needs. 142 behavior incidents were logged during the month for 30 children in 11 classrooms. Eleven children with an early alert are being supported and monitored for behavioral needs. The team will implement small groups on targeted skills and monitor the effects on behavioral interventions.

Nutrition and Health Services Report - Caitlin Cole-Ekman

- Well child check status (physicals): 80% of EHS, 88% of CCP, and 88% 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 77 children over the age of one don't have a dental home, but the health team has received documentation that 123 children have had a dental visit in the last six months, and 44 new appointments have been scheduled for children who

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needed a dental visit.

- Vision and Hearing: Screenings are completed annually: So far, 347 children have had hearing screenings with no referrals needed, and 350 children have had vision screenings with 19 of those currently in the referral process.
- CACFP meals reimbursement for November was \$33,861.

Family Services - Kasheiva Jackson

- ReadyRosie: 235 families are connected to this parenting curriculum that provides multiple activities and resources for learning outside the classroom.

EHS Report - Bridgett Librado

- Hillview families received donations of new winter clothing from Jinx Vidrine, and Etowah families received donated winter clothing as well as holiday gifts from Etowah United Methodist Church.
- Hillview and Flat Rock had winter-themed family engagements that also focused on financial budgeting.

HS/NC Pre-K Report - Amy Smith

- Site Supervisors, area managers, and program managers continually monitor classrooms for quality, safety, and staff performance on a weekly/monthly basis, which builds relationships, supports teachers, and ensures quality programming.
- Supervisors use reflective supervision to guide and support staff individually with job challenges, build relationships, and support retention.

CCP (Partnership) Report - Margit Nelson for Kathleen McDavid

- Kid City Pisgah Forest has opened and partnered with WNCSource with space for 16 EHS children, bringing us to a new total of seven CCP partners.
- CCP sites God's Gifts, Little Red, Kids Kingdom and Laurie's are fully enrolled. Kid City Rosman has 14 of 16 slots filled, and Little Bright Minds has five of eight slots filled.
- Work continues to recruit new Family Child Care Homes in Transylvania County.

Professional Development - Hunter Weatherford

- All Children's Services staff attended an all day training on January 2.
- We have a new trainee who will work on obtaining her IT CDA.
- The apprentices rotated into EHS classrooms on January 4. Next year's apprenticeship cohort is now accepting applications.

Comments and Questions / Any updates from parent representatives:

There were no further comments or questions.

* **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn was made by Kristian Toro and seconded by Angie Davis. The meeting was adjourned by Jessica Ownbey at 10:02 AM.

Next hybrid (in-person/virtual) meeting date: Thursday, February 15 at 9:00 AM

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