

**WNCSource Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council Minutes  
February 15, 2024**

\* Indicates a vote is required

Jessica Ownbey called the meeting to order at 9:09 AM.

**In Attendance:** Linda Carter, Kate Robinson, Dan Edwards, Eric Hoffman, Amy Phillips, Jessica Ownbey, Lisa Brown, Caitlin Cole-Ekman, Mary Hanson, David White, Kathleen McDavid, Rachel Walker, Elizabeth Whitten, Shannon Marlowe

**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 to absent members for voting in addition to the attendees who will vote during the meeting.

\* Review and Approve Minutes from the January 18, 2024 meeting: A motion to approve the minutes was made by Lisa Brown and seconded by Shannon Marlowe, and approved by all attendees present at the meeting. Additionally, Natalie Daugherty, Caroline Dent, Natasha Perkins, Kristian Toro, Laura Durham, Morgan Carbajal, Jennifer Scroggs, Andrea Paniagua, and Kayla Hernandez voted their approvals via email after the meeting, thereby reaching a quorum. The January 18, 2024 minutes were unanimously approved.

**Announcement for Parent Representatives- Dan Edwards**

Dan 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 in order to receive a gift card.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Program Goals Update - Eric Hoffman \***

- HS/EHS Grant: We are in year 4 of the 5-year grant, with goals focused on enhancing school readiness, increasing family engagement, and ensuring the delivery of needed health services. The goal of raising the education level of 10% of staff was not only met but exceeded by reaching 14% and we are targeting 8% for the coming year. Other ongoing goals include implementing curriculum to fidelity and incorporating outdoor learning environments in 75% of sites with next year's goal to be 100%. Our home visiting goal may need to be reevaluated due to the Change in Scope we recently submitted. 95% of enrollment applications are being submitted online, well exceeding that goal. Thanks to the efforts of our Family Advocates, we have seen steady increases in parent committee and Policy Council participation as well as in family engagement events and home-based learning activities such as ReadyRosie. All Family Advocate staff will be trained in the Family Development Model. Staff

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continue to form partnerships with local community agencies to ensure and enhance health and nutrition services, and we continue our focus on becoming a trauma informed and resilient workplace by engaging in training and forming a trauma resilience core team in order to support and better serve our employees, children and their families.

- **Expansion Grant:** We are in year 3 of the 5-year grant, with goals focused on becoming fully operational with qualified staff and promoting wellness for staff and families. Goal progress has been seen in the increase of hiring qualified staff including seven staff who are current/former HS family members. Work continues toward the goal of training Family Services staff in the Family Development Model with a plan to get to 100% by the 5-year mark. A committee for diversity, equity, and inclusion has been established and meeting to work toward the goal of building an organizational culture that reflects those philosophies.

A motion to approve the Program Goals Update for both the HS/EHS and Expansion grants was made by Rachel Walker and seconded by Shannon Marlowe, and approved by all attendees present at the meeting. Additionally, Natalie Daugherty, Caroline Dent, Natasha Perkins, Kristian Toro, Laura Durham, Morgan Carbajal, Jennifer Scroggs, Andrea Paniagua, and Kayla Hernandez voted their approvals via email after the meeting, thereby reaching a quorum. The Program Goals Update was unanimously approved.

#### **Training/Technical Assistance Plan (Primary HS/EHS Grant) - Amy Phillips \***

- The T/TA Plan for 2024-2025 will not change too significantly from previous years, other than small changes in allocating some of the funds, including reserving more funding for training registration and travel costs of external trainings, which provide valuable learning experiences as staff collaborate with colleagues from other agencies across the US. The T/TA funds support the advancement of program goals by enabling staff to earn further certifications or degrees, by providing live or on-demand courses for staff through Teaching Strategies, by mentoring, and by training in trauma resilience. Funds are also invested to encourage and facilitate engagement in Family Committee and Policy Council meetings. Mandatory training includes OHS and NC DCDEE trainings around Health and Safety as well as training for the Policy Council and Board. A motion to approve the Training/Technical Assistance Plan was made by Lisa Brown and seconded by Shannon Marlowe, and approved by all attendees present at the meeting. Additionally, Natalie Daugherty, Caroline Dent, Natasha Perkins, Kristian Toro, Laura Durham, Morgan Carbajal, Jennifer Scroggs, Andrea Paniagua, and Kayla Hernandez voted their approvals via email after the meeting, thereby reaching a quorum. The Training/Technical Assistance Plan was unanimously approved.

#### **Primary HS/EHS Grant Refunding Application (#04CH011737) - Linda Carter \***

- WNCSource will submit an application to fund the 5th year of the grant, which includes funding for 96 EHS and 185 HS center-based slots as well as 24 EHS home-based slots. The requested base funding is \$6,194,271 with a Non-Federal Share (20% match) of \$1,548,568, totaling \$7,742,839. This application does not take

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into account the Change in Scope (CIS) request that we recently submitted because OHS has not yet made a determination regarding that. We will reference the CIS as we proceed throughout the refunding application process with OHS to ensure that correct funding amounts are requested and documented by OHS. A motion to approve the Primary HS/EHS Grant Refunding Application was made by Shannon Marlowe and seconded by Rachel Walker, and approved by all attendees present at the meeting. Additionally, Natalie Daugherty, Caroline Dent, Natasha Perkins, Kristian Toro, Laura Durham, Morgan Carbajal, Jennifer Scroggs, Andrea Paniagua, and Kayla Hernandez voted their approvals via email after the meeting, thereby reaching a quorum. The Primary HS/EHS Grant Refunding Application was unanimously approved.

**1303 Capital Funding Request (Expansion Grant Carryover Funds Use) - Ibby Whitten \***

- We will be applying for unused funds (approximately \$2.2 million) from the Expansion Grant as part of a 1303 capital fund request to build a new child care center on donated land in Rutherford County that will be modeled after the Columbus facility that we're currently building. The size of the current leased facility in Forest City is insufficient to accommodate the 24 allocated EHS slots there. Processing time for the application and accompanying documentation (narrative, facility plans, documentation, budget/cost analysis, etc.) can take up to 18 months. A motion to approve the 1303 Capital Funding Request was made by Rachel Walker and seconded by Lisa Brown, and approved by all attendees present at the meeting. Additionally, Natalie Daugherty, Caroline Dent, Natasha Perkins, Kristian Toro, Laura Durham, Morgan Carbajal, Jennifer Scroggs, Andrea Paniagua, and Kayla Hernandez voted their approvals via email after the meeting, thereby reaching a quorum. The 1303 Capital Funding Request was unanimously approved.

**REPORTS: Several staff are absent today; members are able to review all departmental reports via the slideshow document that was sent to them ahead of the meeting.**

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

- We have worked diligently over the previous year to implement initiatives to meet the OHS requirement for full enrollment. We have increased the number of teaching staff, hired both staff and enrollment recruiters, raised teacher pay by as much as 26%, provided retention, hiring and referral bonuses, and hired after school staff to support work/life balance for teachers. OHS should notify us soon of any next steps, sanctions, or reductions in funding that would come as a result of not meeting 100% of the full enrollment requirements.
- Recently a consulting organization published a report analyzing Henderson County's child care crisis and how the community as a whole could approach this issue. Per the report, some actionable steps to combat this need could include organic talent development, shared staff training and development, support for child care businesses, and outreach to local employers to subsidize child care. WNCSource is

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already involved in several initiatives in these areas and is ready to explore taking a larger role in supporting more comprehensive child care in our service areas.

- The Henderson County Public Schools superintendent would like to have Pre-K classrooms in every school, manned by school system employees. WNCSource already has Pre-K rooms in five of the County's schools. David will be on a committee that has been formed to explore universal Pre-K for Henderson County, how it might be achieved, and what role WNCSource could potentially play in the initiative.

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

- Financials, December 2023: Current grant expenses should be at 50% of total budgeted expense, and the HS/EHS grant is on target, while the CCP grant is at 44%, and the EHS Expansion is below budget at 33%, due to staffing shortages and closed classrooms.
- Credit Card Expense, December 2023: The majority of the \$7,338 expense came from staff travel and program supplies.

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

- We have put our partnership with the CCP site Kid City-Rosman (formerly Little Blessings) on hold while they work through some staffing and licensing issues. We also have a new CCP partnership with an additional Kid City site in Plsgh Forest.
- All children at the Flat Rock site now have a dental home.
- One Developmental Day classroom opened on February 5 at the Tebeau site. A lead teacher and four teacher assistants were hired over from Helping Hand at its closing.
- Classroom Closures: there were three single classroom closure days due to a lack of staff, as well as several weather-related closings.
- Staff Update: Six employees were hired during January, and one employee left WNCSource. 38 positions are currently vacant.
- We continue to hire part-time staff who are dedicated solely to after school care in all counties. There are currently eight more staff in the onboarding process in addition to the twelve existing after school employees.
- The Etowah center experienced significant flooding on January 9 and was closed for several days while our dedicated Facilities team performed clean up, disposal, and renovation tasks.

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

- 373 children have received development and behavior screening as of the end of January, with areas of need being identified and strategies/resources provided to both teachers and parents. 145 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. 42 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, 16% of EHS and HS enrollment,

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13% of CCP enrollment, and 8% of Expansion enrollment are receiving disabilities services. Disabilities include autism, developmental delay, as well as speech/health/hearing impairments.

- **Mental Health:** 8% of enrolled children (33) received support in January for mental or behavioral health needs. 45 behavior incidents were logged during the month for 18 children in 7 classrooms. Seven children with an early alert are being supported and monitored for behavioral needs. The team has begun implementing small groups on targeted skills and is monitoring the effects on behavioral interventions.
- 19 children currently receive private therapy. The EI team is now fully staffed. A comprehensive social-emotional learning curriculum called AI's Pals is being piloted to build resilience in the children and prepare them for life's challenges.

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

- Well child check status (physicals): 73% of EHS, 73% of CCP, and 84% 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. 309 of 399 children over the age of one now have a dental home, and the health team has received documentation that 111 children have had a dental visit in the last six months.
- Vision and Hearing: Screenings are completed annually: So far, 356 children have had hearing screenings with no referrals needed, and 358 children have had vision screenings with 18 of those currently in the referral process.
- CACFP monitoring in the classrooms has not revealed any significant issues. The updated CACFP application for WNCSource has been submitted.

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

- Little Bright Minds is considering moving to a larger facility. Kid City-Pisgah Forest hopes to be fully enrolled with 16 by the end of the month.
- CCP sites God's Gifts, Little Red, and Little Bright Minds are fully enrolled. Kids Kingdom has 11 of 12 slots filled, and Laurie's has 4 of 5 slots filled.
- CCP staff had a full day of Creative Curriculum lesson planning training this month that was very beneficial and that teachers began implementing immediately.

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

There were no further comments or questions.

\* **Adjournment:** Only one Policy Council member, Lisa Brown, was still present at the time of adjournment, thus with no objection from Lisa, the meeting was adjourned by Linda Carter at 10:06 AM.

**Next hybrid (in-person/virtual) meeting date: Thursday, March 21 at 9:00 AM**

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