

**Wake County Smart Start
NC Pre-K Committee Meeting
February 22, 2023**

A meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) NC Pre-K Committee was held on Wednesday, February 22, 2023 with Vice-Chair, Katherine Williams presiding. The meeting was held via Zoom conference call.

Committee members present: Nikia Coates, Veronica Creech, Dawn Dawson, Heather Drennan, Susan Evans, Matt Glova, Liz Hamner, Mickey Holt, Tonya Kangkolo, Catty Moore, Colleen Roache, Kimberly Shaw, Joe White and Katherine Williams

Committee members absent: Christine Alvarado, Matthew Ellinwood, Sherry Heuser, Leslie Ann Jackson, Catherine Lassiter, Sharon Loza, Barbara Morales Burke, Antonia Pedroza, Tonya Venable and Michael Wasilick

Staff members present: Gary Carr, Joan Crutchfield, Carol Orji, Diana Fenves, Gayle E. Headen, Alex Livas-Dlott, Sasha Gomez and Nancy Peck

Guest: Cheryl Stallings

Call to Order/Announcements

At 8:31 am, Vice-Chair, Katherine Williams announced a quorum was present and officially called the meeting to order. She noted the meeting is being recorded and drew attention to the presence of staff and Commissioner Cheryl Stallings attending the meeting as non-committee members.

Liz Hamner moved to adopt the agenda. Susan Evans seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with none opposed, the vote was unanimous. (02-23-42)

NC Pre-K Committee members reviewed minutes from previous meeting. Heather Drennan moved to adopt the minutes from the NC Pre-K Committee meeting on December 7, 2022. Matt Glova seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objection, the motion carried. (02-23-43)


Executive Director's Report

Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen reminded those present that the NC Pre-K Committee is the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K Program before introducing a staff recommendation to establish Wake County Smart Start as the contractor for the NC Pre-K program for the next school year. Catty Moore made a motion to designate Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) as the official Contracting Agency for the NC Pre-K program in the 2023-2024 school year. Veronica Creech seconded the motion. Hearing no objections, the vote to approve was unanimous. (02-23-44)

Gayle E. Headen presented a two-part staff recommendation relating to the site selection process. She briefly outlined the site selection subcommittee's role and provided background information related to the recommendation to reopen the site selection process for the next year, citing a low pool of qualified applicants who submitted before the December 2022 deadline. Veronica Creech moved to approve the addition of new non-Conflicted Site Selection Sub-Committee members, Nikki Leonard and Jenna Tarleton; and reopening the NC Pre-K Standardized Site Selection Process before the 3-year funding cycle ends, following the NC Pre-K Program Requirements and Guidance which includes: completion of the standardized site selection process electronically through e-CImpact, a secure grant management software system; completion in alignment with the 3-year funding cycle (FY 2023-2026); and exempting existing NC Pre-K sites that are maintaining NC Pre-K standards to re-apply during the site selection process. Matt Glova seconded the motion. A committee vote was called for with noted abstentions by Dawn Dawson, Heather Drennan, Susan Evans, Catty Moore and Kim Shaw. Hearing none opposed, the vote to approve was unanimous (02-23-45)

Ms. Headen drew attention to the projection of Attachment D.1, a report of NC Pre-K program 2022-23 Monitoring Concerns and invited questions from committee members. No questions were forthcoming.

Ms. Headen provided the following NC Pre-K program updates:

 Initial _____ Date 4/28/2023 | 11:03 AM EDT

- SY2022-23 enrollment status: Pre-K enrollment for the current school year across all site settings in Wake County is at 88% as of the end of December 2022 with all available classrooms at full capacity. 303 eligible children are waitlisted, a greater number than typical due to reduced classroom capacity.
- SY2023-24 application status: As of mid-February, more than 1500 applications have been submitted, twice the amount in this same time period last year. Application volume continues to increase each year – last year reaching a tipping point that exceeded the previous capacity to effectively process applications in a timely manner. WCSS has applied the learnings from last year's application process to make significant systems improvements.
 - Easier application – average completion time reduced from 90 to 30 minutes
 - Improvements to family communications: monthly status updates; website includes clear definitions of each partner program, eligibility for each program, application requirements, what it means to be waitlisted.
 - Increased number of regular staff and hiring additional temporary staff earlier in the year
 - Major database improvements implemented in three phases
 - Database system now identifies income eligibility for NC Pre-K program based on parent reporting, allowing staff to prioritize processing of these applications and identify families with greatest need sooner.
 - Agreed upon clarification of rolls/responsibilities of each of the Pre-K collaborative partners
 - Wake County Public Schools System now has a dedicated staff member to process applications
- System support to address workforce shortage:
 - With support from Wake County, have already implemented increase in compensation for teachers at private sites to be on parity with their peers in public schools.
 - Beginning of collaborative effort by Wake Tech, WCSS and Wake County Public Schools (WCPSS) to build and promote an early child care apprenticeship for high school students to help address the current workforce crisis as well as creating a local pipeline for early child care professionals through WakeWorks, a partnership between Wake Tech and Wake County. Apprenticeship program costs will be covered by WakeWorks, funded by a Wake County grant, at no cost to providers. The NC Business Economic Committee is also joining as a partner with a two-year state grant to help supplement program expenses. Local providers have been invited to a February 28 information session to determine their interest. Ms. Headen expressed appreciation to board member, Catherine Lassiter for her immediate action after the December Board meeting discussion on workforce shortage in arranging a call between WCPSS, Wake Tech and WCSS to initiate the collaboration.

There being no further business, Susan Evans moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 am. Catty Moore seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the motion passed. (02-23-46)

DocuSigned by:

Leslie Ann Jackson

9F878EFED0674A8...

Secretary

4/28/2023 | 11:03 AM EDT

Date