

**Wake County Smart Start
NC Pre-K Committee Meeting
August 23, 2023**

A meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) NC Pre-K Committee was held on Wednesday, August 23, 2023 with Chair, Katherine Williams presiding. The meeting was held via Zoom conference call.

Committee members present: Nikia Coates, Heather Drennan, Matt Ellinwood, Susan Evans, Matt Glova, Sherry Heuser, Mickey Holt, Leslie Ann Jackson, Catherine Lassiter, Amelia Muse, Ronetta Pearsall, Colleen Roache, Tonya Venable, Katherine Williams, Stacey Wilson-Norman

Committee members absent: Christine Alvarado, Dawn Dawson, Tonya Kangkolo, Antonia Pedroza and Joe White

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

Guests present: Katie Lewis and Cheryl Stallings

Call to Order/Announcements

At 8:33 am, Katherine Williams, Chair, 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 guests, including Wake County Commissioner, Cheryl Stallings, attending the meeting as non-committee members. She introduced new committee members, Amelia Muse, Ronetta Pearsall and Stacey Wilson-Norman and called for a round of introductions from other committee members and staff.

Sherry Heuser moved to adopt the agenda. Matt Glova seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with none opposed, the vote was unanimous. (08-23-07)


NC Pre-K Committee members reviewed minutes from previous meeting. Susan Evans moved to adopt the minutes from the NC Pre-K Committee meeting on June 28, 2023. Nikia Coates seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objection, the motion carried. (08-23-08)

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen introduced a staff recommendation and supporting information to establish the NC Pre-K Committee meeting schedule for the upcoming fiscal year in compliance with NC Pre-K plan requirements. Ms. Headen stated the meeting schedule must be approved annually by NC Pre-K Committee as the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K Program. Leslie Ann Jackson made a motion to adopt the WCSS NC Pre-K Committee meeting calendar for FY23-24 as detailed on Attachment B.2. Tonya Venable seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing none opposed, the vote to approve was unanimous (08-23-09)

Gayle Headen presented a staff recommendation for approval of the Conflict of Interest (COI) Policy. She explained the primary purpose of the policy is to provide guidelines to identify situations where a potential conflict of interest is present and establish a procedure that allows committee actions to be treated as valid and binding even though a committee officer or member has or may have a conflict of interest with respect to the issue. She further remarked the policy is in compliance with the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) requirements for its contract with WCSS and that signed copies will be filed with a copy of the minutes for August 23, 2023 for audit purposes. Katherine Williams reminded committee members that COI disclosure statements are due by Sep. 8, 2023. Matt Glova moved to approve Wake County Smart Start Conflict of Interest Policy. Mickey Holt seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the motion passed. (08-23-10)

Ms. Headen summarized the purpose of the NC Pre-K Plan Requirements and Assurances required annually by the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) and reminded committee members of their role as the decision-making body for the Pre-K program. She informed committee members that Section I. of the document will be circulated to each committee member for signature through DocuSign. Sherry Heuser moved to acknowledge and approve by signature NC Pre-K Plan Requirements and Assurances for contracting in FY23-24 and confirmation of WCSS as the contracting agency. Mickey Holt seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the vote was unanimous. (08-23-11)

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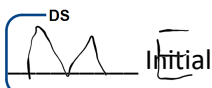
Gayle Headen presented a staff recommendation and supporting information for annual NC Pre-K plans requirements as described on Attachments E.1-E.7. She informed the committee that the site selection process requires centers to submit information on their applications about and/or provide copies of written site plans. She listed the various plans submitted for approval and stated the NC Pre-K Committee as the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K Program, is authorized to develop and implement written plans. Matt Glova made a motion to approve the NC Pre-K plan requirements for: Prevention of Suspension/Expulsion of Children with Challenging Behavior, Transportation, Transition, Family Engagement, Communicating with Children and Families Who are Dual Language Learners and Inclement Weather Policy. Tonya Venable seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing none opposed, the vote was unanimous. (08-23-12)

Ms. Headen presented a staff recommendation that would permit Wake County Public Schools (WPSS) to charge for meals for children not qualifying for free meals. She explained WCSS and its collaborative partners are required to provide breakfast or morning snack and lunch to Pre-K students during the regular school day and that meal fees must be approved by the NC Pre-K Committee as the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K Program. Following a question about how many children might be impacted, Sherry Heuser moved to approve that WCPSS be allowed to charge families the full or reduced cost of meals for children that do not qualify for free meals as indicated on the chart on Attachment F.1. Nikia Coates seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and noting an abstention by Stacey Wilson-Norman, the motion passed. (08-23-13)

Gayle Headen presented a staff recommendation and background information for NC Pre-K slot placement, reimbursement rates and transportation fees as referenced on Attachments G.1 and G.2. In response to a question about the number of slots, she remarked that the total number of slots covering the three programs remains unchanged. In response to a question regarding reallocation of vacant slots, Ms. Headen remarked approval of the recommendation would allow immediate allocation of the 89 slots that remain unassigned if provider capacity increases. She said that in addition to staff shortages, as a consequence of the Covid pandemic, some sites have been only able to focus on basics and are not quite ready to provide the high quality required to qualify as a program site. Ms. Headen said Early Childhood Initiatives (ECI) staff is following up with programs who have indicated interest in becoming a Pre-K site Following questions, to offer them technical assistance and support. WCSS has also identified programs in zip codes with the highest application rates and reaching out to them to see if they are interested in site application as an effort to build capacity in geographic areas with the greatest needs. Following questions and comments, Nikia Coates moved to approve reimbursement rates for the FY 2023-24 as indicated on Attachment G.2; the DCDEE grant allocation of \$10,644,447 for FY 2023-2024 to support the NC Pre-K program; placement of 1,532 NC Pre-K slots for the 2023-24 school year in selected sites as outlined on Attachment G.2 with authorization of WCSS staff to reallocate vacant slots as needed based on the geographic location of applying families most eligible for services; and transportation fees where applicable indicated on Attachment G.2. Sherry Heuser seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and noting abstentions by Heather Drennan, Susan Evans, Ronetta Pearsall, Tonya Venable and Stacey Wilson-Norman, the motion carried. (08-23-14)


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

- SY2023-24 enrollment: 82% of current capacity in private sites; WCPSS has filled all 336 slots and are in process of verifying eligibility for each child now through Oct. 31, 2023; Head Start has enrolled 50% of slots with a challenge in hiring teachers. Weekly updates will be provided by collaborative partners.
- SY2023-24 application status: Ms. Headen reported that applications continue to be submitted however there is no backlog of applications waiting to be processed. She summarized how the revisions to the database and process along with additional dedicated staff have coalesced to better manage the flow of applications.
- Pre-K will host an in-person training in mid-September for administrators, teachers and teaching assistants to cover findings and recommendations from the Pre-K CLASS data received from those who participated in CLASS professional development in the past school year.
- On July 15th, WCSS hosted its first annual NC Pre-K Application Event and Resource Fair, in which over 140 families participated. Six NC Pre-K providers, including WCSS Board member, Ronetta Pearsall set up "experience booths" to give children and families a small taste of the experience children gain in the NC Pre-K Program. Community partners and vendors, including Advance Community Health, Salvation Army and Wake County Human Services Subsidy participated in booths to provide resources and giveaways to

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families. Families filled out surveys to provide data that will be used to improve future in-person application events.

There being no further business, Sherry Heuser moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:27 am. Matt Glova seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the motion passed. (08-23-15)

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Secretary

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