

**Wake County Smart Start
NC Pre-K Committee Meeting
October 25, 2023**

A meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) NC Pre-K Committee was held on Wednesday, October 25, 2023 with Chair, Katherine Williams presiding. The meeting was held via Zoom conference call.

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

Committee members absent: Christine Alvarado, Matt Glova, Mickey Holt, Tonya Kangkolo, Antonia Pedroza and Tonya Venable

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

Guests present: Katie Lewis and Cheryl Stallings

Call to Order/Announcements

At 8:31 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 Katie Lewis and Wake County Commissioner, Cheryl Stallings, attending the meeting as non-committee members.

Sherry Heuser moved to adopt the agenda. Susan Evans seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with none opposed, the vote was unanimous. (10-23-29)

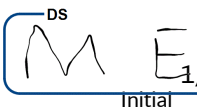
NC Pre-K Committee members reviewed minutes from previous meeting. Leslie Ann Jackson moved to adopt the minutes from the NC Pre-K Committee meeting on August 28, 2023. Amelia Muse seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objection, the motion carried. (10-23-30)

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen introduced a staff recommendation and summarized the background information related to Pre-K site selection process/timeline and subcommittee members. Ms. Headen also presented two other components of the recommendation: electronic completion of site selection using secure grant management software, and an exception for existing sites who have been maintaining NC Pre-K standards to not be required to re-apply. She reaffirmed the NC Pre-K Committee is the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K Program and WCSS is the local contractor, supporting and overseeing the Site Selection Subcommittee. Sherry Heuser made a motion to approve the NC Pre-K Standardized Site Selection process/timeline and sub-committee members as detailed on Attachment B.2. Nikia Coates seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing none opposed, the vote to approve was unanimous (10-23-31)

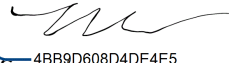
Ms. Headen provided the following NC Pre-K program updates:

- SY2023-24 enrollment: 95% of current capacity across all settings:
 - Private sites are full as of the end of September. WCSS staff are filling any vacancies due to student withdrawal.
 - WCPSS has filled all 336 slots and are in process of verifying eligibility for additional applications now through Oct. 31, 2023
 - Head Start has enrolled about 50% of their slots, challenged with teacher shortages and processing applications. WCSS is reaching out to Telamon Head Start to see what support can be offered.
 - 999 slots have been allocated to private sites. 80 slots remain unallocated due to lack of qualified sites. WCSS is working with WCPSS to allocate the unallocated slots to public school classrooms this year to achieve the common goal of filling all 1532 slots.

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- The conversion rate of submitted applications processed by WCSS staff resulting in enrollment is at 32% this year, a significant increase from 20% in prior years.
- Subsidy market increase: Effective Oct.1, 2023, the new subsidy reimbursement rate for 3-5 yr. olds in 5-star centers has increased to \$1,275, which is greater than the current reimbursement rate of \$1,261 for NC Pre-K slots in private sites. There is potential for the combination of lower reimbursement rates and higher costs for the NC Pre-K program to cause some of the current private sites to leave the program for a better business model. WCSS staff are working on a recommendation for a temporary solution for this school year to mitigate the imbalance that will be brought to the committee at the December meeting.
- Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER): Governor Cooper approved the release of GEER funding in September for all NC Pre-K programs at the amount of \$3,860 per classroom. To be eligible to receive the funding, the classroom must have an approved teacher and at least one child attending during the month of September.
- Legislative update: On October 16, Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) announced an update from the recent legislative session that will allow individual NC Pre-K classrooms to serve up to 20 children with a ratio of 1 teacher per 10 children.

With no further agenda items, Susan Evans moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:27 am. Sherry Heuser seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the motion passed. (10-23-32)

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Secretary

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Date