

**Wake County Smart Start
Board of Directors Meeting
December 4, 2024**

A meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) Board of Directors was held on Wednesday, December 4, 2024 with Vice Chair Nikia Coates presiding.

Board members present:, Nikia Coates, Susan Evans, Ariel Ford, Matt Glova, Sherry Heuser, Mickey Holt, Nikki Leonard, Ronetta Pearsall, Stephanie Shell, Tonya Venable, Joe White and Stacey Wilson-Norman

Board members absent: André Anthony, Veronica Creech, Heather Drennan, Matt Ellinwood, Antonia Pedroza and Katherine Williams

Staff members present: Alex Livas-Dlott, Joan Crutchfield, Gary Carr, Gayle E. Headen, Sasha Gomez, Rob Linens, Deidra McMillan, Nancy Peck, Lynn Policastro and Taylor Young

Call to Order/Announcements

At 8:52 AM, Vice Chair, Nikia Coates recognized a quorum and called the meeting to order. She announced the meeting is recorded, noted the presence of staff members and called for a round of introductions to welcome new Board member, Ariel Ford and new Director of Advancement, Rob Linens.

Early Childhood Initiatives (ECI) Manager, Lynn Policastro and Quality Enhancement Specialist, Deidra McMillan presented the "Mission Moment" focusing on ECI's work connecting the Early Childhood Community. Deidra McMillan opened the presentation with the ECI team, noting that beyond their daily onsite intensive coaching and technical assistance, they also connect facilities with many other early childhood experts and resources and continue to foster ongoing relationships long after actively working with them. Deidra provided a brief overview of the three ECI projects: Quality Enhancement; Quality Maintenance and Healthy Initiatives. Lynn Policastro shared examples of connections ECI has made to experts and resources within the early childhood system at two childcare facilities. The presentation concluded with what is next for ECI. Changes to Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) entails three different pathways to earn a star rated license. ECI staff are engaged in intensive training to learn about all the changes and new tools to share their knowledge as consultants, helping child care programs choose the best pathway for them. Gayle Headen emphasized the importance of the work by the six member ECI team, reaching 250 classrooms to help programs achieve and maintain high quality. She also remarked how during the COVID epidemic, they reached out to vendors for a supply drive, connecting them to childcare providers who were unable to source necessary supplies on their own.

Following the Mission Moment, Susan Evans moved to adopt the agenda. Nikki Leonard seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with none opposed, the motion carried. (12-24-37)

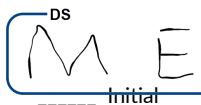
The Board reviewed items on the consent agenda. Sherry Heuser moved to approve items on the consent agenda including minutes from October 23, 2024 Board meeting and October 2024 financial reports. Ronetta Pearsall seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objection, the motion carried. (12-24-38)

Committee Reports

Advancement Committee

As the Advancement Committee Chair, Nikia Coates reported on the success of the November 19 Pastries with Partners appreciation event hosted by WCSS. She observed that the event helped partners feel valued and provided an opportunity for them to make connections with each other.

Ms. Coates encouraged Board members to consider WCSS in their charitable giving. She announced any gifts given on this day will still count for Giving Tuesday. She also drew attention to the Annual Appeal postcard highlighting major achievements by WCSS in 2024, and said the postcard will be distributed in the next few days by email and through a targeted mailing.

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2/28/2025 | 10:55 AM EST
----- Date

Finance Committee

Finance Committee Chair, Matt Glova reported the Finance Committee met in November to review current banking relationships and the programs being offered for the upcoming year.

Chair's Report

On behalf of Chair, Katherine Williams, Nikia Coates asked Board members to hold February 26, 2025 for an all day, in-person Board Retreat. She announced that a portion of the retreat agenda will focus on a deep dive into the WCSS Development Plan, the case for support and the Board's role in both.

Executive Director's Report


Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen ceded her time to Director of Advancement, Rob Linens, who led a discussion based on the following prompt, *How does investing in early childhood education benefit our community as a whole, both short-term and long-term?* Comments included:

- The benefit of investing now in early childhood education is the positive impact on our future workforce
- Children are the core of what happens next. Investing in early education prepares them in the short term for success in school and in the long term as contributing citizens, leaders and decision makers.
- Investment in early childhood education contributes to a stronger social fabric by connecting communities and families. It provides opportunities for improved health outcomes, both physical and mental.
- One of the smartest investments a community can make!
 - Boosts the local economy
 - Prepares children for success both short and long term
 - Benefits of higher earnings, reduced social costs, lower crime rate
 - Generations of wealth can be built by investing now in early childhood education
- To build a fair and just society, young children need and deserve to have safe, secure, enriching experiences and environments. Investment in early childhood education provides access to those who otherwise wouldn't be able to have it.

WCSS staff will use the collective feedback to develop a draft "elevator pitch" that can be used when engaging with potential donors and in the community.

Gayle Headen reported that the North Carolina Preschool Exclusionary Discipline Pilot Study report is ready for distribution and will be released in late December by the North Carolina Coalition for Inclusion, Not Expulsions. WCSS will email Board members with a link to the report when it is released. Findings and recommendations from the research will be used to leverage the work of the coalition to affect policy and practice changes. Nikia Coates invited thoughts about ways the business community might leverage awareness of the issue and support recommendations from the study.

With no further business to discuss, Mickey Holt moved to adjourn the meeting. Sherry Heuser seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned by Nikia Coates at 9:45 AM. (12-24-39)

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Secretary

2/28/2025 | 10:55 AM EST
Date