

**Wake County Smart Start
Executive Committee Meeting
March 27, 2024**

A meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) Executive Committee was held on Wednesday, March 27, 2024 with Chair, Katherine Williams presiding. The meeting was held via Zoom conference call.

Committee members present: Nikia Coates, Matt Ellinwood, Matt Glova, Katherine Williams, and Tonya Venable
Committee member absent: Sherry Heuser

Staff members present: Gary Carr, Carol Orji, Alex Livas-Dlott, Gayle Headen and Nancy Peck

Call to Order/Announcements

At 8:33 am, 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.

Matt Ellinwood moved to adopt the agenda. Nikia Coates seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with none opposed, the vote to adopt the agenda was unanimous. (03-24-61)

Committee members reviewed the minutes. Matt Glova moved to approve the minutes from the Executive Committee meeting on January 24. Matt Ellinwood seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objection, the motion carried. (03-24-62)

Advancement Committee

Committee Chair, Nikia Coates reported with the following updates:

- As a follow-up to the Board Development training, Mendi Nieters of Armstrong McGuire joined the last committee meeting with a sample Board participation plan, outlining various elements for each new and returning board member to commit to. The committee also reviewed the current Board job description and will collaborate with Board Governance Committee on both the Participation plan and Board job description to update both documents in areas concerning development.
- WCSS is moving forward with planning to fill the vacant CRD Director position. Gayle Headen and Sherry Heuser are working to develop an RFP to respond to infrastructure needs.

Katherine Williams remarked on the Board Giving reminder that went to the Board following the February 28 meeting, commenting on the importance of 100% Board participation making a personal contribution.

Board Governance Committee

In the absence of Board Governance Committee Chair, Sherry Heuser, Katherine Williams referred to the written report for updates from Board Governance Committee. She reported that one of the potential nominees, Bettie Murchison, has indicated that she is unable to consider participating as a Board volunteer in the upcoming cycle.

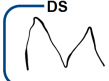
Finance Committee

Finance Committee Chair, Matt Glova, reported the committee did not meet in March. He summarized highlights of each of the February 2024 financial statements, providing additional detail for several of the reports. Nikia Coates moved to approve the February 2024 financial statements. Matt Ellinwood seconded the motion. Calling for a vote, and hearing no objections, the motion carried. (03-24-63)

Chair's Report

Chair Katherine Williams opened for discussion ideas and strategies to improve engagement and create more space for discussion during Board meetings. Executive committee members offered their feedback and suggestions as follows:

- Maximizing use of consent agenda where action items require little if any discussion
- Observation that in-person meetings create more engagement, however the Board survey indicated a clear preference for virtual meetings.
- Include a topic or question prompt for discussion on the agenda which will allow Board members to gather their thoughts about the topic in advance.

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- Living “mission moment”: At least once during the year, meet at a partner’s organization for a brief tour to see some of the work funded by WCSS.
- Create a portal or space on the website for Board members or staff to anonymously submit questions or feedback.
- Incorporate a Kid Connect style tour into the board orientation for new members.
- Quarterly email of upcoming engagement opportunities for the Board to participate in.

Executive Director’s Report

Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen provided the following updates:

- Federal update: Ms. Headen reported the federal government continues to examine ways to stabilize child care and has recently finalized a new rule that includes key changes to strengthen the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). Highlights of the new rule include:
 - lower costs for families by capping parent co-pays for subsidy at no more than 7% of their income.
 - Improved payment rates and practices for providers. The payment structure will be based on enrollment, not attendance, and providers will receive payment at the beginning of the month instead of a reimbursement later.
 - Simplifying enrollment in the subsidy program to make it more accessible to families.
 - Technical changes and clarifications.

Ms. Headen reported the rule becomes effective April 30, 2024, however states can request a waiver of up to two years to become compliant with the rule.

- State update: Ms. Headen reported on the anticipated state funding to sustain early childhood programs. Due to recent legislation of tax reductions, there is significantly less state revenues available to support early childhood programs. The governor’s budget is expected to include much less support for them than in the past.
- Local updates:
 - On April 1, WCSS will make its annual presentation to Wake County Board of Commissioners Education Committee to support its funding request of an additional \$3 million. Ms. Headen called attention to a bar chart representing the growth of Wake County Smart Start funding from FY2017-2025 to illustrate the two main discussion points of the proposal. 1) First in priority, for raising reimbursement rates for Wake ThreeSchool and NC Pre-K programs to keep pace with increased subsidy rate driven by increase in the market rate; 2) funding for an additional 100 seats for Wake ThreeSchool.
 - A draft report from the Suspensions and Expulsions pilot research project is out for review and comment by the Research Community Advisory Board. The final report is anticipated in May 2024 and will be shared with the Board. Learnings from the project will be used for next steps of how to use the information to shape policy making . Grant close out with the funder, Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation (BCBS) will take place this month. Conversation with BCBS has begun about potential funding of future related work. A related activity, the Parent Power Institute led by the Education Justice Alliance will offer “Too Young to Suspend” a four-week training for parents, be held in April and May. The goal of the training is to educate parents on their ability to effect change in a system rooted in racial inequity and equip them to support their children’s education.
 - In early March, WCSS Early Childhood Initiatives (ECI) responded to a request from Governor Cooper’s office to coordinate a classroom for the Governor to use for taping a video aimed at the K-12 school system. Ms. Headen expressed appreciation to Lynn Policastro, Carol Orji and Gizem Imece, Director and Owner of the Cary School for their quick turnaround response to the Governor’s request.
 - WCSS received twenty-eight funding proposals by the RFP deadline, March 6. Ms. Headen commented that many of the proposals are strong and communicate how their activities are aligned with WCSS Strategic Framework priorities.

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- The Allocations Committee will meet during the 2nd week of April to begin evaluations and preparation of their funding recommendations to bring to the Board at the April 24th meeting.
- Leadership Team: During their retreat last October, the Leadership Team (LT) developed its purpose statement with a broad goal of working as a synced team to address all areas of our organization, rather than just through the lens of individual departments. This defined purpose is used to guide team meetings and in the re-structured format of meetings to support collective strategic focus. Since the retreat, LT members have been growing as a team and individually, guided through group coaching and two monthly individual coaching sessions with the leadership coach through June 2024. Ms. Headen remarked the team appreciates this investment and finding renewed ways to “act as thought leaders and think strategically to create a context where all children succeed by addressing system inequities”. She said it is still early in the process, but a transformation is already evident and behaviors and mindset are continuing to evolve with each meeting to influence the quality of discussion and leadership being provided to staff.

With no further business to discuss, Matt Glova moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:02 AM. Matt Ellinwood seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the motion carried. (03-24-64)

DocuSigned by:

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Secretary

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