

**Wake County Smart Start
Executive Committee Meeting
March 26, 2025**

A meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) Executive Committee was held on Wednesday, March 26, 2025, with Chair, Katherine Williams presiding. The meeting was held via Zoom conference call.

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

Committee Members absent: Matthew Ellinwood

Staff members present: Gary Carr, Carol Orji, Alex Livas-Dlott, Gayle Headen, Rob Linens

Guests present: Anjanette Carter

Call to Order/Announcements

At 8:37 AM, Chair Katherine Williams announced a quorum was present and officially called the meeting to order. She noted the meeting was being recorded and drew attention to the presence of staff.

Nikia Coates moved to adopt the agenda. Sherry Heuser seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with none opposed, the vote to adopt the agenda was unanimous. (3-26-47)

Katherine Williams asked for a motion to adopt the January 22, 2025, minutes. Sherry Heuser moved to approve the minutes. Nikia Coates seconded. The motion was approved with no opposition. (3-26-48)

Advancement Committee

Vice Chair Nikia Coates announced that PNC would partner with WCSS as the premier sponsor for the Block Party. Rob Linens added that multiple lower-level sponsors have also been secured for the Block Party.

Finance Committee

Finance Committee Chair, Matt Glova, reported that the Finance Committee did not meet last month. Ms. Williams requested a motion to approve the Financial Reports. Matt Glova moved to approve the Financial Reports. Sherry Heuser seconded. The February Financial Reports were adopted unanimously. (3-26-49)

Chair's Report

Katherine Williams shared that Gayle Headen received a letter from the EEOC. They ruled that there were no concerns to warrant further investigation, no finding of fault against WCSS. The matter is closed from their standpoint. The complainant has 90 days to file a lawsuit, or she would be prevented from doing so on her federal disability claim. Those 90 days will end June 2. She would have to invest her own funds to pursue a case against WCSS.

Ms. Williams noted she was able to attend the call with the County Commissioners considering the WCSS request for the coming year. She commended the team and stated that WCSS enjoys broad support from our County Commissioners.

Executive Director's Report

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

Last Wednesday Congresswoman Deborah Ross toured Wanda's Little Hands in Southeast Raleigh to bring attention to the threats of federal cuts. Discussing that with local leaders present was a parent, Wanda McCargo, the Director of Wanda's Little Hands, Congresswoman Ross and Ms. Headen. Ms. Headen stated Joan Crutchfield, the Pre-K Manager, did a great job identifying Wanda's Little Hands as a host site. She has Early

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Head Start, Wake ThreeSchool, NC Pre-K, and a private kindergarten class. The group toured the site. Congresswoman Ross read a book, and then there was a round table discussion.

Ms. Headen mentioned the last Board meeting and discussions of uncertainty and changes to family and childcare. Staff appreciated the guidance received from the Board and said that staff and Leadership have been leaning into that guidance. Ms. Headen shared highlights from the ED Conference she attended. NCPC held a three-hour session on Leading in Uncertain Times. NCPC values remain. Ms. Heuser added that NCPC is not changing its priorities or commitments.

Ms. Headen reported on the recent Education Committee meeting. The funding request this year is \$8.7M, about \$800,000 more than last year, \$5.2M is for Wake ThreeSchool to support maintaining 300 seats, increasing the reimbursement rate by 3% in teacher and teacher assistant pay scales. \$400,000 in increased funding is requested for NC Pre-K to support a 3% increase for teacher and assistant teacher pay scales as well. Specific to Wake ThreeSchool, they would like to increase social emotional support, including an additional specialist; provide child screening so providers and teachers know the children's strengths and needs at the beginning of the year; and add two intensive intervention contractors.

Ms. Headen also thanked Nikia Coates for the PNC sponsorship and for making that happen. This is the second year of the Block Party. This year the team reached out for sponsors. The goal is to raise \$27,500, and Ms. Headen stated that Rob is well on his way to meeting that goal.

Rob Linens reported that last year's Block Party was broken up into zones, such as the calming zone, the resource zone, touch-a-truck and other activities and over 1,500 families attended. This year, WCSS staff is building out sponsorships around the zones, as well as PNC across the whole event. Please reach out to Mr. Linens for questions and information to share with contacts. Ms. Headen also pointed out that last year Tonya Venable engaged her sorority sisters, and they provided 20 volunteers. Ms. Venable agreed she will try to do the same thing this year.

With no additional business for discussion, Matt Glova moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 AM. Nikia Coates seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the motion carried. (3-26-50)

Signed by:

Matt Ellinwood

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