Wake County Smart Start
Board of Directors Meeting
August 27, 2025

A meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) Board of Directors was held on Wednesday, August 27, 2025, with Chair Nikia Coates presiding.

Board Members present: André Anthony, Kelsey Camarena, Veronica Creech, Ariel Ford, Matthew Glova, Jason Horton, Nikki Leonard, Kerry McCarthy Adams, Ronetta Pearsall, Stephanie Shell, Tonya Venable, Joe White, Katherine Williams

Board Members absent: Matthew Ellinwood, Susan Evans, Mickey Holt, Antonia Pedroza, Michele Woodson.

Staff Members present: Gayle E. Headen, Gary Carr, Sasha Gomez, Rob Linens, Alex Livas-Dlott, Nikki McDougald, Jen McPherson, Carol Orji, Taushau Wilkinson, Taylor Young. Vanessa Guzman.

Call to Order/Announcements

At 9:16 AM, Chair Nikia Coates recognized a quorum and called the meeting to order. She called attention to the presence of staff members. Ms. Coates welcomed the new Board Members and asked each Board and Staff Member introduce themselves.

Ms. Coates requested a motion to adopt the agenda. Matthew Glova moved to adopt the agenda. Jason Horton seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with none opposed, the motion carried. (8-27-01)

SIPE Mission Moment

Ms. Coates introduced Sasha Gomez, WCSS Manager, System Improvement & Public Engagement, and members of her team to present the Mission Moment: Results of the Second Annual Block Party. Ms. Coates congratulated the WCSS team on putting together such a successful event.

Consent Agenda

Ms. Coates requested a motion to adopt the consent agenda. Matt Glova moved to adopt the consent agenda including the Minutes of the June 25, 2025, Board of Directors Meeting, July 2025 Financial Reports, FY2024-25 Reversion Schedule, and DSP Fiscal Monitoring Survey. André Anthony seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with none opposed, the motion carried. (8—27-02)

Committee Reports

Finance Committee

Finance Committee Chair Matt Glova presented a recommendation for the Board's consideration. The Finance Committee recommends Board approval of the $54,879 budget of unrestricted funds to support activities not covered by local, state and federal grants. Ms. Coates asked for a motion to approve the recommendation. Stephanie Shell moved to approve the Finance Committee's recommendation for approval of the FY 2026 Unrestricted Private Funds Budget to cover administrative and program expenses not allowable by state, federal and local grants. Veronica Creech seconded the motion. With no opposition, the motion passed. (8-27-03)

Chair's Report

Ms. Coates said she is excited to serve for the next two years as Board Chair. She has learned much from other Board members during her previous years on the Board. Meeting the new Board members invigorated her own excitement for the next two years. As the Board navigates a new outlook for the next two years, she sees an incredible opportunity ahead. She appreciates the rich perspective each member brings to the Board, and she is excited about the next two years together.

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Ms. Coates noted that after Covid, the Board had inched toward more in-person opportunities to help increase impact and productivity and to build rapport, which inspired her to add an additional in-person meeting to the Board's schedule. The first meeting of the FY26-27 will be in person, resulting in two in-person opportunities in 2026: February and August. This will allow any new Board Members to have their first meeting in person and give the Board an opportunity to build community with each other.

Ms. Coates said the Board Participation Plan Survey is almost complete at 75%, and she appreciates everyone taking the time to complete the survey. The Board approved a three-year strategic plan for the current cycle, and it is time to start planning or FYFY-30. With that, the Board will be creating two ad hoc committees. The first is a Strategic Plan RFP Committee to read through RFPs, then decide on the firm to create the strategic plan. The second is the Strategic Planning Committee, which will be a little larger with longer meetings. This Committee will meet September through February and work alongside the chosen firm to develop the strategic plan. At the February Board Meeting, the new Strategic Plan will be presented to the full Board. In August 2026, the Strategic Plan will be adopted, and in July 2027, the plan will be implemented. Ms. Coates asked for those interested in participating in either or both committees to let her know.

Ms. McCarthy Adams asked if Ms. Coates knew what the frequency of the meetings would be for planning purposes. Ms. Coates said the RFP Committee would begin meeting in early September. The cadence for the Planning Committee will be determined after the firm is chosen, but the meetings will be ongoing between October and February.

Executive Director's Report

Ms. Headen referred to her written report. The FAIR Working Group has been established and is being opened up to staff. Staff are self-identifying and will begin in September.

Ms. Headen shared she was at the Raleigh Chamber Annual Convention Ms. Headen said there was a session on the policy on state budget yesterday. There is a chance that there will not be a new budget voted on this year. Legislatively, when the current budget expires, if there is not a new one in place, the old one remains in effect until a new one. The impact to WCSS is that funding would remain level.

Ms. Headen shared that Smart Start month is September, and WCSS has started planning. She also let the Board know that the current executive assistant has resigned, and Ms. Headen will be the primary contact in the short term. She appreciates the Board's flexibility with the changes.

With no further business to discuss, Ms. Coates asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Katherine Williams moved to adjourn the meeting. Kerry McCarthy Adams seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned by Ms. Coates at 10:03 AM. (8-27-04)

Signed by:

Matt Ellinwood

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