

**Wake County Smart Start
Executive Committee Meeting
September 24, 2025**

A meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) Executive Committee was held on Wednesday, September 24, 2025, with Chair Nikia Coates presiding. The meeting was held via Zoom conference call.

Committee members present: Nikia Coates, Veronica Creech, Matthew Ellinwood, Ariel Ford, Matthew Glova, and Tonya Venable.

Committee Members absent: Katherine Williams

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

Guests present: Roberta Hill

Call to Order/Announcements

At 8:30 AM, Chair Nikia Coates announced a quorum was present, officially called the meeting to order, and drew attention to the presence of staff and guests.

Ms. Coates asked for a motion to adopt the agenda. Ariel Ford moved to adopt the agenda. Matt Glova seconded. The motion passed with no objection. (9-24-06)

Ms. Coates asked for a motion to adopt the Consent Agenda. Matthew Glova moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Tonya Venable seconded. The motion was approved with no opposition. (9-24-07)

Advancement Committee

Veronica Creech reported that the Advancement Committee met. The Committee is working to increase donors and sponsors through a variety of methods. The WCSS 30th Anniversary celebration is scheduled for September 26, 2026, and planning has started. The Save the Date email will go out soon.

Governance Committee

Ms. Coates presented a motion from the Committee to accept the resignation of Mickey Holt. Veronica Creech made a motion for acceptance of the resignation of Mickey Holt from the Wake County Smart Start Board of Directors effective September 1, 2025. Matthew Glova seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition. (9-24-08)

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Gayle Headen reported that every seat, 1,532 seats, was filled for NC Pre-K, the earliest ever. Ms. Headen thanked the NC Pre-K and other WCSS staff for their efforts to get children placed earlier. She has been meeting with different civic groups, representing WCSS, to put child development on the top of minds, and to build and expand relations with WCSS. Pastries with Partners is November 18th 8:00 AM to 9:30 AM, and the invitation will go out in October.

WCSS staff is in the early stages of exploring funding vehicles to ensure the sustainability of WCSS. Two specific vehicles being explored are an endowment with the support of the John Rex Foundation and a donor advised fund (DAF). Ms. Headen and Rob Linens met with Sabrina Slade from the John Rex Foundation to discuss both options. Board involvement will be required. Mr. Glova offered resources he has available for a DAF and how they can be utilized. The Executive Committee gave their endorsement of pursuing a sustainability vehicle and will receive reports on updates as more progress is made.

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Chair Report

Ms. Coates shared that Board Member André Anthony would be moved to the Finance Committee in anticipation of Matthew Glova's eventual retirement from the Board. Mr. Glova is excited to work with Mr. Anthony.

Ms. Coates also reported on the RFP that was released for the next strategic framework preparation. Board Members were asked to volunteer to be involved in the process, both the selection of the firm that would facilitate the strategic framework process and working with that firm to develop the plan. The RFP generated 14 responses, five of which were chosen for further consideration. The committee discussed what the staff needed to support them, the future of the organization, and the nature of the firm that would be best suited to connect well with the community in preparation of the Community Needs Assessment. The Jeong Collective was chosen. The next step is to start the conversation with them, and staff has started the process of working through the Community Needs Assessment.

Ms. Coates asked for a motion for the Executive Committee to go into closed session to discuss the Executive Director's performance evaluation. At 9:15 AM, Veronica Creech moved that the Executive Committee go into closed session to discuss the Executive Director's performance evaluation. Matthew Ellinwood seconded the motion. The motion carried with no opposition. (9-24-09)

During the closed session, Veronica Creech moved to approve a 6% merit increase for the Executive Director in recognition of her exemplary leadership. Tonya Venable seconded the motion. Calling for a vote, the motion was unanimously approved. (9-24-10)

Ms. Coates asked for a motion for the Executive Committee to exit the closed session. Veronica Creech made a motion to exit the closed session. Matt Glova seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing all in favor, the motion carried. (9-24-11)

With no further business to discuss, Ms. Coates asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Matt Glova moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:54am. Veronica Creech seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the motion carried. (9-24-12)

Signed by:

 Matt Ellinwood

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