

**Wake County Smart
Start Board of Directors
Meeting February 25,
2026**

A meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) Board of Directors was held on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, with Chair Nikia Coates presiding.

Wake County Smart Start Board Members present: Nikia Coates, André Anthony, Veronica Creech, Susan Evans, Ariel Ford, Nikki Leonard, Kerry McCarthy Adams, Ronetta Pearsall, Antonia Pedroza, Joe White, Katherine Williams.

Wake County Smart Start Board Members absent: Kelsey Camarena, Matthew Ellinwood, Matthew Glova, Jason Horton, Stephanie Shell, Tonya Venable, Michele Woodson.

Staff Members present: Gary Carr, Joan Crutchfield, Sasha Gomez, Gayle E. Headen, Robert Linens, Alejandra Livas-Dlott, Bryce McClamroch, Carol Orji, Lynn Policastro, Taylor Young.

Guests present: Roberta Hill.

Call to Order/Announcements

At 9:06 AM, Chair Nikia Coates recognized a quorum and called the meeting to order. She called attention to the presence of staff members and guests.

Ms. Coates requested a motion to adopt the agenda. Susan Evans moved to adopt the agenda. Katherine Williams seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with none opposed, the motion carried. (2-25-11)

Mission Moment

Ms. Coates introduced Lynn Policastro to present the Mission Moment. Ms. Policastro shared the Early Childhood Initiatives quality enhancement activities.

Consent Agenda

Ms. Coates requested a motion to adopt the consent agenda. Joe White moved to adopt the consent agenda including the Minutes of the December 3, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting, and January 26 Financial Reports. Ronetta Pearsall seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with none opposed, the motion carried. (2-25-12)

Committee Reports

Advancement Committee

Advancement Committee Chair, Veronica Creech, briefly shared progress on the 30th Anniversary event. Additional details will be provided later during the Board Retreat program.

Finance Committee

Finance Committee Member André Anthony reported for the Finance Committee on behalf of Committee Chair Matt Glova. Mr. Anthony shared the 401k Investment Review Report, as well as participant fee disclosure, plan provisions, and plan review. The Finance Committee is discussing moving the 401k to Fidelity Investments. He shared the Fidelity estimated fee quote, fee transparency and workplace proposal. The Finance Committee is still reviewing and discussing the move and will report to the Board at a future meeting.

Chair's Report

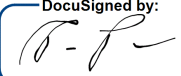
Ms. Coates reported that a volunteer of a John Rex Foundation funded program had reached out to Ms. Coates and Mr. Glova regarding an issue with his termination as volunteer. WCSS is only the fiscal agent for the grant and is otherwise not involved in the issue, so Ms. Coates asked the Board Members not to respond to any emails from him.

Ms. Coates shared that Thelma Wong and Annie Watson from Jeong Collective would be joining the Board and staff to discuss the Strategic Plan after the break, and she laid out the expectations for the rest of the Retreat.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Gayle E. Headen reminded the Board to read her Executive Director's report, especially the sections on Quality Enhancement with Wake ThreeSchool. She also shared that progress is underway for the quasi-endowment, and the John Rex Foundation has agreed to fund Zenith Wealth Partners in their consultation of WCSS Board and staff in developing the investment strategy and other policies needed for the framework of the endowment. She will share more information as it becomes available.

With no further business to discuss, Ms. Coates asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kerry McCarthy Adams moved to adjourn the meeting. Veronica Creech seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned by Ms. Coates at 9:46 AM. (102-25-13)

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