

Head Start Policy Council
January 24, 2023 Noon
Virtual/Stearns Education Center

Attending: Philicia Pace (parent, Sunny View Elementary), Kailee Epley (parent, Tryon Elementary), Alicia Avellaneda (parent-Polk Central), Kelci Hampton (parent, Saluda Elementary), Dena Pfister (Polk County Health Department), Calan Halford (Polk County DSS)

Others Present: Kathy Harding, Amanda VanDuyne, Debbie Lovelace, Jan Crump, Xan Morse, Lisa Brown, Courtney Edney

Call Meeting to Order: Ms. Epley, chairperson, called the meeting to order at 11:38am. She welcomed everyone to the meeting. Each member introduced themselves.

Approval of November 16, 2022 minutes: Ms. Epley asked for a motion to approve the November minutes. Ms. Avellaneda made a motion to approve and Mrs. Pace seconded. The vote to approve was unanimous.

Reports/Information: Ms. VanDuyne reviewed the enrollment information presented on the December program monthly summary. She said attendance for the month of December was okay but there had been more absences than usual due to an increase in illnesses. Ms. VanDuyne also shared the Family Services portion of the report. She told members two new students had been enrolled in the program in December. She shared that the program had purchased new management software called GoEngage and staff completed training on the software. She explained that she was preparing applications for the 2023-2024 school year and that applications will be available online and as paper copies. She told members that PreK classes had enjoyed visiting Stearns before Christmas on a field trip to see the decorations and participate in holiday activities like cookie decorating and a literacy activity. Each classroom also shared a holiday family engagement activity with families, inviting them to decorate gingerbread houses. She explained that she is currently working on a winter family engagement activity for February.

Ms. Brown said December was focused on holiday fun and she had enjoyed helping decorate Stearns and plan for the PreK classes field trip. She stated she also enjoyed helping at the gingerbread house decorating activities with several classes and had helped teachers prepare materials for these events.

Mrs. Edney told members she continued to attend MTSS and IEP meetings monthly for children being referred for EC services, as well as children transitioning to school-based services. She has been completing hearing and vision screenings for newly enrolled children and following up with families regarding referrals. She explained that she tracks student well-child doctor visits and is sending reminders to families as these come due. She shared that the dental bus will return early in February to complete more PreK dental visits.

Mrs. Morse explained December was a short month with classroom teachers focused on providing many fun holiday activities for their classes. She said early in December PreK teachers met with Exceptional Children staff to discuss the PreK teacher's role in providing services for children with IEPs. Teachers were provided guidance on their responsibilities in helping children with disabilities work toward their IEP goals and documenting progress.

Mrs. Crump shared that improving PreK to Kindergarten transition has been a focus this year and was discussed with principals. The plan is for PreK students to be assigned to their Kindergarten class before the end of the year so the receiving K teacher can attend the end of year PreK parent conference and get to know the child and family to improve and streamline the transition process. Ms. Epley stated she thought this is a great opportunity for parents and made her feel less stressed about her child's move to Kindergarten.

Mrs. Harding shared that fall Division of Child Development compliance visits were completed and all sites did well. She stated that the program is beginning to work on budgets for both Head Start and NCPReK. She told members that the program expects to have a Head Start compliance review sometime this calendar year, possibly this spring. She explained that the program works to stay review-ready at all times. She also stated that plans are moving forward on the new building project at Tryon Elementary. She said sealed bids would be opened in a couple of weeks and a contractor would be chosen at that point.

Mrs. Lovelace reviewed the information in the financial reports provided in member packets. She explained that the expenditure report shows the budget amounts, expenses and remaining balance. She noted the line item on page 5 showing \$1.5M is the money set aside for the new building at Tryon Elementary. She told members that financial information for both November and December were included in their packets since there was no meeting in December. She also reviewed the credit card report, and explained the school system's process for using credit cards, saying the process is closely monitored.

New Business: Mrs. Harding told members she is working on the Head Start budget for the next program year and seeking input from all stakeholders. The communication from Office of Head Start regarding the grant re-application process was shared in member packets. The program will receive \$722,584 to operate the program for 80 Head Start students. Mrs. Harding reminded members that this is only partial funding for the preschool program, which also receives NCPReK funding, local funding and other sources of funding. Mrs. Harding said the timeline for budget planning is to discuss budget needs and ideas at the February meeting and in March approve the complete grant application. She said she is currently working on reviewing the community assessment for the grant application, but that much of Polk County's data remains stable. She shared that Polk County's economic stability rating did fall to Tier 2 which does help programs when applying for grants. She told members that tuition for the 2023-2024 school year will remain at \$400 per month.

There was a brief discussion about the new CTE early childhood program at Polk County High School. Six students from the inaugural class will be completing practicums at Polk Central Elementary in the near future, rotating in PreK through 2nd grade classrooms.

Training: Marjorie Vestal and Rosanna Kingston shared information about a new initiative in Polk County called Innovative Approaches. This initiative is being facilitated by Polk's Department of Health and Human Services. The goal is to improve systems of change for children and youth with special healthcare needs, including but not limited to mental health needs, behavioral health needs, hearing and/or vision concerns, developmental delays, chronic illness, etc. Children and youth from birth through age 21 will be served. The focus will be to help parents partner with caregivers and help them access all available resources, as well as aid in transitioning youth with needs into adulthood. They have developed a Care Notebook for parents and providers and shared copies of these notebooks with members of Policy Council. Mrs. Kingston also shared they are creating a Parent Advisory Council to meet monthly, discuss concerns and obstacles, and share suggestions and recommendations with local leaders. She asked the group to share information with anyone they thought might be interested or would benefit from this initiative.

Next Meeting: After some discussion, the next meeting date was changed to Thursday, February 9th at 12:00noon. This will be a joint meeting with the NCPreK Committee; at the conclusion of the NCPreK Committee meeting, Policy Council will convene for the budget discussion as part of the grant application process.

Old Business: None

Comments or Questions: None

The meeting was adjourned at 12:31pm.

Policy Council Secretary

Date