

Head Start Policy Council
March 21, 2023 Noon
Virtual/Stearns Education Center

Attending: Alicia Avellaneda (parent-Polk Central), Calan Halford (Polk County DSS), Donna Wood (Community Member, The Hope Chest)

***A quorum was established by sharing information with members not in attendance and asking for their approval electronically per bylaws.*

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

Call Meeting to Order: Mrs. Harding called the meeting to order at 12:06pm. She welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no new attendees to introduce. Mrs. Harding explained to members that Ms. VanDuyne would email information to members not in attendance to ask for approval in order to meet the quorum requirement. In Ms. Epley's absence, Mrs. Crump led the meeting.

Approval of February 9, 2023 minutes: Mrs. Crump asked members to review the minutes included in their packets and sent electronically. She asked for a motion and a second to approve the minutes. Mrs. Wood made a motion to approve the minutes and Mrs. Halford seconded the motion. All voted in favor of approving the minutes.

Reports/Information: Mrs. Harding reviewed the enrollment information from the monthly report, telling members the program has 119 children enrolled with all 80 Head Start slots filled and 88 students identified as NCPreK students.

Ms. VanDuyne shared information about Family Services. She told members the online application for the 2023-2024 school year has been available since late February and the program has received around 80 online applications already and have approximately 30 applications held over from last year from three year olds that were unable to be placed. She said she already has 107 students on the enrollment tally for next school year. Mrs. Harding told members that this is very unusual for this time of year. This information has been shared with administration since the program may need to consider adding a classroom next year and would have to determine how best to fund this. Ms VanDuyne shared she has placed enrollment signs and flyers throughout the community. She has held Parent Cafe gatherings in each school and shared financial planning information, including information about income tax preparation and budgeting. She said attendance at these gatherings had been minimal but those who attended had received benefits from the information shared. She told members that all PreK staff are continuing to learn about the new program management software being used and another training opportunity has been scheduled for this.

Mrs. Harding said Ms. Brown was not in attendance but shared her update. She has been working with teachers to refresh supplies and materials and has placed orders for these and

delivered them to classrooms. She also helped with the Parent Cafe events as well as attended a family engagement event at Polk Central Elementary.

Mrs. Edney told members she has attended several student IEP meetings as the Disabilities Coordinator. She has completed hearing and vision screenings for newly enrolled students. She said she has been making sure students are up-to-date on health assessments and immunizations so they have what is required for kindergarten. She also shared that the dental bus had returned in February and saw 61 students.

Mrs. Morse shared the Education portion of the monthly report. She told members the end of the second assessment period occurred in mid-February. She explained teachers had entered anecdotal notes and finalized scores for this assessment period and were sharing family reports during winter family conferences. She said PreK teachers have participated in an in-person staff meeting at Stearns Education Center in February, discussing ECERS, newsletters, assessment data and using Ready Rosie for family engagement.. She also shared that Mrs. Crump and Mrs. Benfield, Literacy Specialist, had met with Mrs. Harding and her to discuss a potential new literacy program to be used in PreK.

Mrs. Harding updated members on the new building at Tryon Elementary School. She explained that a contractor had been approved at the last school board meeting and the plan is to break ground after spring break. She is hoping the program can move into the building in December, but it may be February 2024 or later before this happens. She explained that she has met with Tryon Elementary PreK teachers and several playground companies to discuss ideas for the outdoor learning area. She also told members that she had been working on the Head Start grant that members would be approving.

Mrs. Lovelace asked members to review the financial reports included in their packets. She explained that the credit card is only used for a few items; PreK used the credit card once during February for a supply purchase online. She explained that the program had requested to carry over the Head Start grant money for the new building at Tryon Elementary since it has not been used yet. She discussed the requirement for matching funds and said Mr. Greene had received a grant from the state for this. She said the program has also received a grant from Dogwood Trust for playground equipment and furnishings. Mrs. Harding told members that the value of the land the building will sit on is also considered part of the matching funds.

New Business: Mrs. Harding presented the information about the 2023-2024 Head Start Continuation Grant application. A summary of the grant information was included in the member packets, and the full application was shared electronically prior to the meeting. She explained that the program is entering year 4 of a 5 year grant cycle, and this is a continuation application. She said the self-assessment process is on-going all the time and is a real-time process of evaluating and responding as needs and concerns arise. She said the online application is a result of the self-assessment process. Mrs. Harding said she has been meeting with teachers one-on-one to have conversations and learn about any needs or concerns they have. She said the program goals and objectives are updated yearly to acknowledge the

progress made and any challenges that occur. A one-page budget summary was included in packets. Mrs. Harding reminded members most of the funding goes to staff salaries and benefits with all staff being paid on the North Carolina salary schedule. She explained the program uses a cost allocation process with Head Start funds paying a portion of the expenses and other funding streams paying a portion. She also referenced the Training & Technical Assistance Plan, and said Head Start provides \$12,827 in funds to be used for professional development only. Mrs. Harding said she needed a motion to approve the continuation grant and the components of the grant that included the self assessment and improvement plan, the proposed budget, an update on the progress of the program goals, and the T/TA plan. . Mrs. Crump asked for a motion and a second to approve the 2023-2024 Head Start Continuation Grant Application and components. . Ms. Avellaneda made a motion to approve and Mrs. Wood seconded. All voted in favor of the motion.

Mrs. Harding then shared information about the 2023-2024 Head Start COLA and Quality Improvement Application. She explained the group needed to approve the grant for extra funds from Head Start. She explained that she had just received the information with details. The program will receive \$39,746 to offset the increase in salaries and benefits. She explained the increases are estimates at this point since the state of North Carolina has not approved a budget yet. She said the amount for the Quality Improvement grant is \$22,642 and is one-time money that has some flexibility in use. She said the QI money can be used for materials and resources related to curriculum. She told members the Office of Early Learning has required NCPReK programs to use the MyTeachingStrategies assessment, as it aligns with the Kindergarten Early Learning Assessment. Currently the PreK program is using the HighScope curriculum, but NCPReK and OEL would prefer programs use Creative Curriculum which is in the product family of MyTeachingStrategies. She explained that the program is considering using Creative Curriculum and the Quality Improvement funds would be used to purchase the new curriculum and provide training for staff on using the curriculum. Mrs. Crump asked for a motion to approve accepting the Head Start Quality Improvement funds in the amount of \$22,642 to be used for new curriculum and training. Ms. Avellaneda made a motion to approve and Mrs. Wood seconded. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Old Business: None

Next Meeting Date: The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 18, 2023 at 12:00 noon.

Comments or Questions: Mrs. Halford shared DSS has received approval to spend funds for child-care assistance. Mrs. Wood shared that The Hope Chest has been helping a lot of families, opening one day a week in the afternoon for families to come by and pick up needed items.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:47pm.

Policy Council Secretary

Date