

June 12, 2024

EE/NCPK Meeting Minutes

10:00am-11:22am

The Cabarrus Partnership for Children's local NC Pre-K Committee Meeting was called to order at 10:00am by Ann Benfield, NC Pre-K Committee Co-Chair, with a quorum present throughout the meeting.

Committee Members: Trina Wenzel, Ann Benfield, Teresa Aldridge, Lashonda Houston, Jennifer Baucom, Starr Batts, Elizabeth Heston, Debra Pless, Erin Anderson, Deborah Beatty, Lora Lipe, Nicole Sessoms, Sue Rebich, Waynett Taylor, Wynter Sexton

Committee Members Present: Trina Wenzel, Ann Benfield, Lashonda Houston, Jennifer Baucom, Starr Batts, Elizabeth Heston, Deborah Beatty, Lora Lipe, Nicole Sessoms, Sue Rebich, Waynett Taylor, Teresa Aldridge

Committee Members Absent: Debra Pless, Erin Anderson, Wynter Sexton

Guest Present: Andrea Mayle, Aurora Swain, Abigail Rohrer, Misty Mullins, Kelly Huff, Kris Parker, Kunal Shah, Dana Stikeleather, Rachel Grossman-Zach, Malinda Beard

Staff Members Present: Patricia Sehorn, Tu'Nicquia Bradley

Welcome and Introduction:

Ann Benfield, committee co-chair, welcomed everyone and allowed everyone to introduce themselves that were online and physically present.

Action Items:

Minutes of March 20, 2024

Ann Benfield presented the meeting agenda and asked the committee to review the March 20, 2024, minutes. A request was made by Ann Benfield for any corrections. No corrections were needed for the minutes. Ann Benfield requested a motion to approve the minutes without any corrections. Nicole Sessoms the motion and _____ seconded the motion.

Proposed Budget/Slot Allocations

Ann Benfield presented the pending budget of \$302,100 that the Cabarrus Partnership for Children has allocated for NC PreK to continue to offer the reimbursement rates at approved numbers. The board is having a meeting at the end of the month where they are looking at the Smart Start budget, and the \$302,100 is pending approval from the Cabarrus Partnership Board of Directors.

Ann Benfield directed everyone's attention to the proposed budget and slot allocation plan. Ann explains that the slots are allocated based on where the number of children is in the county, which has been done for all the years that she has been working with NC PreK. Patricia also stated that recommendations are based on the number of applications for each site location, with parent preference, location and continuity of care as well as based on the number of applications for each site location. Ann stated that the proposal made the most sense given the numbers of applications and the amount of money that they have since the state of NC will not be giving any more money this year for NC PreK. The state is also cutting administration costs to 4%. It is going to be more than the \$302,100 for NC PreK for Smart Start because we would have to figure out how to pay the people contributing and supporting PreK due to the budget cut.

A question was asked to Patricia Sehorn what percentage the cut was from and Patricia states that the budget was cut down to 4% from 10%.

Ann Benfield said Patricia Sehorn will send a copy of the proposed budget to everyone after the meeting and asked if anyone has questions or wants to make changes.

Patricia Sehorn explained that this was a difficult proposal to come up with because there were many applications and more capacity. She states that to make the numbers work and serve the most kids possible, this was the only scenario that they could come up with.

Trina Wenzel commented that "you cannot wait six weeks before school starts and make this kind of decision". She also expressed how it affects the jobs and livelihoods of staff, and that this decision should have been made earlier. Trina proposed that the PreK application should start earlier. She stated that there had to be a better way to get the applications processed and if not, the group needed to figure out how to provide support for the process because it affects all sites.

Discussions were had across the committee. Sue Rebich motioned to stop the 2024-2025 application process on October 1st and start the new application process December 1st, with a placement date of May 21, 2025, and we will go with whatever we have. Waynett Taylor 2nd the motion. Nicole Sessoms asked if we can vote on it and re-evaluate it again. Ann Benfield asked if all the nonconflicted members agreed. All nonconflicted members agreed. Patricia stated she would have to consult with the policy consultant to see if this would be allowed.

Ann Benfield asked if anyone wanted to make any changes to the budget or slot allocations. _____ motioned to accept the budget as presented and Lora Lipe seconded the motion. Ann asked if the nonconflicted members were ready to vote and everyone agreed to the motion.

Local Plan Discussions

Ann Benfield asked Patricia Sehorn to discuss the local plan. Patricia informed the committee that the state made a new rule where NC PreK classroom can have 20 kids in the classroom. The site can add two private paid kids which will cause the ratio to go from a 1:9 ratio to a 1:10 ratio

for NC PreK. Patricia explains that the board could decide if the classroom size should stay at 18 or if it would be appropriate to add two additional children to the classrooms. Both Nicole Sessoms and Sue Rebich made the motion to keep the classroom size at 18 max. Most members discussed that they felt the classroom size should stay at 18 due to the challenges teachers have faced in recent years. Kunal Shah wanted to reconsider increasing the ratio as it helps his program financially. Ann Benfield informed Kunal Shah that the nonconflicted members are the ones that can vote on the classroom size. The nonconflicted members voted to keep the classroom size at 18 max.

NCPK Updates:

Application Update

Patricia Sehorn stated there were 556 applications received by Monday and 365 of those applications are completed.

Dial Screening

Patricia Sehorn stated that we have had one mass screening with Cabarrus County Schools and were able to screen 109 children. She thanked the CCS staff for their help. There were volunteers from Rowan Cabarrus Community College to help with the screening. Patricia said that they were collaborating with Kannapolis City Schools to do another screening next week. Jennifer Baucom said they also did two other mass screenings. Patricia Sehorn stated that a NCPK staff have also been screening children at the office.

Placement Dates

Patricia Sehorn stated placements will possibly start June 13, 2024, as soon as the committee approves the budget. They will start placing children who have been screened already or have an IEP. Patricia explained that there would be another round of placements after the next screening event.

Outreach Update

Patricia Sehorn stated that Tee Tee and Starla are attending a lot of events to do outreach. She also explained that they have only been able to go out into the community once to give out flyers and postcards and that she has encouraged sites to outreach as well.

Other Agency Reports

Smart Start

Ann Benfield informed that Smart Start programs that are in the second year of their approval are being continued into the next year. They are still waiting for information about the allocation from Smart Start and the contracts to continue programs that the Board of Directors chose for last year.

DHS Subsidy

Elizabeth Heston reported that they do not have a waitlist and an average of 150 pending vouchers. Providers are closing classrooms because they do not have staff. Overages are an issue along with registration fees. Their income guidelines will change July 1, 2024.

CCRI

Starr Batts reiterated that they provide technical assistance for teachers to help them grow. Starr announced that there are some changes coming to the ERS assessments. Looking for a space to have their training in Cabarrus County. Jennifer Baucom informed Starr Batts that they have space at their Parent Center. Ann Benfield also informed Starr Batts about using McGill Baptist Church and will give her the information.

CCS

Trina Wenzel stated that they have taken over 200 referrals in 2 months, and 260 comprehension evaluations in 8 months. Her staff has also been cut and she will have only 3 staff that are 12 months.

KCS/HS

Jennifer Baucom stated that they have also been screening children. They will be working full time 3 weeks in the summer. The evaluations are showing things that have not seen before, more severe, more profound. They are getting ready for summer transitions at kindergarten camp.

RCCC

Nicole Sessoms informed everyone they just had 8 graduates. They have 114 participants. Are doing EDU 153 Bilingual for the first 8 weeks in the Fall and the second 8 weeks they will do EDU 119 again. They are also planning to translate the Infant/Toddler certificate too.

Endless Opportunities

No report.

P.U.R.E. Excellence

Waynett Taylor stated that they are finishing up the school year and post assessments. They have completed 8 trainings this quarter. Waynett informed Starr Batts they she wanted to collaborate so that they are not overlapping with what they are doing.

Ann Benfield opened the floor for any questions or want to bring anything to share.

With there being no other Committee business, the meeting concluded at 11:22 am. The next meeting is scheduled for July 17, 2024, at 10:00 am.

Minutes taken by Tu'Nicquia Bradley.