

**NCPK Committee
Meeting Minutes
1/21/2026**

Members Present- Erin Anderson, Tracy Thiery, Waynett Taylor, Hoke Pittman, Deborah Beatty, Elizabeth Heston, Sue Rebich, Amanda Martin, Carolyn Anderson, Andrea Mayle, Waynett Taylor

Staff members present: Ann Benfield, Patricia Sehorn

A quorum was established

Ann welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending today's meeting. She introduced a new committee member from CCRI, Carolyn Anderson. Carolyn is taking Starr's place on our committee. Carolyn will be providing training and TA in Cabarrus County.

Action Items:

The committee reviewed the minutes of the July 23, 2025, and January 7, 2026 meetings. There were some issues with a mix-up of dates on the minutes that were sent out for the July meeting. Patricia will correct and resend them to ensure the minutes are correct.

- **NC Pre-K Funding and Reimbursement (Proposed Budget)**

Ann presented the proposed budget based on this year's funding. The Smart Start Board approved the distribution of funds for the remainder of the 2025-2026 fiscal year, which supports direct services for NC Pre-K classrooms in public schools. She also presented the proposed direct services budget with the provider's reimbursement strategy, which sets out payment rates for public schools, private sites, and Head Start programs. The 2026-2027 proposed budget and allocations are based on this year's funding. Elizabeth made a motion to accept the budget, Waynett 2nd and all were in favor.

- **Local Implementation Plan**

Patricia reviewed the proposed 2026-2027 local implementation plan for the upcoming year, including local policies, funding distribution, and transportation policies. There were no changes to this year's policies. These documents were provided to members prior to this meeting. Each policy was reviewed and approved.

The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee is the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K Program and is required to do the following:

1. Conduct annual planning for NC Pre-K and approve an implementation plan. (Local Plan)
2. Select or change the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency.
3. Approve distribution of funding (slot allocations)
4. Review and approve the provider's reimbursement strategy (i.e., payment rates to providers). Cabarrus County reimburses programs with these rates: Public Schools, \$520 State/Federal funds, \$190 Smart for a total of \$700. Private Childcare Center sites \$719 State/Federal only funds. Head Start \$420 State/Federal funds only.
5. Approve provider transportation charges to/from the NC Pre-K Program- No providers wish to provide transportation.
6. Approve costs that may be charged to cover the full/partial costs of meals when children do not qualify for free/reduced priced lunch. (Local Plan)-
7. Approve adding new sites or non-voluntary termination of sites in the County/Region Plan. (Site Selection) Site Selection Committee will make recommendations at the March meeting.
8. Approve the reallocation of slots across NC Pre-K sites
 - a. This refers to an adjustment to slot allocations that takes place after the NC Pre-K Committee has approved the initial distribution of funding.
 - b. Slots may only be allocated to facilities that are currently approved to serve as NC Pre-K sites. Sue made a motion to let the Partnership for Children have the authority to move slots between programs as needed. Waynett 2nd and all in favor
9. Appoint site selection committee

Program Updates:

Award of additional slots

Patricia gave an update on the progress of filling the 57 additional slots. Most of the slots have been filled. Lissy and TeeTee are working to fill the last ones.

Applications and Outreach-

The Pre-K application went live on the website the second week of January. As of now, we have already received 56 applications. TeeTee and Starla continue to go to community events to conduct outreach activities.

Site Monitoring:

Patricia reported that site monitoring was completed successfully in December. No action plans were given. The monitoring was completed by desk audits of some sites and in person at others. All sites received a monitoring Close-Out letter.

Site Selection

Sue Ribich, Christy Hopkins, Amanda Martin, Carolyn Anderson and Lora Lipe volunteered to serve on the site selection committee. Waynett Taylor and Elizabeth Heston also expressed interest in serving on this committee. Patricia reported that we have 10 applicants including 7 new childcare center sites and 3 current sites. All 7 committee members were approved to serve on this site selection committee. The committee will meet in February for training and begin the selection process, including selecting a chair, signing confidentiality/conflict of interest forms, completing rubrics, conducting site visits, and preparing recommendations for the March committee meeting.

Agency Updates

Partnership for Children: Ann shared news of her upcoming retirement as Executive Director of the Cabarrus Partnership for Children,

- Tracy Thiery: Will send out information and flyers about the February 10th transition to K event at Cox Mill High School to the committee and via email.
- Erin Anderson: Will send flyers and details about the February 5th KCS Rises Night event (including transportation and dinner information) to Ann and the committee.
- Patricia and Tracy Thiery: Collaborate with Kannapolis City Schools to develop and implement a county-wide kindergarten transition plan using the state template, and coordinate transition planning meeting for all 4-year-olds in the county.

Agency Updates

Cabarrus Partnership for Children: Ann also announced her retirement and introduced Lauren Weston as the new Executive Director of the Cabarrus Partnership for Children. **DHS:** Elizabeth reported that the Department of Social Services has no waiting list for pre-K programs but highlighted ongoing challenges such as high registration fees and space availability.

CCS: Tracy shared updates on kindergarten registration and transition plans.

KCS: Erin discussed an upcoming event for Kannapolis City Schools.:

RCCC: Amanda provided an update on the early childhood education program at Rowan Cabarrus, noting a high number of participants and graduates.

P.U.R.E. Excellence: Waynett detailed ongoing training and coaching efforts, including a visit from Bebe Heron for Conscious Discipline training.

The group discussed the importance of the upcoming March meeting for approving sites and site selection recommendations. Ann announced her retirement, effective 2026, and expressed gratitude for the group's support over the years.