

**Wake County Smart Start  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
February 24, 2021**

A regular meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) Board of Directors was held on Wednesday, February 24, 2021 with WCSS Board Vice Chair, Sherry Heuser presiding. The meeting was held via Zoom conference call.

Board members present: Christina Alvarado, Maria Cervania, Dale Cousins, Veronica Creech, L'Teisha Curtis, Heather Drennan, Matthew Glova, Sherry Heuser, Leslie Ann Jackson, Catherine Lassiter, Cathy Moore, Kimberly Shaw, Charlotte Turpin, Angie Welsh, Joe White and Katherine Williams

Board members absent: Liz Hamner, Tonya Kangkolo, Katie King, Sharon Loza, Barbara Morales Burke, Antonia Pedroza, and Michael Wasilick

Staff members present: Gayle E. Headen, Phyllis Barbour, Gary Carr, Joan Crutchfield, Sasha Gomez, Bryce McClamroch, Carol Orji, Nancy Peck and Anna Troutman

Guests: Dawn Dawson, Susan Evans

**Call to Order/Announcements/Adoption of Agenda**

At 9:00 AM, Board Vice Chair, Sherry Heuser recognized a quorum and called the meeting to order. Dale Cousins moved to adopt the agenda. Angie Welsh seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing none opposed, the vote was unanimous. (02-21-53)

The Board considered items on the consent agenda. L'Teisha Curtis moved to approve items on the consent agenda including the minutes from the December 2, 2020 WCSS Board of Directors meeting and financial reports for January 2021. Leslie Ann Jackson seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the motion carried. (02-24-54)

**Committee Reports**

**Ad Hoc Governance Committee**

Committee Chair, Sherry Heuser provided background on the committee and the scope of its purpose: 1) defining Board and Executive Director roles to clarify the authority of both entities 2) several procedural updates, specifically for the budget and Executive Committee recommendation approval process 3) proposed committee job descriptions 4) creation of a revised board dashboard. Ms. Heuser reported revisions of board member, officer and committee job descriptions have been completed, with exception for the non-board committee member description which is still in process. She drew attention to Attachments B.1 – B.6 and summarized the key changes made by the committee. Ms. Heuser provided information about additional committee work in process including development of an annual plan, revisions to the board dashboard and updates to WCSS bylaws. She advised the board to anticipate recommendations for the annual plan and dashboard at the April meeting and a recommendation to adopt the full governance package in June.

**Chair's Report**

Vice Chair, Sherry Heuser provided a recap of the following highlights from the January 27, 2021 Executive Committee meeting.

- Approval of a 2% increase in the merit wage pool and a 9% increase for health insurance as part of the personnel budget in the FY21-22 planning budget
- Accepted Kristi Tally's resignation from the WCSS Board effective Jan. 31, 2021 and were informed of the appointment of Maria Cervania as board liaison from Wake County Board of Commissioners and Kelly Caldwell rolling off Finance Committee
- Discussion of next steps for Board racial equity work
- Received updates from WCSS Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen on the following: status of WCSS staff racial equity work and a work plan timeline, proposals review and selection of a consulting firm to conduct a Director of Programs search to fill the position upon Anna Troutman's retirement and the announcement of Family Engagement & Leadership implementation grant

## Executive Director's Report

Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen announced this was the last meeting for Anna Troutman before her retirement on March 1, 2021. She recognized Ms. Troutman for her many accomplishments during a long career of work with young children, notably at WCSS for her development of the Wake Connections home based programs intake and referral system.

Ms. Headen provided updates on the following topics:

- **Racial Equity Work:** Ms. Headen drew attention to Attachment C.1, the Racial Equity (RE) workplan which is concentrated internally on the agency for the remainder of the year in two key areas: 1) interpersonal relationship building among staff, 2) completion of an organization assessment with a focus on the grantmaking process as related to racial equity. Ms. Headen stated the assessment will collect information through review of internal documents, surveys and interviews of stakeholders, several board, staff and other community members. Findings will be reported to Board in May with potential for deeper Board work at August or October meetings. Ms. Headen announced staff "buddy groups" have begun to meet every other month to strengthen relationships, practice tools introduced by the base racial equity training and provide feedback to the Equity Leadership Team (ELT). She also shared that the Early Childhood Initiatives team curated two anti-bias book lists for young children ([Infant-Twos](#)) and ([Preschool](#)).
- **Family Engagement & Leadership Grant:** Ms. Headen began her report with a reminder that WCSS had previously been awarded a planning grant to develop a local Family Engagement & Leadership plan. Ms. Headen said a plan was developed with the Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC) around four themes, but due to the pandemic, opportunity to apply for a \$25,000 implementation grant was delayed until recently. Ms. Headen reported WCSS is in discussion with NCPC and the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) to extend the current term of the grant from 6 months to the original 12-month timeline before determining whether to apply for the grant or to execute the plan without this source of funding support. Ms. Headen spoke on potential recruitment of families as consultants to review the LICC website and roadmap brochure for feedback on their usefulness to families using these resources, as well as participation on the LICC as change agents.
- **DHHS:**
  - Ms. Headen announced North Carolina has received a \$336 million federal Child Care Development Block Grant to be expended by October, 2022. She remarked that NC DHHS is soliciting recommendations to inform decisions of how to best put the funding to use. Preliminary options include: operational grants to stabilize child care programs, teacher bonuses and increased teacher compensation through Child Care WAGE\$ program. Feedback from providers appear to support these as options. A plan for spending and funding availability is expected within the next 45 days.
  - Ms. Headen announced Phase 3 of the COVID-19 vaccination plan opens February 24, with priority given to public school teachers and child care workers. She informed the board that Wake County's plan is for child care workers to schedule individual appointments, however through special coordination, fifty child care workers will receive initial vaccinations on the first day of Phase 3.
- **Legislative:** Ms. Headen announced she will make a presentation to the Wake Delegation on Feb. 26 to share information gathered from child care provider surveys and offer recommendations. She remarked that earlier conversations with several legislators revealed they are optimistic for bi-partisan cooperation, a focus on allocating federal funding first and likelihood that state funds will be budgeted later in the session due to the better than anticipated revenue forecast for next several years. Ms. Headen said WCSS will offer short-term and long-term recommendations for: stabilizing the early childhood system, increased teacher compensation, maintaining or increasing Smart Start funding, funding the Leandro case recommendations and increasing investment in home visiting and parenting education.

Sherry Heuser again welcomed Commissioners Cervania and Evans and thanked them for their input and involvement. With no additional business to address, Matt Glova moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:02 AM. Joe White seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the vote passed. (02-21-55)

*Kimberly Shaw*

Secretary

05/21/2021

Date