

Durham PreK Governance Committee Meeting NOTES

Held virtually on March 21st, 2024 (9:30am-11:30am)

In Attendance, listed in random order:

Voting Members: Cathy Collie-Robinson, Dr. Iheoma Iruka, Dr. Wykeshia Glass, Michelle Lyn, Xavier Cason, June Shillito, Dr. Deborah Polen Pitman, Brittany Gregory, Jason Rutherford, Joy Spencer, Beth Messersmith, Charleita Richardson, Brenda Carter

Non-voting Members: Dr. Kristi Snuggs, Dr. Linda Chappel, Tammorah Mathis, Monnie Griggs, Meytal Barak, Jena Fuchs, Jameka Wells; **Guests:** Karen Thompson, Tosh Adams, Adrienne Stephens, Maggie West, Brianna Head

WHAT	NOTES
Welcome and Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A recording of the meeting can be found on our DPK YouTube channel ○ Cathy Collie-Robinson and Dr. Linda Chappel welcomed newly appointed Governance Member and Returning Member <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Charleita Richardson, Chief Executive Officer, Durham’s Children Initiative was welcomed as a new voting member ▪ Beth Messersmith, State Director, Mom's Rising was welcomed back as a voting member ▪ Brenda Carter, PreK Administrator, Families & Community Rising Head Start was welcomed as an interim voting member, to replace Deric Boston, former Wellness & Inclusion Service Area Manager, FCR Head Start ○ All the members introduced themselves ○ Attendance reviewed and meeting quorum verified ○ Reviewed virtual meeting protocol
Meeting Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve Meeting Notes • Consider an end of Year Spending Authorization • Report on Seat Data Across all Public Preschool Programs • Review Seat Reimbursement Rates for SY 2025 • Share Updated Budget Request for 2024-2025 • Review Instructional Assistant Teacher Compensation • Consider Request for a Pilot 3-Year-Old Classroom • Share Program Updates • Confirm meeting schedule for SY 24-25 <i>[Item was moved to an email outreach due to time]</i>

<p>*Action Item</p>	<p>Governance unanimously approved Governance Committee notes from January 2024 Motedioned by Dr. Iheoma Iruka, Seconded by Dr. Wykeshia Glass, all in favor.</p>
<p>End of Year Spending Authorization</p>	<p>Consider bonus payments to instructional staff with surplus funds.</p> <p>Context provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The last three years, we received authorization to use unspent funds available to make bonus payments for lead teachers and instructional assistants. We cannot provide a specific dollar amount yet as spending for the rest of the year is still ongoing. Lead teachers and assistant teachers received direct bonus payments from the CCSA office during last school year (2022 – 2023) and in the year before (2021 – 2022). Different bonus amounts were paid each year based upon available funds; however, teachers and instructional assistants were given the same amount. Each year we have made a full report back to the Governance Committee based on the instructional staff survey results discussing the impact of the bonus payment. • At the May meeting, if funds allow, we will consider allocating any additional dollars to classrooms (in addition to classroom bonuses already given this year). <p><u>Discussion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cathy Collie-Robinson wanted to know the amount of the proposed bonus payment. Dr. Chappel states that the proposed amount for this bonus will be between \$2,500.00 and \$3,000.00. However, we wouldn't know for sure until after March payments are made in the beginning of April. Due to staff turnover throughout the school year, DPK will verify the eligibility of all staff members to determine if they will receive a full bonus payment or a pro-rated amount. • Beth Messersmith mentioned the impact of the Federal emergency compensation dollars running out and asked how it will affect bonuses. Dr. Chappel said that the upcoming end of the stabilization grants for child care programs is a threat to the sustainability of private programs. For public preschool sites, there were no stabilization grants. The DPK bonuses have been used to support the retention of instructional staff. • Deborah Polen-Pitman asked if the bonus would go directly to the teachers and instructional assistants and not to the program or the classroom. Dr. Chapel explained that this bonus will be paid directly to the instructional staff member by DPK- it will not go through the site's payroll. • June Shillito mentioned that the teachers have been very appreciative of the bonus payments they've received. She said the majority of the teachers are using this bonus for regular expenses such as rent, utilities, or food. Teachers also like to have autonomy over what supplies are ordered for their classrooms.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cathy Collie-Robinson mentioned how helpful it would be to approve the bonus payment to better determine funding moving forward. Dr. Chappel mentioned that if funded, we will report back to Governance about the amounts the teachers and instructional assistants will receive and when they'll receive it.
Action Taken	<p>Governance unanimously approved bonus payments to instructional staff Motioned by Jason Rutherford, Seconded by Beth Messersmith, all in favor.</p>
Seat Data Across all DPK Programs	<p>Dr. Linda Chappel, CCSA Sr. Vice President, reviewed the report about Seat Data Across all Public Preschool Programs:</p> <p>Durham’s Community goal is to <i>Expand Public Preschool Seats to Serve up to 75% of the Total Four-year-old census</i>. For school year 2022-2023 we were at 36% of the 4-year-old census. This current school year we are at 40.5% of the census. With our budget request for the upcoming school year, we aim to move to 42% of the census.</p> <p>Table 1 Number of Durham PreK Locally Funded Seats for SY 22-23 and SY 23-24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SY 2022 – 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of Allocated Seats: 604 ○ Number of Seats Filled: 548 ○ Enrollment Percentage: 91% • SY 2023 – 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of Allocated Seats: 659 ○ Number of Seats Filled: 617 ○ Enrollment Percentage: 94% <p>Table 2 Progress towards community goal for SY 22-23 and SY 23-24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SY 2022 – 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Census # of 4-year-olds: 4191 ○ Number of seats across all publicly funded preschool programs in Durham: 1510 ○ Percentage of seats available: 36% • SY 2023 – 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Census # of 4-year-olds: 4118 ○ Number of seats across all publicly funded preschool programs in Durham: 1669 ○ Percentage of seats available: 40.5%

	<p>Table 3 Overall Public PreK Numbers for Durham County for SY 22-23 and SY 23-24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided a breakdown of enrolled children at Private sites, Head Start, and DPS/EC. • SY23-24 data is from February 2024 • SY22-23 data is from December 2022 • EC numbers from DPS include 3-year-olds due to some mixed age classrooms <p><u>Discussion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cathy Collie-Robinson mentioned that table 3 was helpful to explain the breakdown of children enrolled based on site type. • Beth Messersmith asked how many children remained on the waiting list after we filled our slots and inquired about the unmet current demand. Dr. Chappel explained that we do have some children on the waitlist for the current school year; however, most children on the waitlist are there because their parents chose to remain on the waitlist to wait for availability at a specific school. Families are given the option to remain on the waitlist throughout the year rather than making their application inactive. Many families do not apply or enroll their children in pre-k due to other barriers – such as transportation challenges and low access to before or after school care.
<p>Reimbursement Rates for SY 24-25</p>	<p>Dr. Chappel reviewed the reimbursement rates for Instructional services.</p> <p>2024 – 2025 Reimbursement Rates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request that Governance consider a 3% Rate Increase for the upcoming school year, moving the rate from \$1400 to \$1442 per child per month. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rates were increased in May 2022 by 4% to \$1300 ○ Rates were increased in January 2023 by 4% to \$1350 ○ Rates were increased in May 2023 by 4% to \$1400 <p>The current DPK rate of \$1400 was voted on in May 2023 for the 2023-24 school term after an increase to \$1350 from \$1300 in January 2023. The current NC Pre-K rate of \$1100 was implemented in Jan 2023 but was implemented retroactively to July 2022. In addition, in October 2023 the NCDCEE increased the child care subsidy rate.</p> <p>Table 1: Current Monthly Preschool Rates at 5 Star Centers in Durham County Rates provided in this table were pulled March 15, 2024. DPK reimburses for a 6.5 hour day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current subsidy Rate: \$1,273 • NC Pre-K Rate: \$1,100 • Average Private Tuition Rate: \$1,235

- SY 2024 DPK Rate: \$1,400
- Proposed SY 2025 DPK Rate: \$1,442

Payment Plan Model

For the 2023 – 2024 School Year, Governance added a Pre-service Payment over and above the monthly child level service reimbursement payments. This pre-service additional payment is issued to sites when they sign their service contract (ideally in August).

- Pre-service Payment based upon Allocated Seats
- Purpose- To Assist Sites with Cash Flow by Providing Funds in Advance of Service
- To Provide Funding to Mitigate the Impact of Vacancies Throughout the Year

If the reimbursement rate is increased to \$1,442, this will also increase the pre-service payment. The goal of this new model is to help with cash flow by providing funding before the school year starts and by providing additional funding to cover typical vacancy rates throughout the year. In addition to the monthly per child reimbursement and the pre-service payment, sites also receive a teacher support payment each month based on the teacher’s licensing credentials to help pay the higher salaries required by Durham PreK.

Recommendation for a Rate Increase

Options:

- Accept a Motion and Vote
- Defer Decision until May 2024

Discussion

- Mrs. Collie-Robinson asked if there would be an increase in tuition rates due to the ‘childcare cliff’ approaching. (Cliff refers to the end of COVID-era stabilization grants to private child care programs.) Dr. Chappel stated that private tuition rates are likely to go up significantly due to the ‘cliff’ to replace the stabilization funds.
- Dr. Kristi Snuggs mentioned that the CCRR Council recently completed a survey of licensed providers to ask what the impact of the end of stabilization grants might have on their center. Dr. Snuggs mentioned that it is highly likely that there will be an increase in tuition based on the survey results received. Based on the results given, some providers have already increased their rates in preparation, and we will be anticipating an additional increase.
- Dr. Iruka asked if there is any anticipation of the potential downstream in the number of seats that Durham would like to see. Dr. Chappel stated that Durham PreK has requested an increase from Durham County for next year, to add 45 to 70 new seats.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. Collie-Robinson asked if the 3% increase would be enough for the upcoming school year since in the past school years there was a 4% increase. Dr. Chappel acknowledged that the 3% increase may seem conservative; however, we may need to revisit the funding increase in other areas of the program later due to budget constraints. The goal is to maintain balance as well as continue to expand the number of seats in the program. • Mrs. Collie-Robinson also asked about the NC Pre-K reimbursement rate for next school year. Jameka Wells stated that nothing has been shared by the NC PreK leadership at this time; however, an increase in the reimbursement rate has been recommended. Dr. Snuggs confirmed there is not an update at this time; but DCDEE would like to implement an increase. • June Shillito, on behalf of the child care providers, is encouraging DPK to increase the reimbursement rates and explains that any funds available from the program are beneficial to the overall site’s sustainability as well as to staff. She shared that private pay tuition rates at her center, Yates Baptist, are planned to increase by 5% in August 2024 (First increase in three years). • Dr. Iruka stated that the 3% increase is not enough and suggests revisiting this conversation again in May and determine if we need to adjust the numbers. She asked everyone to consider a 5 to 6% increase to fulfill our commitment of ensuring that programs are sustainable and accessible to children who are living in in poverty and other types of diversities.
<p>DPK Funding Request</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based upon slowed expansion of DPK seats post-pandemic, the FY 2025 Budget Request estimates an additional 45 – 70 seats: \$8,246,365. • FY24 budget is \$6,857,581. Of this budget \$5,100,945 is instructional payments for children’s seats and \$1,756,636 for program management and administration, quality improvement, enrollment, professional development, family engagement, outreach, data management, universal application expenses, and the workforce apprenticeship program. • FY23 had a budget of \$5,579,717. Of this budget, \$4,245,991 is instructional payments for children’s seats and \$1,333,726 is management funds to pay for quality improvement, enrollment, professional development, family engagement, outreach, data and universal application expenses. <p><u>Discussion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cathy Collie-Robinson wondered if we vote to increase the reimbursement rates beyond the staff proposed 3%, would the seat capacity decrease to save funds for other services in the program. Dr. Chappel explained that this is a possibility if the resources available are more limited than that asked for in the budget request.
<p>Action Taken</p>	<p>Governance unanimously approved a 4% rate increase, requesting a budget update and a second review at the May 2024 meeting to provide more data. Motioned by Jason Rutherford, Seconded by Brittany Gregory, all in favor.</p> <p>All conflicted members present for the vote abstained, including Brenda Carter, Dr. Deborah Polen-Pitman, and June Shillito.</p>

Instructional Staff Compensation

In March 2023 Governance Established a Minimum Wage for Instructional Assistants (IA) to Equal the Durham Living Wage of \$17.60. A Rate Change Date was not Mandated in that vote. According to the [City of Durham living wage history](#) the living wage for FY24 is \$18.46. Of the 40 IA's we currently have salary information for (this does not include the long-term substitute at Oak Grove), 29 (73%) already make more than \$18.46. Two of the 11 who do not make at least \$18.46 are very close (\$18.36 and \$18.40). Most of those making less than \$18.46 are at private sites, although 1 teacher is at DPS and 2 are at Head Start.

- The average IA hourly rate is \$19.70, and the median is \$19.
- If the minimum rate required matched Durham County's living wage (\$19.21), 43% (17 out of 40) of IAs make above that amount. The median of \$19/hr. is right below that.
 - This information is shared in comparison to the City of Durham rate of \$18.46 in which 73% (29 out of 40) of existing IAs already make a higher rate than \$18.46.

DPK request: Consider a Vote to Establish a Yearly Review Date for the Minimum Wage for Instructional Assistants (IA) or Tie the Rate to a Metric that updates periodically.

DPK request: Vote to Establish a Minimum Hourly Wage for DPK Instructional Assistants (IA) for School Year 2025.

Discussion

- Xavier Cason asked if the burden of aligning wages to the rate that we suggest is on the providers. It was explained that we establish a minimum rate (current minimum is \$17.60) and the provider must adapt their budget to pay at the minimum rate for their instructional assistant personnel costs. For clarification, in terms of what the operator receives for reimbursement – DPK sites receive: 1) reimbursement for seats filled, 2) a teacher support payment to assist with Lead Teacher salaries based on years of experience, and 3) a pre-service payment once contracting documents have been completed.
- Brittany Gregory asked if the providers are provided a salary supplement from DPK. Dr. Chappel explained that the teacher support payment is tied to the actual credentials of the actual lead teacher that a site has hired. If that teacher leaves and a new teacher comes, then we review that teacher's credentials to determine the amount for a support payment. The teacher support payment is a monthly payment that helps the provider meet our salary requirements on the Durham Public Schools wage scale. We don't provide a separate supplement for the instructional assistants' wages-- instead that is incorporated into the budget that a provider establishes through the DPK reimbursement rate.
- Beth Messersmith asked if we are currently below the minimum livable wage for the City of Durham. Dr. Chappel explained that the rate of pay for DPK instructional assistants (IA) was established in March 2023 and is based on the fiscal year 2023 livable wage of \$17.60. As stated above, 73% of our IAs are paid above the fiscal year 2024 livable wage.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jason Rutherford was curious about the pay, candidate, and employee quality comparison as it relates to effectiveness and retention. Staff share that the May meeting is typically when we discuss what our staffing retention has looked like. Last fall we presented to Governance the credentials of our teachers and our instructional assistants. We are always mindful of retention, and we have found in the last few years, when the Governance Committee has authorized a bonus, staff members have said it is helpful to them in meeting their life expenses. • Brittany Gregory asked would DPS be held to the same standard? Yes, they will be held to the same standard. • Deborah Polen-Pitman asked what the percent increase would be if we chose to increase the minimum wage from \$17.60 to the new livable wage of FY 24. [It would be a 4.8% increase in the base.] • Beth Messersmith asked the risk of tying the rate to Durham County and a metric system. Concerned about the negative impact of tying this to Durham County if in the future the livable wage were to decrease. Dr. Chappel explained that the only risk/concern to tying this to a metric would be that the livable wage would go up to a point where we feel that the budget given could not support it without decreasing the number of seats. • Beth Messersmith asked if this is the living wage for an individual or a living wage for a family. [This data represents the living wage for a family] Messersmith stated that research does show that when individuals have their own economic stress, their ability to show up and be present for the children socially and emotionally is difficult. An increase in the IA rate is needed. • Jason Rutherford believes we should be obligated to have the IA salary be increased to the Durham livable wage. Rutherford is in support of matching the pay to ensure IA teachers are being paid at the new livable wage. • Joy spencer asked if we know if some assistant teachers aren't being paid the recommended living wage and if so, is it because centers are unable to afford that wage. Dr. Chappel clarified that all DPK programs are following the living wage minimum of \$17.60.
Action Taken	<p>Governance unanimously approved a review of IA minimum wage in March of each year. Motioned by Xavier Cason, Seconded by Jason Rutherford, all in favor.</p>
Action Taken	<p>Governance unanimously approved to require that DPK providers match the Durham County living wage of \$19.21 and revisit this rate in March 2025. Motioned by Jason Rutherford, Seconded by Iheoma Iruka, all in favor.</p>
DPS Request for Pilot Program	<p>Durham Public Schools (DPS) Requests that a seat allocation be made to Pilot a Classroom to Serve 3-Year-Olds for SY2024 – 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Deborah Polen-Pitman shared that this classroom would be at the new school, Murray Massenburg, which will be opening in August 2024. There are 3 planned preschool classrooms at Murray Massenburg. DPS is requesting funding for a pilot program to be one of those classrooms and this would be a blended classroom of 9 typically developing 3-year-olds and 9 children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The request to Governance is to fund 9 DPK Seats as a pilot initiative.

The remaining seats will be funded by exceptional children's funds given to the district. Children are screened for exceptional children's services through an assessment process to identify the child's needs. This process begins when they're 2 years 9 months so that if a child qualifies for special education services at 3 years old, DPS is positioned to serve those children.

- Historically, through the years, many of the children who qualify are already in childcare services settings or at home (if preferred by parent) and DPS sends teachers either to the childcare settings, personal residence, or various places throughout the community.
- Recently, though the Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams are indicating that some of the 3-year-olds could benefit from a school environment with age-appropriate peers. DPS has been exploring how to create instructional environments that would honor that IEP. The initial program was at Mangum in far Northern Durham; however, families are declining that opportunity because of location barriers. Murray Massenburg would be a centralized location for this program to be better accessible for families. DPS is seeking one 3-year-old classroom consisting of 9 Durham PreK funded seats for general education students and will enroll 9 seats for the exceptional children's program. (paid for with DPS funding).

Discussion

- Mrs. Collie-Robinson mentions that we're currently serving 40% of 4-year-olds right now in Durham and we have a long way to go to reach our goal of 75%. The NC Pre-K and the Durham PreK curriculum and standards and guidelines are great for 4-year-olds, but more work needs to be done to make sure that those classrooms and teachers are ready for brand new 3-year-olds. Therefore, she feels hesitant with beginning a pilot program for 3-year-olds.
- Beth Messersmith would like to know how we are currently serving our 4-year-olds with exceptional needs. Karen Thompson states that DPS currently has inclusive classrooms that are blended as well as exceptional children's programs that are separate programs. Some students come to a specific classroom to receive services for a certain amount of time a day to meet the needs identified by the IEP.
- Joy Spencer wonders how this new program would affect how well we are serving our existing students. Would like to make sure we have maximized effectiveness in 4-year-old classrooms before expanding to other demographics.
- Beth Messersmith wonders about what harm is being done to children with exceptional needs if we do delay serving them.
- Dr. Iruka encourages the start of a 3-year-old classroom despite not meeting our goal for 4-year-olds. Studies have shown that 3-year-old children are benefiting from programs like this.
- This discussion will be continued at the Quality Subcommittee of the DPK Governance Committee that has a meeting on April 10 in April and then it will be further discussed during the May Governance meeting.
- A vote regarding this pilot request will need to be held at the next meeting of Governance.

<p>DPK Program Updates*</p>	<p>ASK Conference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durham PreK teaching staff attended CCSA’s annual ASK (Acquiring Skills and Knowledge) Conference in February. The conference featured the 2020 National Teacher of the Year, Tabatha Rosproy, as the keynote speaker and workshops from the nationally prominent initiative, STEMIE, that focused on the inclusion and STEM learning for young children. • As a follow up to the STEM professional development theme at the ASK Conference, Nita McAdoo, Instructional Support Manager, hosted a STEM coaching session at Childcare Network 58. The activity modeled introduced spatial awareness concepts and vocabulary through a scavenger hunt. <p>Mary Y. Bridgers Award</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durham PreK teacher leader Pebbles Lucas, from First Chronicles Day Care won the <i>Mary Y. Bridgers Award!</i> Debbie Timmons from Randy’s Five Star Academy was recognized as a semi-finalist. This is a regional award that receives nominations from across Durham, Orange, and Wake Counties. The Bridgers Award is given for excellence in early education teaching and is granted after a rigorous review process that examines instructional practices and leadership by the nominees.
<p>Summary and Adjournments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meeting adjourned at 11:33am. <p>Future Meeting Dates- 9:30 – 11:30 am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 16, 2024 – In person meeting with lunch provided after the meeting, virtual participation also available. To be held at the Jim and Carolyn Hunt Early Childhood Resource Center, located at 1201 South Briggs Avenue in Durham. • It was observed that there is a conflict with this meeting date in the form of a statewide early education support program and rally. This was raised as a concern. The staff will work with the Governance Chair to identify options for this meeting and follow up with members as soon as possible.

*** Agenda items with handouts**