

**Durham PreK Governance Committee Meeting**

January 16, 2025 (9:30am-1:00pm) Combined Business meeting and Facilitated Planning Meeting

**NOTES for the Business Portion of the Meeting**

**In Attendance, listed in random order:**

**Voting Members:** Cathy Collie-Robinson, Dr. Wykeshia Glass, Brittany Gregory, Dr. Deborah Pitman, Brenda Carter, June Shillito, Tabitha Blackwell, Dr. Aleksandra Holod, Claudia Hager, Beth Messersmith, Dr. Iheoma Iruka, Darnella Warthen, Miranda Marshall

**Non-voting Members:** Dr. Linda Chappel, Joy Turner, Tammorah Mathis, Monnie Griggs, Meytal Barak, Dr. Kristi Snuggs, Jameka Wells

**Guests:** Karen Thompson, Tabitha Williamson, Tosh Adams, Adrienne Stephens, Rachel Osborne, Marilyn Agostini, Maggie West, Cate Laster

WHAT	NOTES
<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and Introductions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cathy Collie-Robinson and Dr. Linda Chappel welcomed Governance Members</li> <li>○ Everyone introduced themselves. (Names and Job Titles/descriptions)                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Member Introduction Welcome Miranda Marshall</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Attendance reviewed and meeting quorum verified</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Meeting Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve November 2024 Meeting Notes*</li> <li>• Instructional Staff Bonus for FY25</li> <li>• Adjourn to Facilitated Planning Meeting</li> </ul>
<b>*Action Item</b>	<p><b>Governance unanimously approved Governance Committee meeting notes from November 2024</b>            Motioned by Alex Holod, Seconded by Dr. Iheoma Iruka, all in favor.</p>
<b>Instructional Staff Bonus for FY25</b>	<p><b>Bonus for FY25</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversations about a potential staff bonus continued from November meeting.</li> <li>• The original purpose of the staff bonus was to help through COVID with the first one given out in 2021.</li> <li>• We have been able to continue the bonus with funds that are not expended during the school year</li> <li>• A staff bonus is not a line item in the budget for which we reserve funds</li> <li>• At this time, we project approximately \$150,000 in unspent funds at the end of the school year. The amount is not a stable projection at mid-year as there are many factors that influence the spending coefficient. With this amount of funds, a bonus would be about \$1,600 per teacher -- much less than in the years before. At the March 2025 Governance meeting we will report on the projected unspent funds again for your review.</li> </ul>

- Based on 2024 surveys of instructional staff regarding the bonus, some respondents were upset about the bonus being less in SY 2023-2024 than in previous years
- Staff asked Governance members for guidance about communicating with instructional staff about the bonus—now or do we wait until after the March meeting?
- Dr. Iheoma Iruka asked to clarify—the motion would be to move forward with providing a bonus if the funds are available? The bonus will not be given until the summertime, correct? So, you are asking now, opposed to in March, in order to communicate to the teachers about the bonus. Linda answered that is correct, the funds are given out in June since it is awarded based upon the amount of funds not expended.
- Linda asked if this group is uncomfortable with the bonus—since it was originally given to help through the Covid epidemic. Should we give the bonus? In the past Durham County has agreed to allow funds to carry forward into the next fiscal year, so unexpended money will not be lost to the program.
- Cathy asked if we want to give bonus and send out communication or Do we want to not give a bonus and notifying staff of no bonus
- Linda, our main concern is if a bonus is not supported, then we need to communicate with the teachers that a bonus will not be given out—some teachers have grown to expect the bonus.
- Alex, If the money rolls forward what would it be used for?
- Linda, if the Durham County agrees to roll the money forward, then it will go into the general service budget to cover the cost of seats for children.
- Beth, March marks the end of the compensation grants at the state level and the legislature is making it clear that we will not have compensation grants. One of the things I am proudest about with Durham PreK is that we have been very clear that we appreciate, prioritize, and respect our workforce and we advocate for them as much as possible. There is something really powerful about the bonus- saying it may not be a lot of money, but we want teachers to know that they are important, and we care about them.
- June, whatever we can do for the teachers is very important. Her DPK teachers stay with the program because the pay is higher. Communication is important, especially for the ones counting on the bonus.
- Cathy, how soon should we communicate this with our staff?
- Iheoma, I think in the springtime we are worried about what's going to happen and trickle down on a state level and in the springtime people are looking for new opportunities. Has the bonus helped with turnover rates?
- Linda, we have a lot of feedback on surveys that it is impactful around people's decision making but we need to be careful because the requirement for equitable pay has been a huge driving point for our staff, so we don't want to over promise what the bonus does.
- Our plan is to report on as much data as we have available for the March meeting
- Jamika, would we consider a classroom bonus, as it still supports the teachers just in the classroom. Do we have restrictions on the preservice dollars that are paid to sites?
- Linda, anything is on the table for consideration but in the past for this group it was always a priority for the instructional teams to be considered first and then secondarily the classroom bonus. There are guidelines for how the preservice payments are calculated and this is transparent to the sites. We are clear with them that it is to compensate for classroom needs but we do not mandate or restrict the ways the funds are spent.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debbie, can we communicate saying we don't know but we do value you. If we communicate now, it will not be as big of a surprise in March if we decide we do not have the budget for a bonus and then communicate that.</li> <li>• Jamika, agrees with communicating to the teachers asap but also agrees with Iheoma about not seeing the "ifs" in the communication and just expecting a bonus.</li> <li>• Beth, if I got a letter saying we will keep you posted that tells me I am not getting a bonus.</li> <li>• Iheoma, I think that being able to communicate that we want to be able to give a bonus would be nice, but I am worried about what is going to come with the changes on the federal and state levels.</li> <li>• Claudia, so many unknowns right now. Maybe we need to have a conversation at the director's level putting out the intent to make the bonus happen. Communicate that we are grateful for them and will continue to support them in all ways possible. I think that in March we will have a better indication of what we will be able to do.</li> <li>• Linda, we will defer to March. We can follow up with staff that we have gotten feedback that they have become expected but remember the bonuses are not a line item</li> <li>• Cathy, I think we should say thank you, we appreciate you, we are not sure if a bonus will be available due to budget restraints. We will give you more information as soon as we have it available</li> <li>• Claudia, maybe you should put in the budget request for next year a few scenarios into the budget request that supports the bonus at different levels to present to the county. This will allow you to tell the staff we have heard from you, and we are formally adding this to our budget.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary and Adjournments</b></p>	<p>The business portion of the meeting adjourned at 10:25am to enter the facilitated meeting with meeting leaders from the Dispute Settlement Center. Dr. Alex Holod motioned to adjourn and Tabitha Blackwell seconded the motion.</p>

*\* Agenda items with handouts*

# Durham PreK Governance Committee

Thursday, January 16, 2025

Facilitated Planning Portion of the Meeting 10:30 – 1:00pm

CCSA Large Conference Room, Durham

## DRAFT NOTES

### Purpose of meeting

The purpose of the meeting was to (1) reflect together on successes and achievements of Durham PreK; (2) identify needs for Durham PreK for the future, and (3) explore possible paths to strengthen the program.

**Attendees:** Tosh Adams, Marilyn Agostini, Meytal Barak, Tabitha Blackwell, Cathy Collie-Robinson, Brenda Carter, Dr. Linda Chappel, Dr. Wykeshia Glass, Brittany Gregory, Monnie Griggs, Claudia Hagar, dr. Aleksandra Holod, Dr. Iheoma Iruka, Cate Laster, Tammorah Mathis, Miranda Marshall, Beth Messersmith, Rachel Osborne, Dr. Deborah Pitman, June Shillito, Dr. Kristi Snuggs, Joy Spencer, Adrienne Stephens, Karen Thompson, Joy Turner, Maggie West, Tabitha Williamson, Darnella Warthen, and Jameka Wells.

**DSC Facilitation Team:** Maggie Chotas and Laura Swartz

## Facilitated Meeting Summary

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### Welcome & Business meeting

After a business meeting from 9:30-10:30 am, Committee members watched a short video montage of Durham PreK students and their classrooms. It was inspiring and exciting to see the children in their places of learning!

Facilitator Maggie Chotas quickly reviewed the meeting goals and working agreement themes of:

- Leaning into listening
- Sharing honestly
- Sharing space together – step up/ step back
- Taking care of yourself and each other, and
- Staying open to open endings

### Checking in

In table groups, committee members were invited to share an achievement and/or a positive aspect of Durham PreK. The following achievements were highlighted:

- Serving more low- and middle-income families
- Prioritizing staff retention and staff support
- Showing a strong commitment to teachers and quality instruction

- Building a strong local foundation of support in Durham, which will be essential given changes at the state and national level
- Strong solidified path towards universal PreK
- This program is resilient and has stood the test of time!
- Uplift level of support from CCSA/ Early Years
- Local commitment (the County Manager is in attendance) and commitment of this Governance Committee

Linda Chappel shared the following milestones of Durham PreK:

- A Durham tax in 2011 included a portion for support for early education initiatives, and this tax still exists today.
- In 2016, the City, County, and School Boards created a task force to study the landscape of early education. This volunteer task force met for over 8 months and envisioned what became Durham PreK.
- In 2017, Whitted opened as a stand-alone early education center.
- The County funded a supply and demand report, which revealed that residents supported paying more in taxes to prioritize early education.
- This Governance Committee met for the first time on November 18, 2018.
- Durham PreK officially opened in August of 2019, and because of the Covid-19 pandemic, schools went virtual in March of 2020.
- In August of 2023 the apprenticeship program started.
- CCSA, which is now Early Years, has been a part of the Durham PreK evolution from the very beginning, and this Governance Committee has been hugely helpful.

### **Reflecting on data to identify needs**

Table groups reviewed Durham PreK data to consider benchmarks as well as the current reality of the program. Members were encouraged to look through the data to glean insights, gather questions, and consider what needs attention moving forward.

Following time for individual review and table discussions, the whole group discussed what stood out from the data-review. The follow comments emerged:

- Factors beyond our control impacted some of the data.
- Beth Messersmith shared she was interested in data on kids who were not being served. Why aren't they coming to the program?
  - Linda Chappel responded that Durham PreK is constantly discussing who is "*not at the table.*" If parents do not enroll their children, she wants it to be because they considered Durham PreK and decided against it, not because they were uninformed or misinformed about the program.
  - While universal access is a program goal, Durham PreK prioritizes families who have the highest needs.
- Tabitha Blackwell shared an interest in the income discussion. Who is engaged or not engaged over time, and how are we meeting those most in need? She noted,

that considering data on single parents was especially interesting when discussing supports and barriers.

- Jameka Wells shared context that the data includes children coming from the universal PreK application.
- Darnella Warthen emphasized the importance of transportation. Lower income families do not have cars, and they need wrap care which are incredibly important barriers to address.
- Britany Gregory noted on Chart 8, page 5, how much of this is indicative of cost increases and inflation that has pushed families out? Unfortunately, at the state level, there is not the will to release more funds. Given that, is there a way to change the qualifications so Durham PreK can serve more families that may be pushed out?
- When considering Spanish-speaking families, are there families that cannot access Durham PreK because of language barriers? Does our workforce meet the needs of the families we serve?
- Iheoma Iruka asked if there is some way to forecast when we may lose experienced teachers?
  - Linda Chappel noted the substantial investment in teacher coaching and professional development which, she said, helps us get a handle on which teachers are burned out or stuck. As we grow our number of classrooms, we have seen a decrease in fully licensed teachers. This makes sense given the current workforce.
  - Monnie Griggs added that teachers who are not fully licensed are coached and supported on the necessary path to become licensed.

**Where to from here?** Presentation by Linda Chappel, Early Years

Linda Chappel highlighted the overall goal of trying to serve 75% of Durham's 4-year-old population, remarking that presently Durham PreK is serving 42% of our 4-year-old census, which represents a substantial community investment. Durham is currently investing over \$10 million dollars a year in early childhood services, a substantial portion of which is going to Durham PreK.

She encouraged the Governance Committee to consider whether we want to recommit to the 75% goal, noting that, as a team, it drives a lot of our decision making. Also, she urged the Governance Committee to give the braided model another look and see if there is recommitment to it. She explained that not all counties have chosen the braided model approach and some have chosen parallel programs. In Durham, we had the political will around collaboration and the braided approach aligned with that drive for collaboration. The braided model is very challenging, and a portion of the resources are spent supporting the braided model. This group needs to consider whether the braided model continues to be the best model for Durham.

Our theory of change is that high quality and highly supported teachers will make a difference for our children, moving them to success in the long run. A huge portion of our

resources go to teacher investment, including coaching, development, and higher wages for our teachers.

In terms of new possible paths, we received a study-grant to evaluate adding family childcare as an option in public preschool in Durham and will likely have the findings from that study in May 2025. Also, County Manager Hagar supports Durham PreK prioritizing fund-development and looking at partner-resources.

We have worked on an equity plan, which is a living document, to identify program areas where we need to prioritize investments, one of which is related to instructional staff. Do we have instructional staff that mirrors our children? This particularly relates to language gaps.

Joy Spencer asked how family-childcare centers are defined? Linda responded that we define “family-childcare centers as legally operating licensed family childcare homes.” We are only able to consider licensed childcare homes as potentially part of the Durham PreK experience. For public dollars, we are focused on regulated care. Monnie Griggs added that we have family childcare owners on this planning committee.

Iheoma Iruka asked if there was an opportunity to look at funds from other sectors for transportation? Linda responded that we could improve those areas of exploration. We have an allocation to support wrap-care, although it is not adequate. We are not presently providing any transportation, except NC PreK does offer it at one site, at the will of the site. Presently none of the local budget is supporting transportation and we know transportation is a huge need.

Beth Messersmith asked if Durham considered early education as part of the economic infrastructure. Linda responded that we have a meeting with Mr. Miracle in Durham, so this discussion is in process.

### **Learning about and discussing possible paths to strengthen program**

*See the Appendix for detailed, collated notes from the worksheets in this section.*

In table groups, committee members reviewed goals and strategies to consider recommitments to foundational goals and aspects, including:

1. Serving 75% of the county’s 4-year-old population
2. Braided model
3. Investment in teachers

As time allowed, committee members also considered new possible paths, including:

1. Adding Family Childcare to Durham PreK
2. Prioritizing resource development outside the funds from Durham County

3. Other ideas that surfaced earlier in the meeting (eg., wrap care and transportation)

Each of the six small groups discussed and then gauged support using the following framework:

1. **Wholehearted YES** – this is essential. Why?
2. **Maybe** – more information is needed. What?
3. **Yes, but** – Yes in theory, but changes are needed. What?
4. **No** – Major concerns related to recommitting. Why?

### Highlights from small groups

Each group gave a brief report out about their discussions. Summary responses follow:

- We need wrap care and transportation to achieve the 75% goal!
- Yes to 75% goal, but we need benchmarks to get there.
- Who is not being served and why?
- Absolute importance of investing in teachers and the workforce.
- The need for more funding.
- Importance of family childcare for Durham PreK .

### Confirming next steps

1. Linda will follow up by sharing relevant information to address questions and requests from the meeting.
2. At the March Governance Committee meeting, the group will hold space for contingency planning (find/push out resources for families).
3. Craft communication to teachers that underscores the support of bonuses but it is unclear if funding will be available as the budget is yet to come
4. Advocate with local and state leadership about our needs
  - a. Pay attention to budget meetings and
  - b. Include parent and educator voices to deeply engage advocacy
5. Value the importance of finding other sources of funding, be creative

### Closing

Joy Spencer inspired the group by encouraging everyone to remember the power of community. We've been here before. We may not have had resources, but we had each other. Never forget how resilient we are as a community!

**Meeting adjourned at 1 pm.**



**Future Governance Committee meetings**

March 20, 2025 (virtual)

May 15, 2025 from 9:30 – 11:30 (virtual)

# Durham PreK Governance Committee

Thursday, January 16, 2025

Facilitated Planning Portion of the Meeting 10:30 – 1:00pm

CCSA Large Conference Room, Durham

## Appendix Small Group Worksheet Notes

Committee members worked in small groups to discuss their level of support for the following areas, noting differences of perspective. The following charts collate the input of all six groups.

1. Do we recommit to...	1 - YES <i>Why?</i>	2 - MAYBE <i>More information? What?</i>	3 - YES, BUT... <i>Yes in theory, but changes needed. What?</i>	4 - NO <i>Major concerns. What? Why?</i>
<p><b>a. Goal to serve 75 percent of the county’s 4-year-old population?</b></p>		<p>Public schools advertising DPK</p>	<p>As aspirational while checking in to make sure this is consistent with the needs and doesn’t water down programs offered.</p> <p>Yes, but what is the timeline? Include annual benchmarks toward the goal.</p> <p>We need wrap care and transportation to reach this goal!</p> <p>Capacity building with providers in more remote areas of the County.</p>	<p>Transportation.</p> <p>Sites near bus stops? Do families know how to use the bus system (different language)? Would this cause a loss in funding?</p>
<p><b>b. The braided model?</b></p>	<p>Beneficial for community, spreads dollars further.</p> <p>It is necessary because it helps reach more families.</p>	<p>Are there other counties not using the model but successful?</p>	<p>Like the single application spot for families, stronger in uncertain times, but reassess and contingency plan if one thread breaks.</p>	

<b>1. Do we recommit to...</b>	<b>1 - YES</b> <i>Why?</i>	<b>2 - MAYBE</b> <i>More information?</i> <i>What?</i>	<b>3 - YES, BUT...</b> <i>Yes in theory, but changes needed. What?</i>	<b>4 - NO</b> Major concerns. <i>What? Why?</i>
	Collaboration and centralized approach help.		Maybe we should include additional sectors, eg, Tri-Share Pilot.	
<b>c. Investment in teachers?</b> <sup>1</sup>	Yes! And continue with enriching teacher pipeline/ apprenticeship program.  Teachers are leaving the profession; they deserved to be paid well.  We need quality teachers and we need to show teachers they are valued.	Starts with directed leadership.	Invest in PD for teachers working with children with unique needs and challenging behaviors.	

<b>2. Where are we with new possible paths?</b>	<b>1 - YES</b> <i>Why?</i>	<b>2 - MAYBE</b> <i>More information?</i> <i>What?</i>	<b>3 - YES, BUT...</b> <i>Yes in theory, but changes needed. What?</i>	<b>4 - NO</b> Major concerns. <i>What?</i> <i>Why?</i>
<b>a. Adding Family Childcare to Durham PreK?</b>	Benefits working families.  Benefits teachers (teacher workday/ snow days).		With DPK's current issues with transportation and wrap services, the redirection of resources to family childcare seems premature.	Concerns about work needed to get the current program solidified.  Very good when it's good but very bad when its bad!  Funding concerns will be split.
<b>b. Prioritizing resource development outside the</b>	Yes, new business, real estate development, require new real estate developers to build and open			

<b>funds from Durham County?</b>	childcare centers in addition to clubhouses.			
<b>c. Other item</b>	Expand/ recruit churches as possible expansion sites?		Wrap Care – setting is difficult in practice. Teachers have kids of their own.  Transportation is really difficult in practice.	