

**Wake County Smart Start
Board of Directors Meeting
February 26, 2025**

A meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) Board of Directors was held on Wednesday, February 26, 2025, with Board Chair, Katherine Williams presiding. The meeting was held at the North Carolina State University Club, Hillsborough St., Raleigh, NC.

Board members present: André Anthony, Nikia Coates, Veronica Creech, Dawn Dawson, Matt Glova, Sherry Heuser, Nikki Leonard, Antonia Pedroza, Stephanie Shell, Tonya Venable, Joe White, Katherine Williams and Stacey Wilson-Norman

Board members absent: Heather Drennan, Matthew Ellinwood, Susan Evans, Ariel Ford, Mickey Holt, and Ronetta Pearsall

Staff members present: Alex Livas-Dlott, Bryce McClamroch, Carol Orji, Gary Carr, Gayle E. Headen, Joan Crutchfield, Rob Linens, Nancy Peck, Lynn Policastro, Sasha Gomez, Taylor Young, Gina Soceanu and Natasha Williams

Guests: Dawn Dawson, Emily Odjaghian

Call to Order/Announcements

At 9:04 AM, Chair, Katherine Williams recognized a quorum and called the meeting to order. She noted the presence of staff members and guests in attendance.

Matt Glova moved to adopt the agenda. Nikia Coates seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with none opposed, the motion carried. (2-25-52)

Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen introduced Emily Odjaghian, Psy.D, Clinical/Executive Director of the Lucy Daniels Center, who presented the Mission Moment focusing on a direct service partner activity, SecurePath, an early intervention, home-based mental health treatment program for children and their parents in Wake County.

The Board reviewed items on the consent agenda. Sherry Heuser moved to approve items on the consent agenda including minutes from the December 4, 2024 Board meeting, December 2024 financial reports, January 2025 financial reports, recommendations for personnel expenses budget planning, additional fulltime staff position, staff longevity pay, and commercial insurance package renewal. Nikia Coates seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objection, the motion carried. (2-25-53)

Committee Reports

Advancement Committee

Advancement Committee Chair, Nikia Coates provided a brief background on the development plan recommended for approval.

A motion from Advancement Committee was made to approve implementation of the Development Plan as outlined on Attachment B.2 to guide the Community Relations and Development (CRD) and Leadership teams in fund development efforts. Stacey Wilson-Norman seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing all in favor, the motion carried. (2-25-54)

Board Governance Committee

Board Governance Committee Chair, Sherry Heuser announced Heather Drennan has submitted her resignation from the WCSS Board due to leaving her position with Wake County and representing the Wake County Manager as a designee on the WCSS Board. Ms. Heuser noted that Heather is eligible to continue serving on the Finance Committee as a community committee member and has confirmed her interest in doing so. A motion from Board Governance Committee was made to accept the resignation of Heather Drennan effective February 21, 2025. Nikki Leonard seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing none opposed, the motion passed unanimously. (2-25-55)

Finance Committee

Finance Committee Chair, Matt Glova reported the Finance Committee conducted an annual review of the WCSS 401k plan at their February 8 meeting with a representative from the Plan recordkeeper, Capital Group; investment advisors from Heirloom Advisors; and the Plan Administrator, Definiti. Mr. Glova commented that the review included a thorough look at Plan assets and employee participation (close to 100% of eligible employees are participating), employee average contribution rate to the plan is close to 7%, Target Date funds – return on investment, volatility, cost and risk, Plan costs and an update on the implementation of Secure Act 2.0.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen provided the following updates:

- Executive Assistant, Nancy Peck will be leaving her position at WCSS on March 21, 2025, to transition into her new role in supporting her daughter's design firm. WCSS will fill the vacant position on a temporary basis to provide continuity until the position is posted for full-time hire.
- Ms. Headen provided a refresher of Wake County Smart Start's funding and revenue sources. She drew attention to a projected pie chart of the WCSS FY24-25 budget totaling \$33,601,445 which includes \$4,672,034 of pass-through funds for Child Care Subsidy. Ms. Headen did a walk-through of the chart segments illustrating funding resources and the percentages they represent of the total budget. She drew attention to the segment representing 3% of the total, comprised of grants and unrestricted funds that are not tied to a particular program and commented that the Board will learn more about their role in supporting the development plan to grow this percentage. She also commented on recent Executive orders that may impact WCSS funding, underscoring the importance of increasing private funding.
- Gayle Headen shared early guidance from Amy Cubbage, President of North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) for continuing work to serve each child in every community according to the state legislative mandate.

Chair's Report

Chair Katherine Williams initiated a discussion of potential implications of federal policy, inviting feedback from Board members and suggestions on what sort of modifications might be implemented while continuing to protect the values and goals of WCSS's work to serve children and families.

Katherine Williams acknowledged Joe White for acting as a sponsor for the Board retreat at the NC State University Club. His sponsorship allowed for the waiver of a meeting space rental fee.

With no further business to discuss, Sherry Heuser moved to adjourn the meeting. André Anthony seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 10:29 AM. (2-25-56)