

**Wake County Smart Start
NC Pre-K Committee Meeting
February 26, 2025**

A meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) NC Pre-K Committee 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.

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

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

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

Call to Order/Announcements

At 8:43 AM, Chair, Katherine Williams, announced a quorum was present and officially called the meeting to order. She noted the presence of staff and guests attending the meeting as non-committee members. Sherry Heuser moved to adopt the agenda. Nikki Leonard seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with all in favor, the vote was unanimous. (2-25-47)

NC Pre-K Committee members reviewed minutes from the previous meeting. Sherry Heuser moved to adopt the minutes from the NC Pre-K Committee meeting on December 4, 2024. André Anthony seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objection, the motion carried. (2-25-48)

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen introduced a staff recommendation to formally approve WCSS as the contracting agency for the NC Pre-K program for the upcoming school year as required by NC Pre-K Program Requirements and Guidance. She reaffirmed the NC Pre-K Committee is the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K Program. Following questions, Matt Glova made a motion to approve Wake County Smart Start as the contracting agency for the NC Pre-K program for the 25-26 SY. André Anthony seconded the motion. Calling for a vote, and hearing none opposed, the vote to approve was unanimous (2-25-49)

Gayle E. Headen, introduced a three-part staff recommendation for additional refinements to the re-opened site selection process previously approved by the NC Pre-K Committee. Ms. Headen summarized the background information related to the recommendations. She reaffirmed the NC Pre-K Committee is the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K Program. Following a question, Veronica Creech made a motion to approve the recommendation that site selection will determine that high, medium and low level area of needs will be based on zip code; direct WCSS staff to obtain signatures on Conflict-of-Interest statements for each site selection sub-committee member; and that the local Contractor (WCSS staff members) will support and provide oversight to the Site Selection Sub-Committee as outlined in the NC Pre-K Program Requirements roles and responsibilities (e.g. NC Pre-K application release, application review, application decision tree, and scoring rubric). Nikia Coates seconded the motion. Calling for a vote, with an abstention by Nikki Leonard, the vote to approve was unanimous (2-25-50)

Gayle Headen provided the following NC Pre-K updates:

- NC Pre-K Site selection has officially begun, with applications due by February 21st. The Site Selection Sub-Committee will begin the process of reviewing and scoring the applications shortly after.
- SY 25-26 Wake Pre-K Application officially opened on January 7th. Since its launch, almost 2000 applications have been received and is on pace with the number of applications received during the same period in 2024. Pre-K staff are reviewing applications for eligibility.

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- NC Pre-K held an in-person Administrator Meeting at NC Works Community Center where providers received information about the resources the agency offers, including recruitment services, on-the job training, and professional development.
- Ms. Headen reported WCSS Director of Advancement, Rob Linens and Director of Strategy and Impact, Alex Livas-Dlott hand delivered Valentines made by NC Pre-K and Wake ThreeSchool students to Wake Delegation members at the General Assembly on February 14. She shared a letter of appreciation for the Valentines from Representative Sarah Crawford.

With no further agenda items to be discussed, Sherry Heuser moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 AM. Nikki Leonard seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the motion passed. (2-25-51)

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6/9/2025 | 9:52 AM EDT

Signed by:
Matt Ellinwood
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