

**Wake County Smart Start  
Board of Directors Meeting  
August 28, 2024**

A meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) Board of Directors was held on Wednesday, August 28, 2024 with Chair Katherine Williams presiding.

Board members present: André Anthony, Nikia Coates, Veronica Creech, Heather Drennan, Susan Evans, Matt Glova, Sherry Heuser, Nikki Leonard, Ronetta Pearsall, Stephanie Shell, Tonya Venable, Joe White and Katherine Williams

Board members absent: Matt Ellinwood, Mickey Holt, Antonia Pedroza and Stacey Wilson-Norman

Staff members present: Alex Livas-Dlott, Carol Orji, Joan Crutchfield, Gary Carr, Gayle E. Headen, Sasha Gomez, Vanessa Guzman, Bryce McClamroch, Nikki McDougald, Nancy Peck and Lynn Policastro

**Call to Order/Announcements**

At 9:09 AM, Chair, Katherine Williams recognized a quorum and called the meeting to order. She announced the meeting is recorded, noted the presence of staff members and called for a round of introductions to welcome the new Board members: André Anthony, Veronica Creech, Nikki Leonard and Stephanie Shell.

Katherine Williams advised a new time sensitive item requiring Board action has arisen since the agenda materials were circulated and asked for a motion to add it to the agenda. Ronetta Pearsall moved to approve the addition of a new item to the August 28, 2024 WCSS Board meeting agenda. Heather Drennan seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no opposition, the motion carried. (08-24-11)

Susan Evans moved to adopt the agenda as amended. Veronica Creech seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and with none opposed, the motion carried. (08-24-12)

Representing the ad hoc committee, Sherry Heuser introduced a recommendation for updated language in the Mission and Vision statements. She explained this as a piece of unfinished business, included in the 23-24 Strategic Framework, that has been a remaining piece of work in progress. An ad hoc team composed of Nikia Coates, Sherry Heuser and several members of WCSS Leadership staff met to come up with a draft of refreshed language to better reflect the work done by the organization and the vision it aspires to, aligned to the Strategic Framework. Finalized language will allow the pending Development Plan, Mobile Unit van wrap and other branding projects to move forward. Susan Evans moved to adopt the updated language for the Mission and Vision statements and tagline as proposed on Attachment VM. Nikki Leonard seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no opposition, the vote to adopt the proposed language was unanimous. (08-24-13)

System Improvement and Public Engagement (SIPE) Manager, Sasha Gomez and SIPE Team members, Vanessa Guzman and Nikki McDougald presented the "Mission Moment", focusing on the WCSS Community Block Party held June 1, 2024, at Roberts Park in Raleigh. Vanessa Guzman opened the presentation with event attendance data (500 families including 1500 children) and an overview of the 29 programs and services represented in the Resource Zone to increase awareness and provide families with immediate connection to these resources. Nikki McDougald highlighted event activities that were designed with families of young children in mind and included community voice in planning. She pointed out intentional activities, including a sensory hour and calming zone, co-planned with parents of children with disabilities to achieve the goal of making the event welcoming and inclusive for all children. She acknowledged community, staff and volunteer support with special thanks to Ronetta Pearsall, Matt Glova and Katherine Williams for their volunteer work on the day of the event. Sasha Gomez referenced Attachment MM.1 to illustrate how WCSS Strategic Priorities were integrated into planning and implementation of the event. She shared highlights of participants' post event survey results and community comments that provide information about the niche occupied by WCSS and its impact on families.

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10/30/2024 | 11:04 AM EDT  
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The Board reviewed items on the consent agenda. Susan Evans moved to approve items on the consent agenda including minutes from the June 26, 2024 Board meeting, June 2024 financial reports, July 2024 financial reports, FY23-24 reversion schedule and direct service provider fiscal monitoring summary. Ronetta Pearsall seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objection, the motion carried. (08-24-14)

### Committee Reports

#### Advancement Committee

Advancement Committee Chair, Nikia Coates reported that Mendi Nieters of Armstrong McGuire reviewed a summary of the findings from the Development Resource Assessment collected through individual interviews and survey response focused on stakeholder perceptions of the agency and investment feedback. After summarizing the findings, Ms. Nieters shared recommendations for moving forward with Development planning.

Nikia Coates reported that the response to the Board Participation survey is nearly at 100%. She stated that the goal of the survey is to support committees and staff and maximize Board participation and engagement.

#### Finance Committee

Finance Committee Chair, Matt Glova presented a recommendation to use the \$400,026 available in reverted and carryforward Smart Start FY23-24 funds to backfill the reduction in funding for SIPE and Early Childhood Initiatives (ECI) in-house activities during the last allocation round that allowed funding of other new activities. Veronica Creech made a motion to approve authorization of staff to allocate Smart Start FY 23-24 carryforward funds for funding FY 24-25 WCSS in-house activities and administration. Nikki Leonard seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing none opposed, the motion was unanimously approved. (08-24-15)

Matt Glova introduced a committee recommendation for an unrestricted funds budget to support expenditures related to such areas as staff retreats, Community Block Party and advocacy group membership dues that are not allowable under Smart Start or other restricted grants. He referred to the budget narrative on Attachment C.2. Hearing no questions, Susan Evans moved to approve the FY 2025 Unrestricted Private Funds Budget to cover administrative and program expenses not allowable by state, federal and local grants. Veronica Creech seconded the motion. A vote was called for, and hearing no opposition, the motion carried. (08-24-16)

### Chair's Report

Chair, Katherine Williams expressed her appreciation to the Board for their significant work in contributing to a robust early childhood system in Wake County. She yielded the remaining time for her report to Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen.

### Executive Director's Report

Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen referred to the Strategic Framework Action Plan summary shared in the meeting agenda. She invited questions about how WCSS staff are implementing the Board's strategies and asked for other feedback to strengthen and add to the implementation.

Board comments:

- Appreciation for intentionality of including community involvement in strategies.
- Appreciation for focusing metrics on what is most meaningful to the community and community partners.
- Under the data informed decision-making pillar use data related to child care and investment in early childhood as an economic development driver to support why and how WCSS is a solutions partner with the business community.

Gayle Headen shared the following updates:

- Wake ThreeSchool (WTS) enrollment: The program is almost fully placed with a few slots being reserved until the end of the month for families at greatest need who apply late in the application cycle. 902 eligible applications have been received to date, far exceeding the number of available slots.


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- A WTS media event is scheduled on August 29 at A Safe Place's location on Trawick Rd in Raleigh. During her remarks, Gayle Headen plans to invite the business community to join WCSS in investing in early childhood.
- Governor Cooper has proclaimed September as Smart Start Month in North Carolina in recognition of Smart Start's impact on our state's children and families over the past 30 years and its continued promise for the years ahead. Social media is planned throughout month and there will be a different focus and activities for each week:
  - Week 1 – focus on the Smart Start network impact beginning with a Smart Start Legacy event on Sep. 9 at Marbles. Gayle Headen will introduce Senator Chaudhuri, member of Early Childhood Education (ECE) Caucus to receive a Smart Start Champion Award. A link to the RSVP will be sent following the meeting for any Board members interested in attending the event.
  - Week 2 – focus on the impact of ECE. WCSS will host a virtual dance party inviting all 500 licensed providers in Wake County to participate.
  - Week 3 – focus on family support and leadership
  - Week 4 – focus on Health. WCSS will host a Kid Connect tour for Wake County Human Resources employees

With no further business to discuss, Nikia Coates moved to adjourn the meeting. Nikki Leonard seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned by Katherine Williams at 10:05 AM. (08-24-17)

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 Board Secretary

10/30/2024 | 11:04 AM EDT

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