

Durham PreK Governance Committee Meeting NOTES

March 20, 2025 (9:30am-11:30am)

In Attendance, listed in random order:

Voting Members: Cathy Collie-Robinson, Wykeshia Glass, Brittany Gregory, Brenda Carter, Xavier Cason, Jason Rutherford, June Shillito, Aleksandra Holod, Beth Messersmith, Joy Spencer, Michelle Lyn, Miranda Marshall, Meytal Barak (designated for the County Manager)

Non-voting Members: Dr. Linda Chappel, Joy Turner, Tammorah Mathis, Monnie Griggs, Jameka Wells; **Guests:** Karen Thompson, Tabitha Williamson, Tosh Adams, Adrienne Stephens, Nita McAdoo, Rachel Osborne, Marilyn Agostini, Cate Laster, Maggie West

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 Governance Members○ Introductions in chat○ Attendance reviewed and meeting quorum verified
Meeting Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider a Vote to Authorize a Bonus for Instructional Staff• Discuss 2025 – 2026 Budget• Set a Base Pay Rate for IAs• Vote on Teacher Compensation Support Payments• Review and Vote on Seat Reimbursement Rates• Approve Meeting Notes from January• Share Program Updates
*Action Item	Governance unanimously approved Governance Committee meeting notes from January 2025 Motioned by Alex Holod, Seconded by Brittany Gregory, all in favor.
Vote to Authorize a Bonus for Instructional Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bonus for instructional staff has been discussed at the last two meetings. Decision is needed to allow time for distribution.• Governance has approved bonuses for instructional staff since the 2021 school year – originating as a support during the COVID pandemic• Bonus has continued after the pandemic as a retention bonus• Bonus is dependent on available funds.

**Discussed by Joy
Turner**

- There is not a set aside amount or line item in the budget
- Slide deck provides a chart with the history of the bonus amounts since inception
- For the current year we estimate that a per teacher bonus will be \$800-\$955 per teacher, for both Leads and Assistants
- Reminder that in our survey teachers shared they were grateful for the bonus but did express some frustrations that the bonus was substantially lower than previous years
- If a bonus is approved it will be substantially lower than last year..
- Linda: We were reminded last year through the survey that when a bonus is recurring it becomes expected.
- Cathy: The reason that bonuses are less this year is because enrollment has picked up is that the case?
- Linda, Yes, we do not have a line item for the bonus in the budget. We allocate bonus funding from unspent dollars.
- Linda, it is a plus that we have less money now because it means we are doing a better job creating seats for children- forecasting enrollment rates and estimating expenses. The priority is to serve children.
- Linda, if Governance declines to approve a bonus then we will make a request to Durham County to allow any unspent funds to carry forward for the 2025 – 2026 school year.
- Jason, do the teachers understand how the bonuses are generated?
- Joy- probably not in depth. In the past we have had teachers ask about bonuses and we have let them know that the bonus is uncertain -currently it is dependent on available funds and on Governance voting to allocate these funds. There has not been a formal explanation of the bonus in relation to the budget.
- Meytal- Once we move forward with the vote today is there a plan to communicate with the teachers the amount of the bonus and if we have a bonus and make it clear how this was historically created.
- Linda,-Yes, our plan moving forward is to make the bonus a line item in the budget with a potential for an increase based on left over funding. We have in the past communicated with teachers about the bonus not being permanent but based on last year's survey we all agree that we need to communicate clearly about the structure and frame for the bonus.
- Meytal I'm glad to hear that you all are considering adding this as a line item for the next budget season.
- Beth, I feel that it is important to move forward with a bonus this year as opposed to not doing it because when you work a job where bonuses come every year you do start to rely on them. We need to make clear explanation as to where the money comes from and that it is not guaranteed.
- June- I am always and advocate of whatever we can give the teachers to help them. I have seen with the teachers at Yates that the bonus has really encouraged them to stay at the school. My only question is will we have money for the classroom?
- Linda, What we have done in the past and what we intend to do this time- we will evaluate the available funds in May and if warranted, we will request a vote to use extra funds for the classroom.
- Brittany, As a preschool parent, I deeply understand that children entering Pre-K this fall face a dual pandemic—COVID disruptions combined with ongoing political uncertainty. Our youngest learners need stability and familiar faces now more

	<p>than ever. I fully support formally endorsing a teacher retention bonus structure to ensure consistent, caring educators in our classrooms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joy Spencer If I understand correctly, for now, the teachers have been told that they might get a bonus IF funding is available and if there is an affirmative vote? Is that correct? Have they been warned of the amount being significantly lower if approved? • Linda, Unfortunately the teachers have not been communicated with at this point which is why we are at a place of extreme urgency and after this meeting plan to communicate with them immediately • Joy Spencer, Wondered if it's appropriate to send a warning about the lower amount in the next messaging to teachers? • Linda, We intend to be as clear as we can be so that they can plan for their personal budgets.
*Action Item	<p>Vote on Bonus</p> <p>I move that we vote to authorize bonus payments for instructional staff dependent on available funding Jason Rutherford</p> <p>Michelle Lyn Seconds the Motion</p> <p>All in favor</p>
<p>Discuss 2025 – 2026 Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a Base Pay Rate for IAs • Vote on Teacher Compensation Support Payments • Review and Vote on Seat Reimbursement Rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don't know what the DPK budget will be for FY2026. • We were asked about a month ago to submit our request to our early childhood liaison from Durham County • This budget was hard to craft because as we know it is not likely that we will get what we asked for because of the economic climate. However, we asked in a forthright way for we felt was appropriate and needed. • We asked for an increase to \$8,500,633. • We want it to be clear that this budget will add minimal seats. If funded we will add some seats but this budget increase reflects the reality of inflation and the increased cost of care • For perspective we have our goal to serve 75% of the total 4 year old census without limitation of who can be a part of the program • We are still working with sites that want to grow. • The budget has built in funds for teachers' salary increases. • Cathy, Its going to be impossible to grow without the teachers and it will be critical going forward to make sure that we're able to have the teachers. • Joy Turner- we are looking at 3 items that need consideration 1) the minimum hourly rate for Instructional Assistants (IA). Last year we aligned our minimum hourly rate with Durham County government's minimum salary rate, \$19.21. • Program sites can pay what they feel the teacher's qualifications merit, but it must at least meet the minimum. • This school year the DPK average pay rate for IA's is \$19.90 an hour and the median is \$19.21 an hour. • At present the city of Durham living wage is \$19.58 an hour. • We recommend adopting a rate that is tied to the City of Durham living wage. This info is transparently available online.

- Joy Turner, the next issue is the DPK teacher compensation support payments. The current scale for teacher support payments was designed to offset the cost of paying teachers on the Durham Public Schools' salary scale. The payments are based on a graduated scale which considers the monthly salary and the teachers' years of experience
- This is helpful and is working as intended but there are still issues with the current model because it does not address the fact that the base salary for DPK is significantly higher than the average salary for a lead teacher in typical childcare. It also does not account for the fact that median tuition rates have risen at a higher rate than our DPK per child reimbursement rate over the last few years
- The meeting slide deck includes charts that display the increased base salary cost.
- When we began Durham PreK it was our intent that our higher per child reimbursement rate would provide the financial support necessary to pay lead teachers and instructional assistants at these higher rates. However over the last six years the median tuition rates in 5 star Durham centers have increased at a higher rate than the DPK reimbursement rate.
- The result of this is that the per child rate alone is no longer able to sustain paying teachers on the Durham Public School salary scale. We are concerned that the private sites may decide that it's more financially feasible to stop participating in DPK and to only accept private pay children which would make it difficult for us to meet the demands for public preschool in Durham County.
- We propose adding a base payment to the teachers compensation for non-public school sites that all lead teachers and instructional assistants would qualify for regardless of license status or years of experience
- Base payment would mean that the site would receive \$300 a month for instructional assistants, \$400 a month for unlicensed lead teachers and \$1200 per month for licensed lead teachers.
- This base payment would be in addition to our experience payment.
- The chart in the slide show displays the proposed revised framework.
- Joy Spencer-can you explain the 42% on the slide-- is that how many seats we have filled this year?
- Linda- the 42% is telling us that based on the number of seats we have available across all public preschool seats- we are able to serve 42% of the census of 4 year olds in Durham County.
- With our budget request to Durham County, for the first time, we have asked for an increase in our budget to be able to maintain where we are in a robust way- rather than asking for an increase in funds to substantially grow the program.
- Beth how are we putting federal funding uncertainty into our budget for next year?
- Linda- we are developing contingency planning and looking at how we will meet our children's needs if these funds disappear or are dramatically reduced. We are working closely with our partners.
- June, Anything we can do to help these programs?
- Linda- enrollment is a critical piece of the puzzle. Reimbursements to sites are based upon enrollment and attendance. The reality is that all of our expenses have increased so much. We hear the providers' concerns about being able to pay salaries at the public-school rate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base payment would help all sites the same regardless of the number of seats that they have. We do have sites that have smaller classrooms and aren't able to serve as many children based on the size of the space they have for students. • The estimated cost of this new base support payment for non-public school sites is estimated at approximately \$388,600 per year based on the number of current teachers. • DPK reimbursement rates per child- we ask that you consider a 4% increase for the upcoming school year. Currently we are at \$1456 and looking to move to \$1514 per child per month. • The chart in the slide deck displays the rates for private pay child care and increases over the year. • The next chart in the slide deck displays comparisons for all payments including childcare subsidy rates. • Jaso- the proposed budget for next year- was that proposed with consideration for these items getting passed? • Linda- yes, we considered scenarios and if you pass these proposed increases they will be the first things prioritized. It is possible that we will have to make adjustments in the future based on the budget we are given.
*Action Item	Minimum Hourly Rate for Instructional Assistants Alex Holod moved to approve the City of Durham Living Wage rate as the minimum rate set for Instructional Assistant wages in DPK. Jason Rutherford seconds the motion. All approved.
*Action item	Revised Framework for Teacher Compensation Support Payments Motion to approve the addition of a base payment and keeping the experience payment by Beth Messersmith. Brittany Gregroy seconds the motion. All Approved
*Action Item	Reimbursement Rates Per Child Motion to approve the 4% rate increase for the upcoming school year by Joy Spencer. Wykeshia Glass seconds the motion. All Approved
Ask Conference Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We had a successful in person Durham PreK teachers professional development learning track • 84 registered and 74 attended • Kat King, Whitney Gaffney and Jenna Tarlington from the Community Partnership Inc. facilitated the workshop. The topic was, <i>"It's Okay to Have Big Emotions- Managing Emotions in the Classroom."</i> The workshop gave teachers tools to add to their toolbox for the classroom Teachers were awarded credit hours, and we gave out raffle prizes

Application and outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Bilingual info session for parents was hosted on February 3. We had 270 register for the event and 163 attended • The application for next school year is open. By mid-March we had 877 applications in progress or under review • A <i>Roll up and Enroll</i> event was held on March 15 at Durham Tech. All of our partner agencies were in attendance and we had 20 community resource vendors. 44 families were provided direct assistance and at least 23 Durham PreK applications and ASQ screenings were completed in Spanish.
Summary and Adjournments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In school year 2024 – 2025, we met the third Thursday of every month. Remaining meeting date for this school term is 5/15/25. • A virtual meeting will be held July 17th if needed from 9:30-10:30 <p>Meeting adjourned at 11:10am Alex Holod motioned to adjourned and Brittany Gregory seconded the motion All approved</p>

** Agenda items with handouts*