

Durham PreK Governance Committee Meeting NOTES

May 15, 2025 (9:30am-11:30am)

In Attendance, listed in random order:

Voting Members: Cathy Collie-Robinson, Dr. Wykeshia Glass, Brittany Gregory, Brenda Carter, Xavier Cason, Jason Rutherford, June Shillito, Aleksandra Holod, Beth Messersmith, Michelle Lyn, Miranda Marshall, Kate Goodwin, Tabitha Blackwell, Dr. Deborah Pitman, Donna Rewalt- designated for County Manager Hager

Non-voting Members: Dr. Linda Chappel, Joy Turner, Tammorah Mathis, Monnie Griggs, Meytal Barak, Dr. Kristi Snuggs, Kate Irish
Guests: Karen Thompson, Tabitha Williamson, Tosh Adams, Adrienne Stephens, Nita McAdoo, Rachel Osborne, Marilyn Agostini, Maggie West, Jameka Wells

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">• Review and Approve Meeting Notes from March 2025• Discuss 2025 – 2026 Budget and Set Spending Priorities<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Review Teacher Compensation Support Payments○ Review Seat Reimbursement Rates• Receive an Update on SY25 Parent Fees• Examine Public Preschool Enrollment in SY2024 - 2025• Consider Current Application Demographics for SY2025 – 2026• Share Program Updates
*Action Item	Governance unanimously approved Governance Committee meeting notes from March 2025 Motioned by Alex Holod, Seconded by Beth Messersmith, all in favor.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss 2025 – 2026 Budget and Set Spending Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review Teacher Compensation Support Payments ○ Review Seat Reimbursement Rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to discuss our resources to make sure they honor our intentions and align with our goals for the upcoming school year. We have had substantial growth over the years, however without truly stable funding the services can erode. • Our supply of PreK seats does not yet meet the community’s goal to have seats for 75% of children in Durham • We must continue to invest in quality in our community, this includes investing in the teachers • Childcare prices have continued to rise. Nationally they are up 29% since 2020. • We are seeing resources shrink and the priorities in our community are spread across many needs • Slides show the budget and what we requested from the county for next year • The request we made was a very conservative request at the guidance of our county officials who informed us that this is a tight budget season • Based on the budget presentation that the County Manager Hager made to the community, we do not foresee DPK receiving the budget increase that we requested. • No budget plans have been voted on by Durham as yet. On May 27 there is a budget public hearing and in the meantime, there are budget work sessions we are welcome to attend • The DPK budget request covers basic needs and does not make room for new seats because of inflation and cost increases across the board. • We do have the potential for increased seats if additional funds enter the public preschool programs- our braided model of funding depends on dollars entering from all fund sources. • In March we voted to revise the framework for teacher compensation payments to add base payments and to increase the reimbursement rate per child by 4% • Slides display the teacher payment support model increase that was previously voted on in the March 2025 meeting. • The teacher support payment is paid directly to the site to help with the payroll for the teachers hired at the site. • The group reviewed the items voted on in March 2025. • Slides that we saw in March are in the slides for this month for review. • Members were asked to consider allocation priorities that will be required if we do not get a budget increase. Staff made a recommendation to implement the framework for the teacher compensation payments adopted in March for school year 2025-26 but to consider delaying the increased reimbursement rate per child that was adopted. Staff asked for a delay in the rate increase, if needed, based on the budget allotment. Members discussed this option at length. • The other impact of a reduced or flat budget for DPK is on seat allocations. The seat allocations are the bulk of our expenses and depend on the budget. • If we do not get our full allocation, we will need to make some hard choices in June • Teacher raises are priority, and we are required to pay based upon the DPS pay scale. • Governance was asked to provide guidance on the program’s priorities for spending.
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- Jason Rutherford- When I initially looked at the presentation, I thought to consider what the actual budget looked like for the past 2 years- and what increases we have asked for, and what are the program's needs? Throughout my tenure on the board, I feel that we were being overly conservative – we are not asking for what we truly need. I feel that a more aggressive ask would meet what we need. We should ask for at least \$9 or 9.2 million. I considered the total number of seats that we need. By asking for \$9-9.2 we can add approximately 125 seats to our 32 sites and also help support the teachers' pay model that was approved in March.
- Linda suggested that in the coming year we should reconvene the Durham Preschool Task Force members from 2017 and report on our progress and make a case for major budget scheduled budget increases over the next five years.
- Cathy, I think that it is very concerning what we're hearing at the State and local level, at State and Federal levels regarding early childhood funding and I think Durham has an option here to really continue setting the pace and being the forefront of what public funded Pre-K can look like. I'm wondering, Linda, are we tracking the quality impacts of Durham Pre K on kindergarten readiness?
- Linda, we are using the resources available to us to track the children in the Prek program. As far as the longitudinal impacts- we are not currently able to do that at this time but have been in communication with DPS about this information as they are the ones with access to that resource. We did remind our county commissioners that a more robust evaluation will be an expensive investment that we wish they would consider.
- Jason suggests that we show up at the county meetings and at the public hearing session on May 27th and possibly at the budget vote meeting on June 9th
- Beth Messersmith, I think that it is really important that we have fidelity to the model that we know works - as opposed to letting it get watered down over time. We need to ask for what we need and counting on our braided funding is not a stable option at this time.
- Brittany Gregory- DPK has been able to take the little bit and make it a lot, but it's never been enough. It's not enough, and we need more. And I think it is okay to say that. What do we need to do to sit at the meetings and advocate for the budget? Do we need a subcommittee to help with these priorities?
- Cathy, I like Brittany's suggestion of a subcommittee. We have so many excellent points that can be brought to the attention of the County's leadership. Who is interested in being a part of that subcommittee? (Beth, Brittany, and Jason said they were interested) We should get teachers, directors and families involved also.
- There is an opportunity to speak at the May 27 Budget Public Hearing. If members are unable to make the meeting you can send an email or call the County Commissioners
- Brittany suggests that we start an email train. She is going to start it with the help of Beth and Moms Rising
- Cathy, Do we have data on the DPK teacher turnover rate vs the teacher turnover rate at private PreK sites?
- Linda, We do not in that way but we do have a variety of ways to track our teachers in DPK

- Some action items for the immediate needs for the upcoming of the budget process: get an email campaign going, attend the [May 27th public hearing](#). It is at 7 pm in the Commissioner Chambers office.
- If you feel that we need more time to think about all of these changes then we will have to call a meeting in June.
- Linda shared that we need guidance from Governance today rather than waiting until June. Do you support the staff recommendation to delay the increased monthly reimbursement rate? Or do you have some other ideas? Or do you want to hold harmless seats at all costs, which means, if we don't cut seats, then we can't implement any of the increases that you voted on in March.
- Beth, you want us to consider a contingency plan?
- Linda, yes or we will need to have a meeting in June to discuss the budget and make decisions about how to use the funding.
- Beth, it seems like June or a contingency plan is what we are all looking at so far. We do not want to water down the DPK model that we know works well.
- Beth, I do not think it is fair to cut into the support for the pay of the caregivers doing all the work that goes into quality childcare. Cathy agrees with Beth.
- June Shillito, the teachers are what make the classroom. It is not the materials in the room but the passion of the teachers. I think we need to maximize the workforce support. Let's try to preserve the seats we have and make sure that the workforce is taken care of. I think it would be a great idea to have a meeting in June. I think the advocacy subcommittee is a great idea and I would be happy to assist.
- Linda, if we have a June meeting it needs to be early in June.
- Dr. Kristi Snuggs, I think it's important that Durham should stand for the workforce. I think it is important for others to understand that the increase of per child reimbursements could impact the teachers' salary. I would prioritize the teacher raises and teacher support payments. If for some reason we have to make a hard decision know that any money put in to the program has the opportunity to help with teacher salary.
- Linda, by waiting until June for a meeting the staff will need to craft a reduced seating plan until we have the full budget. This will delay seat offers to families that are waiting to hear back from us.
- Xavier Cason, with the subcommittee - are we advocating for the workforce and sticking to the \$8.5 million that was originally asked for in the budget or are we advocating for more funds then originally asked for?
- Cathy, the advocacy is for increased funding- with more money we get to do both- more seats and provide the workforce support. Can we do both- give a contingency plan so that families can be notified and still meet after the budget is final?
- Linda, the other option is to reach out to families to share that we are in a delayed environment as we wait on the budget
- Kristi, with the requested budget we would be able to preserve the seat allocation, correct?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linda, the current request incorporates the increases that you recommended in March but would not allow for an expansion of seats • Beth, I do not like the idea of putting uncertainty on parents. Some parents do not choose Durham PreK because they feel uncertainty for so long. So how do we preserve maximum flexibility without pushing uncertainty on the families? • Kristi, they started applying in February and we know we need to get confirmations of seats as soon as possible. • Linda, they already wait until June. We must wait on NC PREK information as well. • Cathy, if we do not agree on the contingency plan now then parents would not get seats until July? • Linda, we hope that it will not be as late as July, we will do our best to get seats out as soon as possible. • Cathy, do we feel that the top 3 things on the slide for the Budget Guidance are items that we will be able to move forward? Would you like us to approve the contingency plan and then meet in June or would we like to hold off until June for all of it? • Beth, if we get more money that doesn't mean a contingency plan now is doing any harm. • Linda, if we meet in June you will have definitive numbers. • June, would the contingency plan make things easier, but we can still advocate for more money? • Linda, the contingency plan would help us- it gives us the opportunity to see where we need to cut seats in order to support the teacher pay model that you all approved in March. • Jason, I support the idea of the contingency plan with a potential pivot should we get an increase in the budget. • Cathy, are we meeting in June or are we waiting to meet in July? • Beth, if we were to get more funding, I think it would be a good idea to meet in June. If not we could hold off until July • Cathy we will put a hold for a date in June. • Linda suggested June 12th for the meeting after the budget is finalized. • We will schedule the meeting for June 12th and we will keep the scheduled July meeting. We will move forward with guidance from the contingency plan. We will keep everyone informed with any updates we receive during that time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Item 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote to support the contingency plan. Motioned by Jason Rutherford Seconded by Brittany Gregory All in favor

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive Update on SY25 Parent Fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent fees come into at 400% federal poverty level. It then becomes 2% of family income if they are over the 400% federal poverty level. • Charts in the slides show examples of annual salary for various jobs along with the poverty levels. • DPK has seen a steady increase in the number of families that have a parent fee over the last 3 years. The chart shows the increase over the last 3 years. • Parent fees go directly to the provider. We pay the difference in the per child reimbursement to the facility • The program is open to every family and we also have a priority to serve children of lower income so we do pay close attention to the demographics of the families enrolling.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine Public Preschool Enrollment in SY2024 - 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocations and the enrollment in locally funded seats are shown on the chart in the slides. • We have seen a slight dip in enrollment across sites. Last year it was 94% and this year we are at 91% so a slight decrease. • Overall Public PreK enrollment is shown on a chart in the slides. These are seats funded by local dollars and also seats not funded by local dollars- NCPREK seats at non DPK sites, Head Start seats not funded by DPK and DPS including Title I, Exceptional Children and Montessori program sites • Linda, If you want to have further discussion about this topic I would suggest we do that in the September meeting. • Cathy, In the September meeting we will have the final numbers? • Linda, we will have DPK seat numbers but not enrollment across the board • How we determine the percentage of seats are displayed in the chart on the slide show.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider Current Application Demographics for SY2025 – 2026 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides show the application numbers compared over the last few years • We have received 7% more this year than this time last years Based on numbers from May 2nd . • Demographics shown in slide • First looking at race we have the largest category being children that Identify as African American followed by children of the white/European with various other races shown on the table • Looking at ethnicity we have about ¼ of children identifying as Latino or Hispanic with the other ¾ as not Latino or Hispanic • These numbers are very much on track with what we have seen over the years • Looking at Durham’s zip codes- the largest number of applications are from 27703, 27713, and 27704. We continue to monitor and track this information over time. • We are using zip codes to drive our outreach plans- targeting locations with low applications.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share Program Updates* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application and outreach updates- by May 2025 we have 1158 applications in process or review. • First roll up and enroll was March 15th at Durham Tech. We had 20 resource tables, 44 families served and at least 23 families were assisted with applications. Assistance with ASQ developmental screenings was provided as well. • The second roll up and enroll was held April 26th at Eastway Elementary, led by DPS. 32 families signed in-more families were served. • A virtual bilingual family info session was held on May 7th and 64 families registered and 54 attended. • The Durham Early Educator Apprenticeship program is launching a 6-week early educator academy this summer. We received a grant from Duke Doing Good, an employee- giving campaign, to launch this project. Our goal is to better support individuals interested in a job in early education -but not yet working in the field- by giving them support to complete the requirements needed to work in the field. We have funding for 10 participants and as of today have received 40 applications. We are searching for other funds to allow us to enroll more. • In April, technical assistance (TA) quality improvement site visits were made to 27 sites and 83 teachers. This coaching supports improved instructional strategies. Coaches allow the teachers an opportunity to reflect over student work and to solve problems and/or vent about the stressors in the classroom. TA coaches partner with instructional staff and support them by providing professional development opportunities. • We have workshops on the professional development training calendar and DPK instructional staff can enroll at no charge. In addition, coaches partner with teachers to make a personalized development plan or to enroll in higher education courses. • The coaches are working with 6 non-DPK sites for capacity building technical assistance to become public preschool classrooms in the future. • Post school year assessments are underway for each DPK classroom. We compare the ratings from Fall 2024 with the end of year scores to verify progress from technical assistance and coaching. • NCAEYC provided 5 scholarships for Durham PreK site administrators to participate in the adult mental health first aid course. This aligns with our desire for directors to support their teachers' social emotional health and to identify and recognize when there may be mental health concerns. • Frank Porter Graham (FPG) provided 5 free scholarships to DPK teachers to attend the UNC FPG International Inclusion Institute. All 5 teachers we chose were able to attend. The teachers shared how honored they felt to be selected to go to the Institute. • FPG partnered with DPK for a center visit for Taiwanese educators who were attending the International Inclusion Institute. Randy's 5 Star Academy hosted 2 participants in the DPK classroom. We received feedback that it successfully demonstrated an inclusive environment for exceptional children. • Christy Farmer has joined the DPK team in March as our new Birth to Kindergarten licensed quality enhancement coach
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Summary and Adjournments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In school year 2025 – 2026, our regularly scheduled meetings will be held on the third Thursday of every other month from 9:30 – 11:30am. 9/18 (in-person), 11/13(virtual), 1/15 (in-person), 3/19 (virtual), 5/21 (virtual). • We will have a virtual meeting on June 12th from 9:30-11:30am, <i>if needed</i>, to discuss the budget. • A virtual meeting will be held July 17th from 9:30-10:30am, <i>if needed</i>, to approve any items needed to open school. <p>Meeting adjourned at 11:30am. Alex Holod motioned to adjourn, and Brittany Gregory seconded the motion. All approved</p>
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*** Agenda items with handouts**