

Durham PreK Governance Committee Meeting NOTES

May 21, 2026 (9:30am-11:30am)

In Attendance, listed in random order:

Voting Members: Cathy Collie-Robinson, Dr. Wykeshia Glass, Dr. Deborah Pitman, Brenda Carter, Jason Rutherford, June Shillito, Tabitha Blackwell, Dr. Aleksandra Holod, Beth Messersmith, Dr. Iheoma Iruka, Kristina Baldrige

Non-voting Members: Dr. Linda Chappel, Joy Turner, Tammorah Mathis, Monnie Griggs, Ileana Vink, Dr. Kristi Snuggs, Kate Irish

Guests: Karen Thompson, Tabitha Williamson, Tosh Adams, Adrienne Stephens, Nita McAdoo, Rachel Osborne, Marilyn Agostini, Maggie West, Cate Laster, Jameka Wells

WHAT	NOTES
Welcome and Introductions	• Welcome and Introductions ○ A recording of the meeting can be found on our DPK YouTube channel ○ Cathy Collie-Robinson and Dr. Linda Chappel welcomed Governance Members ○ Everyone introduced themselves. (Names and Job Titles/descriptions) ○ Attendance reviewed and meeting quorum verified
Meeting Objectives	• Review and Approval of Notes from the March 2026 meeting and April 30, 2026 special business meeting • Enrollment, Seat Allocations across Durham's Preschool Programs • Review of the Lead Teacher Credential Requirements • Update on the 2026 -2027 DPK Budget/ DPK Budget continued- Teacher Support Payments • Receive program updates • Plan for Special Meeting; July 16, 2026 (9:30 – 11:00)
*Action Item	• Governance unanimously approved Governance Committee meeting notes from March 2026 • Motioned by Jason Rutherford, Seconded by Tabitha Blackwell, all in favor.
Action Item	• Governance unanimously approved Governance Committee meeting notes from April 2026 • Motioned by Kristina Baldrige, Seconded by Wykeshia Glass, all in favor.
Enrollment, Seat Allocations	• Enrollment Updates • Joy Turner presented current enrollment data.

across Durham's Preschool Programs	• Enrollment remained steady at approximately 87% across all seat types, essentially steady since February. No major changes at the site level. • Data was reviewed by site category including: ○ Private sites ○ Head Start ○ Durham Public Schools (DPS) • Joy Turner explained that late in the school year programs usually experience increased exits and fewer new enrollments because families are less likely to enroll children for only a few remaining months. • This year showed stronger-than-usual enrollment consistency through April. • Leadership viewed this as evidence of strong year-long enrollment retention. • Whitted Enrollment Discussion ○ Kristina Baldridge raised concerns regarding enrollment disparities at Whitted compared to other Durham PreK sites. ○ Dr. Chappel reviewed collaborative work among Durham Partnership for Children, Durham Public Schools, Families and Community Rising, and Early Years to improve outreach and storytelling efforts. ○ Leadership referenced prior Board of Education and County Commissioner discussions regarding enrollment efforts for Whitted. • Dr. Deborah Pitman shared appreciation for the collaborative support surrounding Whitted. • Dr. Pitman reported for DPS: ○ Early childhood seats remained in the upper 90% enrollment range outside of the Whitted ○ NC Pre-K seats were fully enrolled ○ Durham PreK seats remained the primary focus for additional outreach ○ Leadership discussed efforts to improve communication with families and strengthen the processes for making seat offers. ○ Kristina Baldridge noted concerns about community confusion regarding wraparound care availability at Whitted. ○ Governance discussed transportation barriers and family access challenges across the broader early childhood system. ○ Cathy Collie-Robinson shared positive impressions following a visit to Whitted with Durham Tech students and emphasized the importance of family tours and site visits to showcase program quality.
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Review of the Lead Teacher Credential Requirements	Teacher Credential Policy Background • Dr. Linda Chappel reviewed the history of Durham PreK credential requirements. • Governance previously convened a special April meeting and subcommittee review related to a waiver request submitted by a provider site. • The requesting site also asked Governance to revisit overall instructor credential policies. • Leadership emphasized that credential requirements have been foundational to Durham PreK (DPK) since the program launched in 2018. • The DPK reimbursement structure and compensation model were intentionally built around teacher licensure and credentialing standards. Lead Teacher Credential Requirements • Leadership reviewed current Durham PreK lead teacher requirements. • Lead teachers must either: ○ Hold a valid teaching license OR ○ Hold a bachelor’s degree in an approved field while actively pursuing BK licensure • Teachers pursuing licensure are required to: ○ Complete at least 6 semester hours annually ○ Maintain grades of C or better ○ Demonstrate ongoing progress toward licensure • Leadership acknowledged the complexity of North Carolina’s licensure system and explained that Quality Improvement staff assist teachers in navigating the process. • DPK intentionally designed its brand and quality standards around research demonstrating the importance of teacher training and credentialing on long-term student success. Relationship to NC Pre-K Requirements • Leadership explained that DPK first follows NC Pre-K requirements unless Governance chooses to adopt stronger standards. • DPK currently maintains stricter standards than NC Pre-K in several credentialing areas. • NC Pre-K accepts: ○ Certain out-of-state licenses ○ Some preschool add-on licensure pathways • DPK does not automatically accept all of those pathways. • Leadership explained that DPK’s goal is to ensure teachers eventually hold North Carolina licensure for consistency and equitable credentialing standards. Teacher Workforce Supports
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- Governance reviewed support available for teachers who are pursuing credentials, including:
 - Intensive instructional coaching from Quality Enhancement Coaches
 - Apprenticeship programs
 - Assistance navigating licensure systems
 - TEACH scholarships (pay for tuition)
- Leadership emphasized that DPK takes a supportive approach while maintaining high standards.
- Quality Enhancement Coaches provide direct support to teachers while they complete credential requirements.
- Apprenticeship programs provide additional wraparound support and licensure pathways.
- Lead Teacher Workforce Data**
- Leadership presented workforce data demonstrating that:
 - 93% of lead teachers currently meet qualification requirements
 - 3 of 43 lead teachers did not yet meet full requirements in the 2026 school year
 - 2 of the 3 teachers not yet qualified are actively enrolled in coursework
- Governance reviewed trends showing recovery in BK licensure completion rates following COVID-related disruptions
- Since August 2022, Durham PreK has seen significant increases in lead teachers earning BK licensure.
- Teacher Recruitment and Retention Discussion**
- Leadership acknowledged statewide challenges in recruiting qualified early childhood educators.
- Dr. Chappel noted that providers across North Carolina consistently report staffing shortages and compensation concerns.
- Cathy Collie-Robinson highlighted DPK's comparatively low turnover rates.
- Governance discussed how DPK's higher compensation structure and workforce support contribute to stronger retention outcomes.
- Licensure Cost and Accessibility Discussion**
- Kristina Baldridge asked whether licensure costs create barriers for educators pursuing BK credentials.
 - Leadership explained that residency licensure costs vary depending on programs and institutions.
- Dr. Chappel explained that TEACH scholarships typically cover coursework expenses and significantly reduce financial barriers.
- Early Years staff assist educators in navigating scholarship applications and accessing support.
- Governance discussed testing fees and other costs associated with licensure pathways.
- Instructional Assistant Credential Requirements**
- Governance reviewed Durham PreK credential requirements for Instructional Assistants (IAs).
- IAs must either:
 - Hold an associate degree in early childhood or
 - Be actively enrolled in coursework toward the degree

- Leadership explained that Durham PreK requires completion of at least 6 semester hours annually toward credential completion.
 - Durham PreK allows some case-by-case flexibility for staff experiencing extenuating circumstances.
- Differences from NC Pre-K IA Standards**
- Leadership explained that NC Pre-K accepts the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) as a standalone credential for instructional assistants.
 - DPK requires standards beyond the CDA.
 - Leadership reported that maintaining these standards has not created significant operational challenges.
- Instructional Assistant Workforce Data**
- Governance reviewed IA workforce data showing:
 - 71% of instructional assistants currently meet qualification requirements
 - 12 of 41 IAs did not yet meet requirements
 - 11 of those 12 are actively enrolled in coursework
 - Leadership emphasized that TEACH scholarships continue supporting instructional assistants in earning required credentials without significant financial burden.
- Credential Policy Discussion and Governance Feedback**
- Dr. Chappel explained that significant policy changes would require:
 - Review of compensation structures
 - Review of reimbursement rates
 - Revisions to DPK branding and public messaging
 - Development of an implementation timeline potentially beginning in the 2027–2028 school year
 - Ileana Vink asked questions regarding out-of-state licensure pathways and rationale for requiring North Carolina licensure.
 - Joy Turner explained practical challenges related to salary scale placement and verifying experience equivalencies across states.
 - June Shillito strongly advocated maintaining current standards and emphasized the importance of quality, teacher support systems, and maintaining alignment with Durham Public Schools’ salary structures.
 - Beth Messersmith agreed that maintaining high standards is central to Durham PreK’s identity as a model program.
 - Dr. Pitman emphasized the importance of maintaining high-quality standards while advocating for continued county funding support.
 - Governance members generally expressed consensus support for maintaining current credential standards.
 - Cathy Collie-Robinson summarized that Governance appeared to support maintaining the current policy structure while continuing future conversations as needed.

**Update on the
2026 -2027 DPK
Budget/ DPK
Budget
continued-
Teacher Support
Payments**

Teacher Incentive Payment Discussion

- Joy Turner reviewed teacher and instructional assistant incentive payments tied to participation in professional development activities.
 - These payments replaced prior COVID-era end-of-year instructional bonus payments.
 - Teachers could earn either \$500 or \$700 depending on participation tracks completed.
- Leadership reported:
 - 88% of lead teachers earned incentive payments
 - 78% of instructional assistants earned incentive payments
- Total incentive payments exceeded \$35,000 and will be distributed directly to teachers in mid-June.
- Leadership explained that these incentives reflected DPK's continued commitment to supporting professional development despite budget constraints.

County Budget and Funding Discussion

- Dr. Chappel reviewed Durham County budget recommendations affecting DPK.
 - DPK was recommended for approximately \$1.27 million in additional funding.
- Leadership noted appreciation that DPK avoided major cuts during a difficult county budget year.
 - However, leadership explained that the proposed increase still falls short of the funding needed to maintain current service levels.

Potential Seat Reductions

- Leadership discussed projected impacts of budget limitations.
 - Preliminary estimates suggest Durham PreK may need to:
 - Cut approximately 40 fully funded Durham PreK-only seats
 - Reduce support for approximately 40–65 enhanced seats
- Leadership clarified that enhanced seats may still exist through other funding streams but would lose Durham PreK enhancement funding.
- Dr. Chappel noted that this would represent the first period in which Durham PreK may move backward in seat expansion rather than forward.

County Advocacy Discussion

- Leadership encouraged Governance members and partners to advocate with elected officials regarding DPK funding.
- Early Years offered to provide suggested advocacy language and messaging materials for outreach efforts.

Budget Context and Historical Funding Review

- Leadership reviewed prior year funding history and one-time county allocations that previously prevented seat reductions.
- Durham County previously allocated one-time funding totaling approximately \$770,000 to support Durham PreK seats and avoid reductions.

	• Governance reviewed implementation of prior teacher support payment increases. 2026–2027 Funding Projections • Leadership reviewed projected budget needs for the upcoming school year, including: ○ Previously approved reimbursement rate increases ○ Increased wraparound care subsidy rates ○ Teacher salary support increases • Governance discussed proposed state teacher salary increases averaging approximately 8%, with heavier increases concentrated among beginning teachers. Leadership explained that salary increases would create additional financial pressure on provider sites and reimbursement systems.
Action Item	• Motion to approve adjustments to the teacher support payment formula for FY2026 - 2027 ○ Motioned by Kristina Baldrige ○ Seconded by Alex Holod ○ 5 yes votes ○ 0 No Votes ○ 2 Recused for conflict of interest
Program Updates*	• Governance viewed student and classroom video highlights showcasing Durham PreK classrooms and student experiences. • Program staff shared updates regarding the 2026–2027 application cycle. • As of May 2026: ○ 1,000 applications had already been submitted through the online portal ○ This represented a 3% increase compared to the prior year’s opening period • Leadership reported that 1,833 applications were received during the prior school year application cycle. • Enrollment for the current school year is now closed. • Maggie West presented updates regarding apprenticeship celebrations and workforce development accomplishments.
Summary and Adjournments	• In school year 2026 – 2027, we meet the third Thursday of every month from 9:30 – 11:30 am. • There will be a Special Called meeting to discuss the budget on July 16th 9:30am-11:30am • Meeting adjourned at 11:30am Tabitha Blackwell motioned to adjourn and Wykeshia Glass seconded the motion

** Agenda items with handouts outside the slide deck*