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Durham PreK Governance Committee Meeting NOTES

March 19, 2026 (9:30am-11:30am)

In Attendance, listed in random order:

Voting Members: Cathy Collie-Robinson, Jason Rutherford, June Shillito, Dr. Aleksandra Holod, Tabitha Blackwell, Dr. Deborah Pitman, Miranda Marshall, Beth Messersmith, Dr. Iheoma Iruka, Dr. Wykeshia Glass, Ellen Reckhow, Eddith Ogola, Joanne Pierce (representing Claudia Hager), Brittany Gregory

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

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

WHAT	NOTES
Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Introductions and Meeting Protocols● Cathy Collie-Robinson and Dr. Linda Chappel welcomed Governance Members● Attendance reviewed and meeting quorum verified
Meeting Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Welcome New Members● Celebrate Video● Approve January Meeting Notes● DPS Presentation on Whitted School● Enrollment, Seat Allocations across Durham’s public preschool programs● DPK Instructional Assistants’ wages● Policy Review/ Waiver Request● Challenges and Opportunities for 2026-2027 DPK Budget● Program updates● Final Announcements, Adjournment
Introduce New Governance Members	We welcome Ms. Eddith Ogola as a new Parent Representative on the DPK Governance Committee. Ms. Ogola shared in her membership information, <i>“I am honored to serve on the Durham PreK Governance Committee and to support work that shapes early learning opportunities for children and families across our community. My</i>

	<i>commitment to early childhood education is deeply personal as a parent whose autistic child attended Durham PreK. Experiencing the program as a family showed me both how transformative inclusive early education can be and how essential it is that systems are designed to meet the needs of all learners.”</i>
Review and Approval of Notes from the January 2026 meeting*	<p>Governance unanimously approved Governance Committee meeting notes from January 2026</p> <p>Motioned by Ellen Reckhow, Seconded by Jason Rutherford</p>
DPS Presentation on Whitted School	<p>Presented by Durham Public Schools leadership team</p> <p>Overview</p> <p>Durham Public Schools presented an update on the Whitted School:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-service preschool facility serving general education and Exceptional Children (EC) students • Approximately 128–132 total seats <p>Enrollment Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC and NC Pre-K seats are presently full • Durham Pre-K seats remain under-enrolled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Approximately 53 of 80 Durham Pre-K seats filled of the available general education seats <p>Program Highlights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only Pre-K–exclusive facility in Durham Public Schools • Inclusive classrooms and specialized EC services • 5-star licensed facility • Full-day programming with wrap care (before and after school) options • Focus on whole-child development using Creative Curriculum <p>Marketing & Outreach Efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased social media campaigns and newsletter promotion • Distribution of flyers (English/Spanish) • Community partnerships (housing authority, libraries, health centers, faith organizations, universities) • Media coverage and promotional video (award-winning)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events: open houses, tours, job fairs, spring festival <p>Discussion Highlights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for expanded marketing and awareness • Possible concerns about location and safety perceptions • Acknowledge that families often do not select Whitted as a preferred site • Suggestions included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Broader advertising (radio, public service announcements) ○ Promoting the intergenerational programming at the site that was part of the original vision for the building ○ Strengthening community engagement
<p>Enrollment, Seat Allocations across Durham’s public preschool programs in all seat types</p>	<p>Enrollment Update</p> <p>Current Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall enrollment across all seat types and fund sources: 87% (unchanged since December) <p>Trends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durham Pre-K enrollment has increased throughout the school term • Typical late-year trends: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fewer enrollments ○ More withdrawals • Families are less likely to enroll late in school year
<p>Instructional Assistant Wage</p>	<p>Current Wage Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current minimum: \$19.58/hour • City of Durham living wage: \$21.90/hour • County minimum: \$19.22/hour • DPS minimum: \$17.15/hour <p>Workforce Distribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39% earn exactly minimum • 83% earn below living wage • Only 17% meet/exceed \$21.90

	<p>Pros of Increasing Wages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports staff retention • Addresses cost-of-living increases • Aligns with workforce investment priorities <p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial strain on providers • Potential need for increased salary support payments • Risk of reducing available Pre-K seats • Budget uncertainty due to county funding <p>Budget Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program may already face budget shortfalls • Possible need to reduce seats regardless of wage decision • Wage increases directly impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provider contracts ○ Number of funded slots
	<p>Motion to approve 3% annual raise for IA Motioned by Ileana Vick Seconded by Jason Rutherford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes votes 7 No votes 1 abstained 7
<p>Policy Review/ Waiver Request</p>	<p>A program site submitted a request for a waiver for the DPK lead teacher credential requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The request includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A site-specific waiver for a specific lead teacher (personnel item) ○ A broader request for DPK Governance to review the overall lead teacher credential policy • The waiver request involves a personnel matter, requiring a closed session • A decision is needed by the end of April due to a site deadline in early May • Options for consideration: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Form a subcommittee to review the waiver request. Empower the subcommittee to vote for a decision. 2. Hold a full committee closed session in April <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Entire committee reviews both policy and waiver

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Form a subcommittee to review the waiver request. Subcommittee will make a recommendation ○ Schedule a closed session in April for the full DPK Governance Committee to accept recommendation and vote <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The subcommittee will make a recommendation, not a final decision. ▪ The full committee will review the recommendation in a closed meeting • Staff will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Send out volunteer requests to Governance members to create the Subcommittee. ○ Share confidential materials for review by the Subcommittee. ○ Issue a poll to schedule the April closed session. <p>No formal vote was required at this time because the subcommittee is not granted decision-making authority.</p>
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<p>Budget Overview</p>	<p>Current goal: Expand public preschool access to 75% of 4-year-olds (currently at ~42%)</p> <p>FY 2025–26 budget context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No cuts to seats due to temporary ARPA funding • Modest expansion achieved through braided funding model • Maintained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher support payments (salary/benefits) ○ RAPCARE family scholarships ○ Small staff bonuses • <i>Planned reimbursement rate increase was not implemented</i> <p>Key Financial Gaps for 2026 - 2027</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$1.9M additional funds needed to maintain current services (no expansion) • Additional \$650K requested to expand 34–50 seats. • Total budget request: \$2.57M
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	<p>Breakdown of major cost drivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reimbursement rate increase: ~\$260K • WRAP CARE increases: ~\$31.5K • Teacher pay adjustment (5% est.): ~\$30K • End of ARPA funds: ~\$770K gap • Murray-Massenburg classroom funding gap: ~\$825K <p>Budget Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy reliance on one-time funding creates a “transition/crunch year” • Competing county priorities make approval unlikely • Program budgets assume some vacancies to account for normal turnover <p>Program Trends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modest seat growth over recent years (no major expansion). • Growth slowed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ COVID impacts ○ Funding constraints • Preschool seen as a pipeline to strengthen public school enrollment in Durham <p>Advocacy & Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership encouraged greater visibility with county commissioners • Suggested: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attending meetings as a group ○ Leveraging Week of the Young Child for advocacy (April 11 – 17)
<p>Program updates</p>	<p>Applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 652 applications received for the next school year, 2026 – 2027, (as of March 13) • Enrollment will remain open for the 2025 – 2026 current school term through April

	<p>Events & Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative visit in March 2026 at Kids Are Kids Durham PreK site (positive exposure) <p>Workforce Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New pre-apprenticeship track launched • Partnership with Durham Tech • Provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Credentials ○ Access to workforce funding ○ Pathway to employment <p>Key Takeaways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority is maintaining current services, not expansion. • Significant funding gaps due to loss of temporary funds. • Strategic advocacy will be critical for future funding. • Program continues to grow slowly and expand workforce pathways.
<p>Upcoming Events for the DPK Workforce Support Activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Education Job Fair to be hosted at Durham Tech in partnership with the Early Education Apprenticeship program: May 2 • Graduation Luncheon: May 3
<p>Adjournment</p>	<p>Motioned by Ellen Reckhow, Seconded by Dr. Iheoma Iruka</p>
<p>Final Announcement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule for 2026 meetings: 3rd Thursday of every other month (July-May) • Future Meeting Dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April Specially Called Closed meeting will be held on April 30 from 9:30 – 11:00am • 5/21 9:30-11:30am Virtual

** Agenda items with handouts*