

Durham PreK Governance Committee Meeting NOTES

April 30, 2026 (9:30am-10:05am)

In Attendance, listed in random order:

Voting Members: Cathy Collie-Robinson, Brittany Gregory, June Shillito, Tabitha Blackwell, Miranda Marshall, Michelle Lyn, Ellen Reckhow, Kristina Baldrige, Dr. Aleksandra Holod, Brenda Carter, Jason Rutherford

Non-voting Members: Dr. Linda Chappel, Joy Turner, Monnie Griggs, Ileana Vink, Jameka Wells; **Guests:** Tabitha Williamson, Rachel Osborne, Marilyn Agostini, Nita McAdoo, Christan Paylor

| WHAT | NOTES |
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| Welcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Cathy Collie-Robinson and Dr. Linda Chappel welcomed Governance Members |
| Meeting Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Review and vote on the recommendation from the Governance Subcommittee regarding a policy waiver request from a DPK site.● Revisit and re-vote on the Durham Pre-K minimum wage increase for instructional assistants (IAs) for the 2026–2027 school year due to procedural issues during the previous meeting. |
| Subcommittee Recommendations/DPK Background information | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Dr. Linda Chappel explained that the Governance Subcommittee met to thoroughly review the policy waiver request from a current DPK program site. The request was to waive the policy that requires lead teachers to hold a NC Birth to Kindergarten teaching license.● Five governance members participated in the Subcommittee.● The discussion included:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Review of documentation submitted by the site○ Examination of circumstances surrounding the request○ Analysis of how the policy impacts Durham Pre-K lead teachers overall● The issue involved personnel matters, so privacy considerations were emphasized.● Dr. Chappel noted that the BK (Birth-Kindergarten) license requirement for lead teachers has been a foundational Durham Pre-K policy since the program began in 2018. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Governance Subcommittee recommended denial of the waiver request and sought a motion from governance members to accept the recommendation. |
| Vote to Move to Closed Session | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Motion to move to closed session was made by Kristina Baldrige ● Seconded by Ellen Reckhow |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In closed session Governance discussed the recommendations made by the Subcommittee and asked general questions. |
| Vote on Waiver Request | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Governance received motion from the Subcommittee to Deny the Waiver Request ● All in favor voted by use of virtual hands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Majority approval confirmed ○ Motion passed to deny the waiver request |
| Vote to Return to Open Session | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Motion to move to open session was made by Brittany Gregory ● Seconded by Ellen Reckhow |
| Instructional Assistant Minimum Wage Re-Vote | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dr. Chappel reviewed the action taken at the March 2026 Governance meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Governance Committee approved a 3% increase to the Durham Pre-K minimum hourly wage for Instructional Assistants(IA) for the 2026–2027 school term. ○ The increase moved the minimum rate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ From \$19.58/hour ■ To \$20.17/hour ● Ellen Reckhow, raised concerns about increasing wages during a period of financial uncertainty and expressed concern about increasing disparities between Durham Pre-K compensation and DPS compensation structures. ● Linda explained how the Governance Committee previously tied IA minimum wages to the City of Durham living wage. Governance originally chose the City of Durham wage because it was publicly available and it was updated more consistently than Durham County’s data. The current concern arose because the City of Durham living wage increased significantly to \$21.90/hour. ● Ileana Vink noted that Durham County employees receive strong benefits packages and suggested total compensation should include benefits, not just hourly wages and indicated that higher hourly wages in private centers may offset fewer benefits offered by those employers. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kristina Baldrige asked how Governance should respond if DPS does not raise its minimum wage and emphasized the need for clear communication regardless of the final decision. ● Linda, DPS previously received waivers when their compensation structure did not meet Durham Pre-K minimums. These waivers were approved partly because DPS employees receive stronger benefits and therefore have a stronger compensation package. Approximately 39% of current instructional assistants earn the current minimum wage and would be directly impacted by an increase. Many instructional assistants already earn above the minimum. ● Linda clarified that increasing the IA minimum wage would not directly reduce the number of Durham Pre-K seats funded. Sites receive flat-rate support payments. Additional per-child funding increases planned for the coming year may help providers absorb compensation increases. However, providers still must feel financially capable of participating in the program. ● Ileana asked whether county leadership could override recommendations by the Governance Committee. ● Cathy Collie Robinson clarified that Governance functions as a committee and final approvals rest with county leadership. ● Linda shared that Durham County leadership has not historically overturned decisions made by the Governance Committee. However, budget-related decisions could potentially be overridden. ● Ellen proposed maintaining the current IA minimum wage temporarily and revisited later after Durham County and DPS budgets are finalized. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ellen Reckhow motioned to maintain the current IA minimum rate at \$19.58/hour and revisit the issue during a summer meeting after budget decisions are finalized. ● Seconded by Kristina Baldrige ● Motion passed unanimously to maintain the current IA minimum rate at \$19.58/hour and revisit during a called meeting in July 2026, after the new budget is allocated. |
| | <p>Upcoming Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Next scheduled governance meeting: |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ May 21 ● Additional summer meeting anticipated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thursday, July 16- 9:30 – 11:30 ○ To revisit compensation discussions once budgets are finalized. |
| Adjournment | Moted by Jason Rutherford, Seconded by Brittany Gregory |