

Policy Council Minutes

02.04.2021 via Zoom

Voting Members Present: Kim Dykes, Cody Hoferer, Sarah Crowley, Dana Webb-Lewis, Natasha Busch, Miranda Kay, Brandi Galarneau, John Lobato, Keri Kavouras, Abigail Stoll, Vicky Geiber, Sherri Lafollette

Non-Voting Present: Lesa Larson, Tasha Phillips Alaina Ryan, Casy Ziegler, Linda Lorette, David Powell, Scott Gardner

Call to Order – David Powell called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Changes & Additions to the Agenda: Brandi Galarneau motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Sarah Crowley seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda Items: Brandi Galarneau motioned to approve the Consent Agenda Items as presented. Sarah Crowley seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Training: None

Director's Report:

We are in our third year of providing weekend food support for Heartland children. Children are referred by teachers. This year we received grant funding through the Greater Salina Community Foundation and the CHIP Foundation of Salina Regional Medical Center. We currently send fifty bags of food to our children in our programs, including outlying sites each Friday.

This year, Heartland started a Quarantine Support Project for Heartland families and staff who have been financially impacted by the pandemic due to quarantine. We are currently serving 16 families, including outlying sites. This is a fluid number. It is short term based on need. The project helps with household items such as dish soap, laundry detergent, toilet paper, etc. These items cannot be accessed with WIC or SNAP benefits. This project began through donations by Heartland staff who wished to give back.

Old Business: None

New Business:

APM Report:

Lesla attended the Affiliate Program Membership (APM) meeting in January. It is a gathering of all Head Start Programs throughout Kansas. Dana Webb-Lewis is our parent representative this year. These meetings are currently held via Zoom. During the meeting, updates were provided by various organizations. Lesla provided highlights of the following updates:

- Kansas Enrollment Update – Kansas Head Start programs have gone from 75% of full enrollment to 88% in Early Head Start and from 71% to 78% of full enrollment in Head Start. We are slowly filling our slots, but we know we will not be fully enrolled this year due to the pandemic. The federal government has made exceptions for all Head Start programs this year in light of the situation.
- For the first time, two Head Start alumni were elected to the US Senate. They are:

- Senator Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico. Ben Ray grew up in Nambé, a small farming community.
- Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock of Georgia grew up in Kayton Homes public housing in Savannah.

Dana did not receive notice of the meeting in January. Alaina will work with KHSA to make sure Dana receives the invitation for the next meeting.

Early Childhood Request for Proposals

Linda shared Federal grant proposals from:

1. Office of Head Start. The proposal shows the amount of funding we will receive next year, for a total of \$5,278,281.00. Of this funding, \$76,921 is designated for training. This is the same funding we received this year. The funding period for this grant is July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022 and the applications is due April 1, 2021. The grant will be submitted to Policy Council for approval during the March meeting.
2. KSDE, Early Childhood Programs Updates have been received. They provide instructions and requirements to apply for the following non-Head Start grants.
 - a. Kansas Preschool Pilot (KPP) Grant Request for proposals – due February 9, 2021 & Preschool-Aged At-Risk Program Approval Form – due April 2, 2021 - the grants fund integrated preschool programs, which are located in the elementary schools, Hageman building and Heartland serving at-risk 4-year olds.
 - b. Kansas Parents As Teachers (KPAT) Grant - this program is overseen by Heartland Early Education and provides home-visiting services to families of children 0-5 in the USD305 school district. This grant application must be submitted by April 2, 2021.
3. State of Kansas Child Care Partner and Home Visit grant proposals have been received and are due by March 15th.

All above listed grants will be submitted to the Policy Council at the March 4th meeting for approval and will go to the Board of Education for approval in March so they can be submitted by the due dates.

Grant Budget

Linda provided a draft budget for the 2021-22 school year. Linda explained, 85.7% of the budget is staff salaries and benefits. Only 13.4% of the budget covers other expenses, which were listed in the draft budget provided. The budget lists enrollment numbers for the various services provided, including Head Start, Child Care Partnerships, Early Head Start classrooms and home-based services and Parents As Teachers. Total child enrollment is 547.

PAT Quarterly Report

Casy reviewed the Parents As Teachers quarterly report provided in the February handouts. There are currently 47 children enrolled within 48 families, and year-to-date served 74 children within 54 families. The retention rate has been very good in light of the pandemic. It is a testament to the staff, who have managed to retain families through virtual home-visit engagement. The objectives for the year were written prior to the pandemic.

Objective 1: Parent educators will complete no more than 50 home visits each month. Home visitors completed 30 and 33 home visits respectively, so they stayed within that guideline.

Objective 2: Parent educators will use Foundational Curriculum along with interpersonal and communication skills to design and deliver personal visits to families.

Families with two or more stressors in their lives require two home visits per month. This has been a struggle due to the pandemic. Currently 56% of families with 0-1 stressors are receiving two home visits per month and 22% of families with two or more stressors are receiving two home visits per month. Some of the families only attended one home visit during each month.

Objective 3: Provide opportunities for enrolled families to participate in Group Connections.

Due to COVID-19, Group Connections are planned by Heartland staff to ensure the safety of all participants. Most activities have been virtual.

Objective 4: Parent educators will help parents understand their child's development, recognize strengths, and identify areas of concern. It is hard to complete these developmental screens when you do not see the children face-to-face. Currently, 60% of children have received developmental screens.

Heartland's Parents As Teachers program collaborates closely with Early Head Start, Regional PAT Programs, and ICD.

Integrated Preschool Quarterly Report

Casy reported there are currently five Integrated Preschool classrooms in USD 305 elementary schools, there is one classroom located at Heartland and one classroom located at Hageman. Heartland covers the Heusner, Coronado and Stewart areas. Hageman covers most of the Meadowlark area. This is a collaboration between the State PreK Grant and KKCIE placing children with disabilities within the integrated classrooms. Teachers have degrees in special education and there are morning and afternoon sessions at each site. The goal is to have 24 children at each school. Numbers are lower this year due to COVID-19, however Sunset is very full and has one child on the waitlist. This is a great service providing preschool for families in their neighborhood schools.

Background Checks Policy Discussion

Tasha discussed the background check policy. It states that all staff hired to work in a Head Start or Early Head Start facility must receive a satisfactory background check before beginning employment. Heartland is governed by USD 305, so Heartland follows their hiring guidelines. Heartland is also required to follow Head Start Performance Standards, and State of Kansas licensing requirements.

The policy is being reviewed in an effort to keep hiring fair and consistent within all programs in Heartland Early Education. When a person is hired, the applicant is offered their position contingent on receiving a satisfactory background check. Before offering the position, USD 305 runs a name-based background check to give us a general idea if the person is going to pass the State of Kansas background check. An additional four background checks are required, including the Child Abuse & Neglect Registry, FBI Fingerprints, KBI Fingerprints, and the Sex Offender Registry.

Heartland must follow Head Start, USD 305 and licensing regulations in regards to hiring. Salina is the only building falling under licensing regulations because it provides child care for children 0-3. This can cause inconsistencies within the different programs and can make it difficult to move staff around within those programs. For this reason, the wording, "regardless of the county you are being hired for, Heartland will follow the strictest requirement when hiring to maintain consistent hiring practices" is being added to the policy. The rest of the policy remains the same.

Tasha invited Policy Council representatives to offer suggestions to improve the policy or ask questions. John Lobato asked if Heartland is required to periodically complete background checks for existing employees. Tasha verified that background checks are completed every five years for all existing employees.

CDE129 Coaching Plan

Lesa presented new Policy CDE129 Coaching Plan to Policy Council for approval.

The policy states, "Heartland Early Education provides research-based, coordinated coaching opportunities to all education staff. The focus of coaching is to improve school readiness outcomes for all children. Heartland aligns coaching goals with assessment data, program goals, school-readiness goals, and curriculum fidelity. Coaching staff have a strong understanding of developmentally appropriate teaching practices, adult learning, and the use of assessment data to drive coaching strategies aligned with program performance goals." The policy aligns with Head Start performance Standard 1302.92c.

The coaching plan has been established to ensure teachers are always improving. Heartland's coach, Rhonda Smith is currently coaching eight staff; five lead teachers and three teacher assistants. The teacher identifies areas they want to improve and Rhonda helps develop a goal with the teacher. She works through observations and coaching to help the teacher achieve the goal.

Kim Dykes asked if staff are required to receive coaching. Lesa verified coaching is voluntary. If a teacher is struggling to meet standards in certain areas, the coach will approach the teacher and offer assistance. Coaching is not a punishment or requirement. Coaching is meant to be positive and the coach is the teacher's cheerleader.

Brandi Galarneau motioned to approve CDE129 Coaching Plan as submitted. Cody Hoferer seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Parent/Community Member Reports:

Brandi Galarneau reported her son has begun crawling and they are baby-proofing their home now that he is mobile.

Natasha Busch reported she will be graduating from nursing school in a few months and secured a job at Salina Regional Medical Center today. Also, the New Community Church on Rush St. in Salina provides free saliva COVID tests. You will need to sign up online and results are usually available within 2 days. She has had children in her household test positive, even though they were asymptomatic. She urged everyone to be tested if they have been exposed.

Keri Kavouras urged Policy Council members to continue to be tested for COVID-19 if they are having symptoms so the medical community can get a better idea of herd immunity, prevention, etc.

Brandi Galarneau motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:50 p.m. Kim Dykes seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Alaina Ryan, Administrative Assistant and Sarah Crowley, Policy Council Secretary