

Policy Council Meeting
1-25-22
Submitted by: Kaiya West & Kerry Mehling

Members Present: Laura Morehead, Kaiya West, Kathrine Macintosh, Kristina Stokes, Haylie Wallingford, Ana Rodriguez, Lacey James, Mackenzie Schreiber

Staff Present: Kerry Mehling, Lauren Starke, Teena Branson

Board Members Present: No liaison present

Policy Council Meeting called to order by Chairperson, Laura Morehead, at 6:10 pm. New member introductions were made. Members reviewed the minutes from the November meeting. **Kathrine moved to approve the November minutes. Mackenzie seconded the motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.**

Director's Report:

All members received a copy of the Director's report. Kerry Mehling discussed the report. Main items included a decrease in Home Base enrollment, and recruitment efforts are being organized to reach out to more families. Center-based openings in the area will be filled with waitlisted students within the month. The struggle to fill Bridgeport seats and staff positions continues to be ongoing. Possible reasons for this were discussed, but no clear rationale was identified. Recent illnesses have had major impacts on several locations resulting in decreased attendance and closures due to lack of staff. Looking ahead, family advocates will begin home visits for the second semester, and many family engagement events are scheduled for the spring months.

The Head Start Continuation grant was submitted on 12-17-21. The process continues as program staff clarify or answer questions that might be asked by the Regional Office as they complete the review of the grant submission. The waiver for partnership schools to continue serving 20 students a session was denied and the students served will need to drop to 17 beginning next school year in double session classrooms. Program administration has begun these conversations with the partnerships to begin planning for the 2022-2023 school year enrollment.

EHS/HS is holding a professional development training on January 28. Two speakers will present on family engagement and working with families and children who experience trauma.

Currently, the COVID-19 Vaccination & Masking mandate is on hold. As of January 1, 2022, following a decision by the United States District Court for the Western District of Louisiana, implementation and enforcement of the vaccine and masking requirements released for Head Start Programs is preliminarily enjoined. Grant recipients in 24 states, including Nebraska, are not required to comply with the IFC pending future developments in the litigation. The ESU13 Head Start Program continues to follow the agency protocol for masking and closure determination if exposures or positive COVID tests occur in our sites. The protocol can be found on the ESU13 website.

Finance Report:

All members received a copy of the Finance Report. Lauren Starke, Head Start Fiscal Officer and Kerry Mehling presented the reports. Reports presented included Head Start (HS) Operating, Early Head Start (EHS) Operating, HS Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA), EHS T/TA, credit card expenditures, and COVID funding for November and December 2021 due to no meeting being held in December. Reports outline current month expenditures in comparison to previous month expenditures where applicable, the budget year-to-date, and the %

of the budget year expended. Kerry also explained the Administrative percentage requirements and costs and reminded members that this number cannot exceed 15% at any given time.

Several purchases will be made prior to the end of the fiscal year. It is expected that there will be surplus funds available, so the program is working with classrooms to establish “wish lists” and plan for program needs. There is also expected to be surplus TTA funds due to lack of travel as a result of continued COVID restrictions. These funds will be used to help current staff with renewing certifications or continuing education tuition payments.

The program submitted a carry-over request for COVID-1 funds for the amount of \$68,966.03. An official response for the request has not yet been received from the Regional Office.

The ESU13 audit was completed in November 2021. Both reports for EHS and HS were classified as “Unmodified Opinion” with no need for revisions or changes. **Kristina moved to approve the finance report. Lacey seconded the motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.**

Board Report:

A brief report was given for the December and January Board of Education Meetings. In December, changes were approved to the district boundaries for ESU13 due to results of the 2020 Census of Population data. Dr. Laura Barrett was approved as the permanent Administrator of ESU13. The Head Start Program Continuation grant was approved for submission and calendar changes were approved for the Panhandle Beginnings and Valts student calendars.

In January, Board member officers were approved with no changes from the previous year. The Title 1C Education Program presented to the board members information about the number of school districts served, counties and students served, eligibility, qualifying work, and services provided. Dr. Laura Barrett’s contract was approved for July 1, 2022-June 30, 2024. Lastly, the board approved the HVAC installation at the Early Learning Center with Big Mac HVAC, LLC in the amount of \$10,968.00. This project has been an ongoing conversation with the Policy Council over the past several months to be completed with COVID funding.

New Business:

Accreditation Interview Opportunity:

ESU#13 will be participating in the accreditation process on March 22, 2022. Accreditation allows representatives from each department within the agency to highlight all of the amazing things that are happening throughout the programs and to identify areas where growth or improvement could be beneficial. We are looking for a few parents who might be willing to participate in this process. The interview would take place in a group setting via Zoom on March 22nd. Time is yet to be determined. Parents are welcome to also Zoom from their own location or come to ESU13 and sit with a group. If any Policy Council members would like to have this opportunity to contribute regarding the Head Start Program, please let Kerry know right away as we are looking to fill these parent slots for the interview.

Kristina Stokes and Kathrine Macintosh volunteered depending on when the interview is scheduled.

Planning & Monitoring/Communication & Record Keeping Written Plans: Members received the written plans in their packets. Kerry Mehling discussed the plans including policies MS01-MS05 and MS07-MS09. Core topics include program planning, communications with the general community, communication with families, communication with governing body and policy groups, communication amongst staff, record-keeping systems, reporting systems, program self-assessment and monitoring.

The communication plans sparked discussion on the Ready-for-K messaging system currently used. The system seems to have made some changes in messaging. Certain age group notifications are not being sent as frequently as other age groups. Teena Branson will investigate what the cause of the change is. Overall, PC parents are pleased with Ready-for-K for family engagement compared to other electronic engagement systems.

Haylie moved to approve the Planning & Monitoring/Communication & Record Keeping Written Plans. Kristina seconded the motion. Motion approved by roll call vote.

ERSEA Written Plans and Eligibility Training & General Procedures: Members received the written plans in their packets. Teena Branson discussed the written plans and presented the eligibility guidelines and general procedures that are followed by the Head Start Program. Core topics included determining community strengths, needs and resources; community assessment; determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility; eligibility verification; recruitment of children; orientation for new enrollees; selection and enrollment of children; enrollment criteria; change in enrollment status; returning children; attendance, absenteeism, and withdrawal of children; prohibition on suspension and expulsion of children; intake and record keeping systems. She addressed questions regarding disenrollment based on new children with greater needs. Head Start strives to never disenroll any student currently being served. New qualifying children are placed on a waitlist if all seats are currently filled. Members briefly brainstormed ideas for additional recruitment opportunities. **Kathrine moved to approve the ERSEA Written Plans. Haylie seconded the motion. Motion approved by roll call vote.**

ERSEA Selection Criteria 2022-2023: Teena Branson presented the proposed selection criteria for the 2022-2023 school year. She explained the point process on the application as a means to make the process quantifiable. She also clarified why certain information on the application is able to be revised based on change in need and circumstances. The need for confidentiality regarding selection criteria was stressed to all members.

Mackenzie moved to approve the ERSEA Selection Criteria 2022-2023. Haylie seconded the motion. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Review of 2020-2021 Program Information Report (PIR): All members received a snapshot summary report of the PIR that was submitted by ESU13 Head Start and Early Head Start Programs in August 2021 in their packets. Kerry highlighted specific items from the snapshot including health services, special services, education, and family services. Members are able to access the full report if they want. The Policy Council praised Head Start for all of the different support provided for families in our communities.

Approval of Fiscal Officer Candidate: Lauren Starke began in the position of Fiscal Officer on 1-17-22. She has a Bachelor of Science in Finance & Accounting from the University of Wyoming and is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). Previous experience includes: Accountant at Scottsbluff firm from 2020-2021, Accountant in Denver from 2018-2020, and serving as a Tax Accountant while attending college from 2015-2017. The ESU13 Board of Education and Region 7 have approved Lauren in this key position. **Kristina moved to approve Lauren Starke as the Fiscal Officer. Haylie seconded the motion. Motion approved by roll call vote.**

New Hires:

Victoria Bogus – Start date 1-13-22 – Assistant Teacher @ ELC. Full-time, full year position.

Anahi Garcia – Start date 1-17-22 – Floater/Assistant Teacher at ELC. Full-time, full year position.

Jollisa Gonzalez – Start date 1-13-22 – Assistant Teacher @ CDC. Full-time, full year position.

Brandi Graves – Start date 1-17-22 – Floater/Assistant Teacher @ CDC – 30 hours per week/full-year positions.

Kathrine moved to approve the New Staff Hires. Kristina seconded the motion. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Employment Openings were passed around for members to review. Openings included:

Early Childhood Teacher – Bridgeport Head Start – Full time, 10 month position.

Early Childhood Certificated Teacher – 2022-2023 School year – Full time, 10 month position.

Maintenance/Facilities Tech – ESU13 Administration – Full time, full year position.

Early Development Network Services Coordinator – 240 day contract.

ASD Behavior Specialist 2022-2023 school year – 185-190 day contract.

Professional Learning Coordinator – 185-210 day contract.

Speech/Language Pathologist 22-23 school year. Full-time position.

Special Education Retention Program Project Manager – 200 day contract.

Title 1C Education Service Provider – full time.

Substitute Para Educators – Meridian School.

Substitute VALTS Facilitator Sidney – On-call, as needed.

Job descriptions including credential requirements can be found at www.esu13.org (Employment Opportunities).

Center Reports:

ELC - Laura Morehead presented the report. Currently serving 18 students; attendance has been low due to illness but recently improving; family engagement activity was painting snowman blocks and making Christmas ornaments; center concerns are chipped paint in classrooms and lacking storage; struggling to get InKind documents back; community project is a food drive

Home Base - Kathrine Macintosh presented the report. Attendance has been low, families have been sick; personnel changes for Home Base are coming in February; family meetings were held in January and one is scheduled for February; community project is a food drive

Mitchell - Kaiya West presented the report. Good attendance, both sessions are full with 20 students; December Mom and Dad day activities were done, they made gingerbread houses and mini table tennis kits; community project is Cash for Cans food drive

Bayard - Lacey James presented the report. Currently at 65% attendance with one new student. Parent activity was decorating with Dad; parent meeting is scheduled for February; center projects are planned for the bathrooms; families are reading alot of books.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.