

Heartland Early Education -- Policy Council Minutes --- 02.01.2024

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: Chelsea Luffman, Brittanie Most, Tricia Fry, Kelly Mobray, Shelly Peters, Sarah Crowley, Jennifer Svaty & Jenny Reyes.

NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: Udana Arceo, Scott Gardner, Lesa Larson, Shanna Rector, Jasmine Corral & Linda Lorette. Guest: Joyce Adams, parent

MEMBERS ABSENT: Stephanie Armer, Christina Helvey, Dawne Letorneau, Jacque Peterman, Macy Young.

CALL TO ORDER: Udana Arceo called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

CHANGES AND ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA: There were no changes or additions to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS: Shelly Peters motioned to approve the Consent Agenda. Brittanie Most seconded the motion; motion passed.

TRAINING: Michelle Hellmuth (Education Coordinator) focused on Active Supervision At-A-Glance, a document that provides guidance to classroom staff but is also good information for home environments. Guidelines include:

- Set Up the Environment so staff can supervise children and be accessible at all times. When activities are grouped together and furniture is at waist height or shorter, adults must always be able to see and hear children. Small spaces should be clutter free and big spaces set up so children have a clear play space that staff can observe.
- Staff must position themselves to prevent children from harm. They can place themselves so they can see and hear all of the children in their care and make sure there are clear paths to where children are playing, sleeping and eating. Staff will stay close to children who may need additional support.
- Scan and Count is an essential strategy. Staff must always account for the children in their care. They regularly scan the entire environment to know where everyone is and what they are doing. They count the children frequently; this is especially important during transitions, when children are moving from one location to another.
- Listening for specific sounds or the absence of them may signify reason for concern. Staff who are listening closely to children can immediately identify signs of potential danger. Classrooms are encouraged to implement additional strategies to keep children safe. For example, bells added to doors to help alert staff when a child leaves or enters the room is considered a safety measure.
- Anticipate Children's Behavior. Staff use what they know about each child individual interests and skills to predict what he/she will do. They create challenges that children are ready for and support them in succeeding but also recognize when children might wander, get upset, or take a dangerous risk. Information from the daily health check (e.g., illness, allergies, lack of sleep, or food, etc.) informs staffs observations and helps them anticipate children's behavior. Staff who know what to expect are better able to protect children from harm.
- Engage and Redirect. Staff use what they know about each child's individual needs and development to offer support. Staff wait until children are unable to solve problems on their own to get involved. They may offer different levels of assistance or redirection depending on each individual child's needs.

Jenny Reyes asked, "What do you do if there is a concern in the classroom regarding a specific student?" Michelle said, "We would first talk to the parent/guardian and if necessary, schedule a meeting to further discuss how we can help the student be successful."

Udana Arceo asked, *“How often do you re-train and keep active supervision on the forefront?”* Michelle responded with, *“This information is reviewed at the beginning of the year for Head Start staff and is generally a topic at monthly staff meetings. EHS has monthly meetings where information like this is reviewed also.”*

Brittanie Most added, *“As a parent it’s nice to know that teachers and assistants receive this kind of training and also listen to what we have to say.”*

DIRECTOR UPDATE: There is no update regarding Federal Review. Lesa is hoping to receive the final letter by the end of February. Once Lesa receives the final letter, she will share it with Policy Council members.

OLD BUSINESS:

Under Enrollment status: Lesa explained Heartland’s numbers are still low. In the last 10 days, there have been several meetings on this topic. We are six months into our year-long Under Enrollment plan (ends July 15, 2024). There are several things we are working on:

- Lesa has been meeting with Linda and Tasha (HR) to propose a wage increase for specific groups. Shanna has been involved in those discussions and we are hoping the information will be presented to the district’s executive team soon. Shanna Rector has helped tremendously during these discussions. We are also working on a more informative plan to let staff know Heartland pays college tuition for employees working in the classroom.
- We are moving forward with plans to serve children and families who qualify for Head Start in the elementary preschool classrooms.
- We have been meeting with Heartland staff interested in staff recruitment and staff retention. Heartland will have a “recruitment table” at Central High School and is planning to meet with South High School to do something similar. Lesa handed out a recruitment card encouraging PC members to pass them out to someone they know who might be interested in working at Heartland.

Shanna said, *“We are fortunate to have a school district who supports our early childhood programs. We are opening doors for all families.”*

Brittanie added, *“I am very happy wages are being talked about. I have friends/acquaintances that are interested in Heartland’s open positions but don’t want to move forward due to the pay rate. I believe this is a great starting point for Heartland.”*

Joyce Adams, guest, asked for clarification about paying for college classes. She also wondered if we would hire employees to work part time. Lesa shared that Head Start has become more flexible and part-time work is a new consideration we are willing to work with.

Chelsea Luffman asked, *“Is there a pay-back policy for the free tuition? For example, we pay your college tuition but you have to work with Heartland for one or more years?”* “Not currently, but we have been talking about this” said Lesa.

In-Kind follow-up: Linda stated it is required to generate federal in-kind through services that are not paid for but if necessary, we would pay for them. She also knows that parents are very interested in this topic and Linda wanted to help parents be aware of In-Kind and know how to document hours. Linda then presented the In-Kind Information brochure and Record Log and further explained that parent involvement provides a service to benefit the program and IS allowable as In-Kind. Parent involvement that primarily benefits the parent or child is NOT allowable as an In-Kind match.

Udana Arceo asked, “*The In-Kind goes towards matching funds?*” “*That is correct.*” said Linda.

Brittanie added, “*A lot of parents are not aware of the opportunity there is regarding In-Kind. Putting a flyer in a child’s backpack to take home or direct the parents/guardians to someone who will be able to further assist will be very helpful.*”

Budget Committee update: Linda presented the *Kansas Early Head Start 2024-2025 Grant Applications*.

- Home Visitation budget includes staff salaries, travel, car expenses and phones.
- Child Care Partnership budget includes child care, staff salaries, diapers and meals.
- Increases for both are due to salary. Both grants are due in March.

NEW BUSINESS:

KEHS Home Visitation grant- The 2024-2025 Home Visitation grant application is for funding in the total amount of \$200,000. Brittanie Most motioned to approve the 24-25 Kansas Early Head Start Home Visitation Grant Application, Jenny Reyes seconded the motion; motion passed.

KEHS Child Care Partnership grant- The 2024-2025 Child Care Partnership grant application is for funding in the total amount \$697,000. Brittanie Most motioned to approve the 24-25 Kansas Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Grant Application, Chelsea Luffman seconded the motion; motion passed.

APM (Affiliate Program Membership) Meeting update. The Kansas Head Start Program meetings are always in Salina. Next year in 2025, will be the 60th anniversary of Head Start.

New Policy: CHS 143 Health and Safety Incident Reporting- When health and safety incidents occur, Head Start recipients are required to report to the Office of Head Start (OHS) Regional Office immediately or as soon as practicable, and no later than seven calendar days following the incident. Brittanie Most motioned to approve the new policy CHS 143 Health and Safety Incident Reporting, Sarah Crowley seconded the motion; motion passed.

PARENT AND COMMUNITY REPORTS:

- Chelsea Luffman expressed some concerns regarding Mental Health services in Enterprise. Lesa will look into it.
- Jennifer Svaty stated that KKCIE does Autism screening. If anyone has further questions or concerns, contact her.
- Shanna Rector passed out binders regarding the first Conscious Discipline training module presented to the community during 1st semester.
- Jennifer Svaty motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:24pm, Shelly Peters seconded the motion; motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by Jasmine Corral, Administrative Assistant