

Arkansas Early Childhood Commission (AECC) Meeting

July 18, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Elizabeth Waldrum (Chair), Deborah (Debbie) Mays, Tyra Greenwood, Leah Henderson, Senator Jane English, Barbie Baxter

Members Absent: Senator David Wallace, Tiffany Sharp, Rep. Denise Garner

I. Call to Order

Elizabeth Waldrum called the AECC Commissioner's Meeting to order July 18, 2023, at 10:20 a.m. Elizabeth Waldrum read the AECC's mission statement.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Debbie Mays to approve the April 18, 2023 meeting minutes. Senator Jane English seconded it. The motion carried. The meeting minutes were approved.

III. Old Business

- DCCECE Commission Report: Tonya Williams welcomed new Commissioners and overviewed the Commission Report.
- HSSCO/AHSA Updates: Randy Morris presented the following HSSCO/AHSA updates in Barbie Baxter's absence:
 - Recruitment and Retention of Quality Teaching Staff-Across the state Head Start programs are struggling with the retention of their current qualified teaching staff and the recruitment of qualified new employees. Many programs have established partnership agreements with local colleges in order to recruit potential early childhood education graduates. Retention of current staff is also an on-going struggle among programs; many programs have implemented staff wellness programs to support their current employees and made every effort to offer competitive salaries that are within their current budgets for employees.
 - Meeting Funded Enrollment-Directors have reported that they are still struggling to meet their funded enrollment for the Office of Head Start. Programs are continually working on and seeking new methods for recruitment of income eligible children to serve. A few programs have reported positive results with incorporating electronic billboards, and recruitment flyer book inserts at their local libraries. Recruitment efforts are continuous and on-going for all programs.
 - Conversions/Change in Scope Requests-A few programs are awaiting official decisions from the Office of Head Start on conversion/change in scope requests. Converting funded enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start based on the needs of the communities in which they serve. Central Arkansas Development Council Early Head Start/Head Start were just approved for conversion/change in scope on May 31, 2023. The funded enrollment slots went from serving 486 Head Start children to serving 390; and from serving 24 Early Head Start children to serving 72. There is an increase for Early Head Start services in the CADC service area and this approval will help meet the needs in those four counties.

- **Arkansas Head Start Association Institute Update:**
The Arkansas Head Start Association Institute “Honoring the Past, Treasuring the Present, and Shaping the Future” was held June 6-9, 2023 at the Arlington Resort Hotel & Spa in Hot Springs. The training institute was very successful with a total of 281 registered participants/trainees and 97 presenters, keynote speakers, and exhibitors for a total of 378 attendees. The pre-institute also included an Opioid and Substance Misuse Summit that took place on June 6, 2023 that was very educational and informative for all the trainees. At one of the general sessions there was a special keynote speaker by the name of Coy Bowles. Mr. Bowles is a member of the 3 Time Grammy Award Winning Zac Brown Band. Not only is Mr. Bowles an accomplished musical artist and songwriter, he is also an amazing Children's Book Author. Coy Bowles has written 5 children's books: Amy Giggles: Laugh Out Loud, Will Powers: Where There's A Will. There's A Way, When You're Feeling Sick, Behind the Little Red Door, Behind The Little Red Door: Can You Touch A Color?

- **ARPA Updates/Stabilization Grant:** Paige Cox provided the following updates:
 - Numbers for the Supply and Expansion grants have increased.
 - We’ve served over 9,000 additional children (infants, toddlers and school agers), in 50 counties with ARPA funds.
 - We received \$258M. We spent approximately \$254M. The final \$4M will be spent before the October 17, 2023 commission meeting.
- **TEACH Scholarship Program Update:** Paul Lazenby provided the following updates:
 - Enrolled 400th recipient in the TEACH Program for Fall 23
 - Serving 49% first generation college students
 - 67% white, 33% non-white
 - One-third work with children 3 and under
 - Average age; 34
 - Beginning avg. wage: \$12.75/hour; Ending avg. wage: \$13.40/hour
 - New Non-degree Paths: Non-degree Staff Qualification, Early Childhood Licensure, CTE (High School) CDA for Credit
 - Step of to Wage\$ continues to operate due to ARPA Funds; As end of June 2023, over \$6.6M has been paid out
 - Apprenticeship Pilot Program with start this Fall; mentoring component will be added

IV. New Business

- **LEARNS:** Tonya Williams provided the following updates:
 - Had introductory inaugural meeting with the Early LEARNS Workgroup two weeks ago; the next meeting will be on July 20, 2023
 - Keeler Bryson will send out the link to the LEARNS website (<https://learns.ade.arkansas.gov/>); everything related to LEARNS is on this site (workgroups, members, etc)
 - There are roughly 17 members on the Early LEARNS Workgroup. Tonya Williams, Dawn Jeffrey and Lori Bridges are coaches/co-facilitators. Jackie Govan (from Head Start), Danita Pitts (from Part B), and Tracy Turner (from Part C) are also support staff to the Early LEARNS Workgroup.

- Child Care Appeal Review Applications:

- Senator Jane English made a motion to approve the two Child Care Appeal Review Applications. Debbie Mays seconded it. The motion carried. The applications were approved.

V. Next Meeting

- The next meeting will be held in-person/virtually October 17, 2023.

VI. Adjournment

- Senator Jane English made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Tyra Greenwood. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 11:38 a.m.