July Policy Council Meeting Minutes

NRCA Head Start Policy Council
7/22/2026 5:30 PMEDT
@ Virtual

Attendance

Present:
Members: Jennifer Brown, Roni Fitch, Sarah Huff, Beth Rodriguez, Annie Shaba, Stephanie Smith, Scott Sowder, Debra Taylor

Absent:
Members: Alisha Persinger, Nick Popczun, Sarah Popczun, Paige Walters, Vonetta Williams

I. Call To Order

Roni opened the meeting & introduced Beth to the group.

II. Agenda Review

III. Announcements - Introducing New Staff

Beth gave a brief introduction about herself. Then had the attendees introduce themselves to the group.

IV. Minutes from Last Meeting

Amended Members Present on April PC Minutes to include Jennifer Brown and Kristy Castanon.
Motion to approve minutes with amendment was given by Annie and Jennifer seconded the motion.

PC April Minutes.pdf

V. Finance

Sarah updated Policy Council that finance was still trying to close out the program year so she didn't have any numbers at this time. She did mention that the Parent Funds were overdrawn by a couple of centers. Sarah made suggestion to increase the cost per child for 2026-2027 to $7 per child vs. the $5 per child last year.
Jennifer made motion to approve. Annie seconded the motion.

VI. Director of Early Childhood/Family Services Report

Roni stated that the Nutrition Grant that was applied for in Oct 2025 was not funded for the program. They have resubmitted the Grant again for the next round of approvals. This grant would help with upgrades to the food service areas, the cooking with families and children as part of the curriculum.
MOU's are in progress. She has met with schools to get this completed.
We split one of the Mixed Delivery spots into two Head Start wrap around spots in order to provide before and after care at the Fairlawn Campus.
Single point of entry recruitment is going well, we are almost at full enrollment.
We currently have 16 Over Income students -12 from last year (rechecking eligibility to see if those family's income has changed), 4 for this year.
Currently working on the Self Assessment & Annual Report - will have them ready for the next meeting.

Hiring new staff is going well, should be fully staffed this year although there will be a short timeline for getting background checks back.
Start Dates (at request of Scott) - Aug 17 ELC, Aug 24 Head Start with exception of Blacksburg which will start Aug 27. We have extended the school day this year by 15 minutes to help with possible makeup snow days.

VII. New Business

NRCA Board Updates:
Roni gave an update from the Last Board meeting started with a Housing presentation, She talked about the ACB changes and explained the policy to the members present.
Self Assessment Updates:
As part of the Self Assessment, Roni met with members of the committee to get ideas and questions regarding:
1-Parent Engagement:
What ideas or suggestions do you have for increasing family participation in Head Start parent engagement events? Also, what are the best ways for our program to share positive parenting information and resources with families? Please consider potential topics, event formats, communication methods, and community partnerships that could help families feel more connected, informed, and supported.
2-Child Outcomes:
Background: Child Outcomes are low in literacy and math; we experienced almost 22 days of inclement weather interruption. Staff were given an additional 4 days of leave we had to work into the school year and had staff turnover in some classrooms.
What types of support, resources, or professional development do you think would help teachers improve the quality of their educational activities and foster more positive, meaningful interactions with children throughout the day?
3-Staff Turnover:
Staff turnover can impact the consistency and quality of services provided to children and families. What ideas do you have for improving staff recruitment and retention throughout the school year? Consider ways to support new employees, recognize and retain current staff, strengthen workplace culture, and address challenges that may contribute to staff turnover and affect the consistency of services for children and families.
Parents heard a synopsis of the self assessment process, data gathered and were given an opportunity to provide feedback on the three different questions.
The policy council suggested the following:
1- Roni asked for ideas to increase participation in Parent Engagement Activities: -tasks to do together (painting, coloring), - movie night; Time and Day is a factor that plays in participation for parents - was suggested to get parent input on dates; Should food be included? Yes/No - Scott said sometimes yes depending on the time, definitely for kids, maybe parents.
2- As far as Outcomes - Staffing impacted a lot of the outcomes with shortages, PTO, etc. - Inkind will be going back to weekly - was suggested to have more reading and hands on activities - scavenger hunts, bring things from home. - Newsletters with updates for the week so parents know what to expect that week (clothing/shoes to wear for activities). - Supposed to be fun aspect, enjoy learning, helping with attendance. Gives parents an opportunity to ask questions if they don't understand & support what is going on in the classroom at home.
Staff Turnover - suggested having basic stay surveys & exit surveys asking what can be done to keep them or why they left agency. When they are anonymous you get more responses. We have 63 of the 70 staff who have stayed.

VIII. Adjournment of the Meeting - Schedule August Meeting

It was decided that August 17 @5:30 would be the next meeting virtually. Roni mentioned this would be right before the Board meeting so Policy Council items can be reviewed by them.
Scott adjourned the meeting at 6:30 - Annie seconded and all members approved.