



Policy Council Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 26, 2025, 5:30pm
SMC – 58900 Cherry Grove Rd, Dowagiac, MI 49047

1. Welcome and Introductions

Policy Council Members in attendance: Amelia Espinosa (Bangor), Kahli Lorenz (Cass PC Chair), Sarah Newman (Decatur), Megan Mallory (Mattawan), Khyra Kimble (Millburg), Kristen Survoy (New Buffalo), Samantha Litaker (SMC), Sydney Whittker (Watervliet Treasurer), Mellody Buzalski (Cass GSC), Sherry Bennett (VB GSC), Jen Moody (Berrien GSC)

Policy Council Members voting via email: Mary-alice Wirick (Niles PC Chair)

Guests in attendance: Chanda Hillman CEO; Laura Curtis CFO; Maureen Ovington Development Director; Gloria Walter Family Services Director; Stacey Spencer ERSEA Manager; Rut Vargas Enrollment and Recruitment Assistant; Patti Masters EHS Education Director; Mandy Orlando HS Education Director; Melanie Bullock Community Inclusion Manager; Ivette Bucio Communications and Engagement Coordinator; Laura Emborsky Classroom Program Director; Robin Neeb Nutrition Manager; Sarah Savage Family Advocate; Crystal Hayes Family Advocate; Trent Lamonds Family Advocate; Trecia Davis Family Advocate; Eve Alcaraz Family Advocate; Ana Moreno Family Advocate; Amanda Raymond Family Advocate; Laura Brugh Family Advocate; Benny Russell Family Advocate; Jodi Curran Family Advocate; Juanita Carretero Intern

Quorum was met

Kahli called meeting to order at 5:36pm

2. * Approve Minutes – January Meeting
Samantha motioned; Amelia seconded. Motion carried.
3. * Directors Report – January/February
Increased enrollment – making progress – attendance dipped in February due to illnesses
 - a. HR Dashboard
 - i. HR making progress in getting people hired. We are making note on how many applicants there are per vacancy
 - b. Family Services Report
 - i. FAs working hard – they worked 82 hours to help prevent closures in classrooms
 - ii. Over 100 applications for the 2025-2026 school year
 - iii. 28 events between March 14 – May 10 toward recruiting efforts
 - c. Development Report
 - i. We are seeing some donations through the webpage
 - ii. Waiting to hear from Corewell
 - iii. DeGroot Family Foundation grant of \$52,500 towards tuition-based slots
 - iv. Kahli and Sydney are going to talk to restaurants in the area for a Give Back Night, grocery store round ups and giving pumps at gas stations
 - d. Mandy
 - i. Scores look good

- ii. 18% of children with IEP & IFSPs. Progress in language and literacy has been made with an 11% increase.
 - e. Patti
 - i. PQA is right on track – this score is on the Great Start to Quality website showcasing our quality of childcare
Samantha motioned; Mellody seconded. Motion carried.
- 4. * 306.3 EHS-HS Transition Policy
There is a pre app request form to assess and put feedback to say whether a child is ready to transition. This needs to be completed by teachers and parents have final say.
Samantha motioned; Amelia seconded. Motion carried.
- 5. * Transition Policy 533.2
Talking points were added to ensure that a conversation starts earlier so parents know how their child is doing
Samantha motioned; Amelia seconded. Motion carried.
- 6. * Apprenticeship and CDA Policy 531.2
Program offers classes at SMC, offering 12 credit hours for their degree. Students can work while in school and will get a laptop they can keep. This is a partnership with Michigan Works.
Samantha motioned; Amelia seconded. Motion carried.
- 7. * Finance Report – January/February
 - a. January 100% of the year completed
 - b. February we are 92% of the year remaining
 - c. In-Kind – February is not reported yet
Samantha motioned; Jen seconded. Motion carried.
- 8. * SF425
Semi-annual Report: including annual cash receipts, disbursements, expenditures, non-federal share, admin costs, CACFP
- 9. * SF428
Tangible Personal Property Report: includes equipment purchased for over \$5,000
- 10. * SF429
Real Property Status Report: including electric, gas, insurance, percentage of NFS in the property
Samantha motioned; Sherry seconded. Motion carried.
- 11. * 401k Contribution
Allocated by eligible compensation. This year 5% will be contributed to staff and contribution will be made whether or not staff contributes to the account
Samantha motioned; Jen seconded. Motion carried.
- 12. TPA update
Mercer Advisor recommended Transamerica which will save us \$40,000 annually. We will meet with Koshner and Company once more to get a final approval.
- 13. * Governance Screener
We want more active parent committees – we will begin putting out a calendar of monthly dates for each center in August
Mellody motioned; Jen seconded. Motion carried.
- 14. Organizational Chart

Reframed job description to allow us to save money from the Operations Director position loss. Cindy will be the licensing expert; Cindy/Marybeth/Patti/Mandy education compliance; Kevin transportation, maintenance and facilities; Marbeth IT; and Mandy/Patti conscious discipline and coaching.

- Chief Operations Officer: This position provides strategic leadership, training and direction for school support operations including human resources, facilities, volunteerism and transportation, and collaboration with agency leadership to ensure effective resource stewardship and compliance with all local, state and federal employment laws, workplace safety requirements, transportation safety laws, Michigan childcare licensing rules and Head Start Performance Standards. The Chief Operations Officer is an integral member of agency leadership, reports directly to the CEO, and provides direct supervision and support for the Human Resources Director, Transportation Manager, Community Inclusion Manager and Facilities staff.
- Health and Mental Health Services Director: This position is primarily responsible for agency-wide health and safety standards in compliance with all state and federal requirements for workplace safety, childcare licensing, medical records administration, nutrition and medication requirements and Head Start Performance Standards. Duties include leadership, planning and direction for childcare licensing, nutrition, disability services, health records administration and mental health support services for employees and program participants. The Health and Mental Health Director is an integral member of agency leadership, reports directly to CEO, chairs the Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee, leads the multi-disciplinary team to regularly assess and address classroom health and safety concerns, and provides direct supervision and support for the Mental Health and Disabilities Manager, the Nutrition Manager, and Health Services staff.
- Human Resources Director: This position is primarily responsible for ensuring that agency staffing meets operational needs, and that the agency complies with all applicable labor and employment laws. Duties include developing and implementing policies and procedures regarding safety, workers compensation, recruiting, onboarding, employee relations, employee handbook administration, benefits administration, communication, and promoting a positive, welcoming and productive organizational culture. The Human Resources Director is an integral member of agency leadership, reports to the COO, and provides direct supervision and support for the Human Resources Specialist, Executive Assistant and Information Technology Specialist.
- Education Coach: Education Coaches uses the Practice Based Coaching Model to support teaching staff/home visitors throughout the agency through focused observation, providing feedback, and setting professional development goals using focused observation data. Coaches are certified CLASS observers for the agency and help ensure that all classrooms comply with Flowers Early Learning Policies and Procedures.

Samantha motioned; Mellody seconded. Motion carried.

15. Education

- a. Presentation Nutrition Manager Robin
 - i. 5-week cycle menu – this was sent to teachers to provide feedback about what the children like. Children like bread, noodles and fresh food.



- ii. 10c a meal is a great program that allows us to bring fresh food from the KVCC Valley Hub
- 16. Communications
 - a. Kahli & NHSA Winter Leadership Institute – met with representatives and watched advocacy at work
 - b. Federal updates – Federal Funds can’t be used for DEI efforts. Watching closely on what messaging is being put out to not pose a risk
 - i. Now more than ever it’s important to move toward tuition-based slots. We will not displace any of the 583 children to do tuition-based slots.
- 17. Report from Centers
 - a. Jodi – Niles Family Committee Meeting had a great turnout – 9 parents showed up
 - b. Kahli – Cass Family Committee Meeting had a great turnout – 5 parents showed up
 - c. Melanie - Grandpa Buck is retiring April 10th – turning 100 this month
- 18. Report from Great Start Collaboratives
 - a. VB – Touch a Truck in May; Baby shower end of April; family field trips throughout summer
 - b. Cass – Family Coalition Meeting 3/27 – Community baby shower May 3
 - c. Berrien – virtual parent cafes over the summer; playgroups in the park; celebrate Berrien babies in August
- 19. Pleasure of the Floor
 - a. Samantha - SMC family fun night 3/27
 - b. Chanda- Joint Planning Meeting is very important, there will be no zoom option. Please plan to attend in person.
- 20. * Adjournment
 - Samantha motioned; Mellody seconded. Motion carried.
 - Kahli adjourned the meeting at 7:06pm

Next Meeting: Joint Board/PC Planning Meeting **Wednesday, June 18, 2025 2:30pm VBISD Conference Center 490 S Paw Paw St, Lawrence, MI 49064**

*Denotes approval needed