



**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Board of Trustees Meeting  
February 16, 2018**

**Canal Room, EdVenture Children's Museum, Columbia  
11 a.m.**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present (15):**

Ken Wingate, Chair  
Deputy Superintendent David Mathis  
Representative Rita Allison  
Senator Greg Hembree  
Representative Jerry Govan  
Judith Aughtry  
Amy Williams  
Walter Fleming  
Alexia Newman  
Jennifer McConnell  
Sue Williams  
Rick Noble  
Roger Pryor  
Susan Alford  
Josh Baker

**Members Absent (7):**

Julie Hussey, Vice-Chair  
Senator Gerald Malloy  
Tracy Lamb  
David Wilson  
Josh Baker  
Tim Holt  
Pat Talley

**Staff Present:**

Georgia Mjartan  
Dan Wuori  
Martha Strickland  
Debbie Robertson  
Mark Barnes  
Russell Brown  
Samantha Ingram

Betty Gardiner  
Kate Roach

### **Call to Order/Quorum Call**

Mr. Ken Wingate called the meeting to order at 11:21 a.m. and stated that a quorum was present.

Mr. Wingate called for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2018 meeting. After a motion by Senator Greg Hembree and a second by Mr. Roger Pryor, the minutes were unanimously approved. Mr. Rick Noble proposed changing language in the minutes to say "interest will go back to the program whose funds generated it". Upon a motion to approve the minutes as amended by Rep. Jerry Govan and a second by Ms. Jennifer McConnell, the revision to the minutes was unanimously approved.

Mr. Ken Wingate stated SC First Steps wanted to stay focused on having a full board and pointed to the board vacancies and stated the vacancy categories. Mr. Wingate asked board members to recommend or solicit feedback on who could fill those vacancies. Mr. Wingate also asked Ms. Judith Aughtry and Mr. Rick Noble to start thinking of potential replacements that could be presented to those making appointments as their time on the board would end soon.

Ms. Judith Aughtry presented on behalf of the Finance and Administration Committee. Ms. Aughtry noted seven local partnerships exceeded the 8% administrative cap and two counties did not meet the required 15% match. Ms. Aughtry asked for questions from the board. A motion was made to approve the waiver requests for seven Local Partnerships, Barnwell, Calhoun, Chester, Clarendon, Georgetown, Marlboro, and Sumter, to exceed the 8% administrative cap and for two local partnerships, Hampton, and Horry, to exempt them from meeting the 15% match requirement for the 2017 fiscal year. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Aughtry pointed the board to the Financial Report as of January 18, 2018. Mr. Mark Barnes elaborated on the report and stated 4K funds carry forward will be much less than past years, and noted changes in a proviso allowing extended care helped expend those funds.

Mr. Wingate introduced Mr. Roger Pryor, who presented the report on behalf of the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Governance Council. Mr. Pryor briefed the board on the Council's recommendation of the February 1, 2018 submission of a one-time, supplemental funding request of \$208,517 to the Office of Head Start.

Mr. Walt Fleming made a motion to approve the recommendation from the Council, followed by a second by Ms. Jennifer McConnell. The recommendation was unanimously approved.

Mr. Pryor also made a motion on the recommendation of the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Policy Council to approve the Incident Reporting Policy as proposed. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Pryor stated Rebecca Brown had retired effective February 14, 2018 and asked people to share the job vacancy with anyone who may be interested. Mr. Pryor stated that Mr. Dan Wuori will be the Acting Director for the grant until the position is filled.

Mr. Pryor stated that SC First Steps terminated the agreement with Little Treasures as of February 2, 2018 and Mr. Walter Fleming will help transition the impacted students into one of his Head Start centers hopefully by mid-March.

Mr. Pryor gave a report on plans to use a vacant school building in Latta, SC in conjunction with Dillon County First Steps, to house Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership students by August 2018. Mr. Pryor noted that student enrollment will increase due to the expansion grant. Mr. Pryor said SC First Steps met with Region IV to discuss incidents at Thornwell and Little Treasures. It was stated that the incidents in Thornwell were self-reported. Mr. Pryor asked for questions. Rep. Govan asked if the agency should expect any repercussions from the incidents. Mr. Pryor said he could not say yes or no.

Ms. Georgia Mjartan noted that because our grant has two federal deficiencies that our agency will have to compete nationally for the grant once the initial grant funding is up. She also noted that it is possible that we could receive additional deficiencies pertaining to the additional incidents.

Ms. Mjartan asked Region IV specifically if they thought we should terminate additional contracts with providers and Region IV said no. Regardless, the goal is to keep the EHS funds (\$35M) in South Carolina, no matter who serves the classrooms.

Ms. Jennifer McConnell gave the report for the Program and Grants Committee. Ms. McConnell stated the committee continues to work on the evidence-based program list. Upon the recommendation by the committee, a motion was made to approve the addition of the following seven programs to the current list of evidence-based: Early Identification and Referral, Early Steps to School Success, Imagination Library, Language Environmental Analysis (LENA), Raising a Reader (with parent training), Nurturing Parenting Program, Parent Child Home. The motion was approved unanimously. Ms. McConnell also presented another recommendation to the board. Upon a recommendation by the committee, a motion to approve the request of Darlington and Sumter to begin new strategies for Fatherhood and Child Care Quality Enhancement respectively. The motion was approved unanimously.

Sen. Hembree presented on behalf of the Legislative Committee. He stated that the committee met on January 29, 2018 and discussed where, in the legislative process, the agency was with reauthorization. Sen. Hembree noted one senator, Sen. Shane Martin,

continued to block the bill and noted that Ms. Mjartan has met with him on several occasions.

Rep. Govan noted that Sen. Martin has added six additional requests as opposed to his initial one. Based on the additional requests, Hembree does not see making any additional amendments and stated that the can always take a different route.

Mr. Pryor asked about details of the proviso route. Sen. Hembree stated the agency had already submitted the proviso as a life boat.

Mr. Wingate wanted to know if it was time for the board, the staff and the constituents to get involved. Sen. Hembree asked that everyone stay calm for now, but would let us know when to bring in the cavalry.

Sen. Hembree noted that Ms. Mjartan and staff did a great job working with the Senate Finance Committee.

Sen. Hembree spoke briefly about the bill (S.B. 840) proposed by Sen. Talley and stated that the bill would not make any moves in the legislature this year.

Ms. Sue Williams expressed that Sen. Talley understood that this year's bill was to start the conversation about combining early education services and the goal, long-term was to create an Early Learning Cabinet agency.

Ms. Mjartan said she had a very productive meeting with Sen. Talley and told him it was our board's goal to be that body that provides coordination of early learning services.

Rep. Rita Allison concurred with Sen. Hembree and said that she has seen the additional requests from Sen. Martin but does understand those requests can only be taken care of the by board and the requests were all things the General Assembly was already addressing. Rep. Allison said the House will most likely file a proviso to safe guard anything, just in case the Senate does not get the reauthorization bill through. She has also talked with Sen. Talley and told him that once reauthorization passes, First Steps will be in a position to take on the duties of a Department of Early Development and Education.

Mr. Wingate reminded the board that they are the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) for South Carolina. He said the agency will send out the ECAC statute to all board members. Mr. Wingate read the 10 statutory requirements and gave a brief history on the previous work of the ECAC. Mr. Wingate suggested creating 3-5 working ad hoc committees and suggested some members for the board, such as Children's Trust, Department of Education, Dr. Amy Williams, DSS (Amber Gillum), DDSN or DHEC be involved on the committee. Mr. Wingate asked for feedback within a week if board members are able and willing to participate in the ad hoc committees. Ms. Mjartan said she was tying up loose ends like the ECAC and Interagency Coordinating Committee and suggested these committees become one.

A recommendation was made to constitute a standing committee of the ECAC which shall include the Interagency Coordinating Committee charged to make recommendations to the ECAC as a whole regarding the statutory requirements. A motion made by Rep. Govan followed by second by Hembree, the motion was unanimously approved. Rep. Govan made a motion to adjourn the ECAC and reconvene Board of Trustees meeting.

Ms. Mjartan gave her Director's Report. She thanked everyone, specifically Ms. Susan Alford at DSS and Superintendent Spearman at SC Department of Education for their role in welcoming her and introducing her to ways that the departments already are and can continue to work collaboratively. Ms. Mjartan also thanked Ms. Aughtry for her many years of service to the agency, noting her tenure on the board. She thanked the local partnership directors in the room including Amy Breault, Dorothy Priester, Jim Riddle, and Rick Noble and noted how gracious each one was to host her in their counties.

Ms. Mjartan noted to the group that budget request information was included in the Executive Committee report and noted the donor report and thanked board donors.

Mr. Wingate asked for people to let him and Ms. Mjartan know of possible donors they can reach out to for private donations. Mr. Noble suggested SCANA and Dominion.

Ms. Mjartan briefed the board about a fiscal concern at a 4K center in Bamberg and thanked Ms. Martha Strickland and Mr. Dan Wuori for their quick action to terminate the contract with the 4K provider and get SLED involved to resolve the issue.

Ms. Mjartan talked about her visit to the Riverbanks Zoo with Lexington County First Steps and expressed her ideas about documentary photography to tell the story of First Steps and the children and families we serve.

Ms. Mjartan said through discussion with her staff, conversations were happening around how we purpose our mission, vision, impact and goals. She talked about her different conversations and how each one integrates into our mission with the goal to share the numerical goal for 4K participation, similar to Early Head Start, and was prepared to ask for additional funding for a new data systems for local partnerships.

Dr. Amy Williams stated the importance of having numerical data and having a collaborative effort. Dr. Williams volunteered to help with anything that was needed to reach that goal.

Sen. Hembree noted alignment is very important and the key to know what the agency is shooting for is to have alignment.

Mr. Noble suggested balancing your ambitions with capacity and ensure you have the right staff to meet those ambitions.

Ms. Mjartan suggested using 4K carry-forward money to hire someone to go out into the counties to help recruit new 4K centers instead of adding more work onto the 4K coordinators.

Ms. Mjartan talked about the agency as a convener, collaborator, and connector and gave an example of the 4K marketing and noted that this year's 4K marketing would have both SDE and SCFS information for parents so they can decide where to enroll their children. She discussed First Steps' desire to share waiting lists with SC Department of Education to ensure all children are served.

Mr. David Mathis agreed to share waiting lists between the SC Department of Education and SCFS.

Ms. Mjartan said the agency can do better to communicate our role as a state office and that we are not just a pass through to local partners. She told the group about her trip to Abbeville and Greenwood Counties and their roles in direct operation of programs. Mr. Wingate reminded the board of their complex job to advance and improve local programs and state how we must all be committed to that. He noted that this had been discussed by the Executive Committee.

Ms. Mjartan talked about internal operations and thanked Ms. Julia-Ellen Davis for her positive influence on the tone and culture of the state office. Ms. Mjartan said her focus is on accountability, chain of command, transparency and integrating across programs: for example, including 4K and EHS at the Program and Grants committee, and exploring levels of insurance at the state office, providers, and local partnership, inclusion, diversity, and equity.

Rep. Govan also thanked Ms. Davis and Mr. Dan Wuori for doing a great job in such a critical time.

Mr. Wingate said the board needed to choose meeting space for the remainder of the year, noting that he liked having the meeting at EdVenture, as it is one of First Steps' partners in education. Ms. Williams suggested her office. Ms. Mjartan said she and her team would explore options.

Mr. Wingate opened the floor to any board members or audience members to bring information. Ms. Dorothy Priester asked the board to consider looking at the funding for Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

A motion was made for the board to move into a brief Executive Committee meeting to discuss a personnel matter. A motion was made for the board meeting to reconvene.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 1:06 p.m.