

**Policy Council**

February 27, 2024

10:00 am

Policy Council Members Present: Greg Taylor, Heidi Calhoun, Diana Suarez, Angel Dreyfus, Karen Rhoades

FSP Staff Present: Jennifer Mercer, Carolyn Clouser, Alexandra Acevedo, Erik Nichols, Jessica Hatch, Pam Raynor, Cirsten Kelly (Shippensburg University Intern)

Board Members Present: Lura Hanks

1. **Welcome:** Heidi welcomed everyone to our Policy Council Meeting at 10:05 am
2. **Old Business:**
3. January Meeting Minutes: Lura Hanks made a motion to approve the January Meeting Minutes. Angel Dreyfus seconded the motion. Motion passed.
4. January Financial Reports & Credit Card Expenditures: Erik shared that Head Start is overspent in program supplies and contracted services so we are monitoring closely. There are no major issues with the budget. Pre-K Counts is at 58.2% which is right on budget. Erik also shared that we will be completing allocation changes for personnel. Angel Dreyfus made a motion to approve the January Financial Reports and Credit Card Expenditures. Greg Taylor seconded the motion. Motion passed.
5. Officer Elections: Carolyn shared that Angel is considering being the Treasurer as well as the Secretary. Angel will attend next month’s Finance and HR committee meeting to get a better understanding of the committee and make sure that she is comfortable with this position.
6. **New Business:**
7. NAEYC Self-Assessment and Program Improvement Plan: Jessica shared handouts with the group surrounding the Program Improvement Plan. Every year we do a self-assessment to ensure we are on track or if we need to make any adjustments. We had a successful monitoring visit and decided to move forward with our NAEYC accreditation by working on program observations, classroom observation and the 2 portfolios. In 2022-2023 we used NAEYC standards in the self-assessment and found that 88% of the target areas were on track. In April of last year, we had a child incident where a child was left in a classroom unsupervised for a period of time. This is an area of non-compliance which results in us not being able to apply for our accreditation visit. We are still moving forward but not quite there yet so we are not setting a date to request accreditation.
8. Strategic Plan Update:

* Healthy Schools: There are four areas that need our attention- health, curriculum, assessment and physical environment (page 2 of handout). Our teachers are still learning and based on the external evaluation (page 3 of handout) we know we have to get the observation numbers closer together. By Spring, every classroom will have received at least one visit.
* Healthy Communities: Carolyn shared that we have developed an outreach plan so we know that we are reaching children most at risk. We would like to get families back into the classrooms. In 2022, we had 9 community volunteers and 77 families. This year we have encouraged parents to participate in Parent Committees and Policy Council. We now have 36 community volunteers and 77 families. Our next step is to see how we are doing and are we doing things well. Carolyn did a preliminary review to see if we are retaining families and engaging them and if not, what is causing them not to return. She found that we need to do some work on our documentation.
* Healthy Children and Families: The expectation is that 100% of our children have immunizations on file. The post-pandemic data shows that the data is increasing and we can now pull shot records for the State Health Department. Our goal for the year is 80% and we are currently at 70%. We are focusing on a medical and dental home and currently we are not showing that we are over 50% for any of our funding streams which is concerning. The expectation for a medical and dental home is that we obtain this information within the first 30 days and that within 90 days we receive physicals and dental exams for our children. As far as health insurance, the expectation is to have this on file and if not, we give the families connections. Our goal for the year is 90% and we are not even at 50%. Angel shared that she struggles finding a dentist because of them not taking the state insurance so she will probably have to self-pay. Lura stated that she knows that Keystone will take patients if there is an emergency.
* There are a significant number of areas that need to improve and have changes. In 2018 we began a process for enrollment reductions to increase our quality by reducing the number of children served. If you lower the number of children in the classroom you then can provide more 1 on 1 time with children with disabilities. If we are able to increase the pay to our teacher, we will hopefully attract teachers who have the qualifications we are looking for and then allow us to retain them. We are also looking at our facilities to ensure we are in high quality locations. In 2018, we were asked to write for additional funding instead of reducing enrollment. We did this and it has helped. Head Start is now encouraging programs to request an enrollment reduction to be able to get comparable salaries for our teachers. The reduction will not affect children who are currently enrolled in our program. Jessica stated we are requesting the Policy Council’s approval to purse the enrollment reduction. Heidi Calhoun made a motion for FSP to continue to research this and pursue the reduction. Lura Hanks seconded the motion. Motion passed

1. Fishing Derby: Pam Raynor shared that this will be the fifth year for the fishing Derby. It is open to our families only. Children ages 3-5 participate with the parents being able to assist them following guidelines. There are also trophies that are present for different categories. The event will be held on May 4th from 8:00 am- 10:00 am at the Conococheague Stream off of Loop Road. The Mercersburg Sportsman Association supplies the fish either the evening prior to the event or right before the start. We typically partner with the Chambersburg Police Department and also receive donations. Pam shared that we would like to increase our grocery store gift cards. There was also a scavenger hunt that can be completed if families were interested. How can Policy Council help?

* **Sign up for a duty**
* **Looking for sponsors or donors. Dropping off donor letters to past sponsors**
* **Assistance setting up, assembly of scavenger hunt kits if we chose to have the scavenger hunt**

1. Safe Kids Action Plan: Carolyn stated she would bring more information back surrounding this. We currently have an advisory group that is working on an action plan and wanted us to use Policy Council since you are parents of young children.
2. Introduce Policy Council By-Laws: Carolyn shared that we do have by-laws that guide us and they are to be reviewed annually. We want to make sure we are doing what is written in the by-laws.
3. Remind App: Jennifer asked the group about setting up a Policy Council group through the remind app. This would allow messages to be sent to them directly on their phone. All Policy Council members stated that they use this with their family advocates and teachers and they thought it was a good way to communicate. Jennifer will set up the group and send invites for them to join.
4. **Member Discussion/Questions/Suggestions:**

* A discussion was held around Parent Cafes and why we no longer have them. Diana stated that she felt it brought families together and allowed for support and discussion. The Parent Cafes were funded through Summit Endowment but the funding has expired. Jessica stated that we could look for creative ways to hold them.
* A suggestion was also made surrounding the expansion of bilingual home visitors.

1. **Adjourn:** Meeting was adjourned at 11:26 am

**Next Meeting: April 23, 2024 from 10:00-11:30 am at 871 Stanley Ave. Chambersburg (Chambersburg Early Learning Center)**