

Bright Starts Cooperative Early Learning Centre Board Meeting

Tuesday, September 21, 2021 at 7:30pm

Chairperson: Kennedy Sherwood

Meeting by Videoconference

In attendance: Karen Hinnigan, Stacey Reid, Kennedy Sherwood, Jennifer Bleakney, Michelle Bauer, Angie Docking, Julia Carvalho, Mariam Hassan, Emily Kozlowski, Robilyn Vanos

Regrets: Edwin Ng

Meeting called to order at 7:34pm

Motion to approve agenda

- Moved by Jennifer
- Seconded by Robilyn
- All in favour, none opposed, no abstentions
- Motion carried

Motion to approve August minutes

- Moved by Michelle
- Seconded by Emily
- All in favour, none opposed, one abstention (Jennifer)

Request made to not use dashes before financial values in "Finance report" section – Angie to update previous minutes and use a colon moving forward.

Executive Director's Report – [full document](#)

Financial:

- No Regional funding update currently.
 - Stacey to re-apply for Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and Canadian Rent Subsidy Programs (CERS) after P6 ends, as our revenue will be lower and we may be considered for further funding.
 - Still expecting stabilization funding for Sept 1 – Dec 31 2021; will receive a little more than \$70K in October.
- Stacey is working on preparing the draft budget (2022), and will share with Michelle by end of next week (Oct 1) to prepare for her next finance report.
- BSCELC applied for room closure funding for the 3-day closure re: positive COVID case, and Stacey hopes to hear back from her tomorrow (would amount to approximately \$2K, which would be credited back to families affected).

Health, Safety & Nutrition:

- Positive COVID case affecting Toddler 3 + 4.
 - Karen, Heidi + Stacey notified all families (phone + email) and coordinated with Public Health. Child tested positive on Sept 13, all children could return Sept 24 after isolation.
 - Stacey received negative feedback from one parent, but all other families were accommodating.
 - *Do most parents understand that there are two co-horts that are connected?* Stacey – yes, and this parent was reminded that certain educators move between rooms.
 - Jennifer offers to help Stacey craft a reply to the parent's negative feedback

- The Operation Guidance from the Ministry has been updated; Stacey sent out note to parents.
 - She received great feedback, except for one parent worried about no eyewear/masks outside. Stacey chatted with them, and they understood – then the Ministry reneged on that guideline, and now masks/eyewear are back in place. Educators are frustrated.
- Public Health used to also send out a document during COVID (ROWPH COVID-19 Child Care Guidance Document), but they've since retired it – Ministry document now covers the ground that's needed. Public Health has continued to send a suggestion document on areas where we can enhance safety (i.e. stricter guidelines on parents entering the building + staff needing to sign in and sign out of communal spaces). Our policies have been updated to reflect and sent to the P&P committee – we will vote on this tonight.
- New immunization disclosure policy – P&P committee has seen, we will vote tonight; parents will need to see as well - Stacey has drafted an email to send to parents on Thursday, Sept. 23.
- Ministry now wants parents to show proof of passing the screening. Ministry only requires it until Sept. 24, but the Ministry may reinstate it during holidays.
 - BSCELC recommends we do this until January 2022 and re-evaluate. While we needed to show some parents how to use the tool, it is now going smoothly.
 - Question from Stacey – *any thoughts on not using screening tool?* Board is in agreement with keeping it until Jan 2022.
 - *Do we have an alternative for parents who don't have cell phones?* Stacey – we have a tablet in the office that can be used in those cases.
- Air purifiers have now arrived and are all in the rooms – a bit loud on high, but educators don't mind that as it can act as noise machine + AC. Stacey thinks it's a great investment and will be applying for City funding (\$2.5K). We need UW to support our application as we're an affiliate.
- Struggling with educators wearing their eye protection consistently. Stacey / Karen have purchased many different types / face shields for educators to try and have given several friendly reminders about eye protection + reinforced at staff meetings.
 - Question from Stacey – *any feedback from the Board on reminders to staff?*
 - *Are there the same staff who are being reminded?* Stacey – yes.
 - *Will glasses work?* Stacey – no, it must cover more than just eyeglasses.
 - *Would a face shield be sufficient instead?* Stacey – yes, but educators really don't like them.
 - *How many are not wearing? Would worry about morale if others are seen not complying.* Stacey – it's a handful.
 - *Is there any formal disciplinary process?* Stacey – yes, would document verbal warnings (1,2,3) then document written warnings (1,2,3) before dismissal.
 - *Can you advise at staff meetings that this process will be followed moving forward?* Stacey – yes, we have done this, and have communicated in writing. We will reinforce the disciplinary process in our next meeting.

Enrollment:

- September occupancy rates – 100% in infants, 96% in toddlers, and 87% in preschool. Karen working hard to increase enrollment for October.

Staffing & Retention:

- Had another staff resignation - Ridhi in Toddler 4 finishes on Oct 4. She is heading home to Mississauga to be with her family.
- Continue to actively recruit and have had a lot of resumes but not necessarily all are qualified. Heidi has some interviews next week; some applicants would need mentoring.

- *Would you often hire with the expectation that you'd mentor?* Stacey – not particularly, but we try not to place two new graduates into a program together. Although it is hard to sometimes move experienced staff from the rooms they are most comfortable.
- *When infants are moving to toddler rooms, is that an opportunity to move staff to other rooms?* Stacey – we have tried that, but it hasn't worked... will have to have further discussions to remind them that they work for Bright Starts, not just their "rooms".
- *Has the relief person started between Toddler 3 + 4?* Stacey – yes, just over the last week. Will communicate with parents with both news of resignation + staffing addition.
- *Have you tried to reach out to past educators to see if they'll come back?* Stacey – yes, do that regularly, and are expecting 2x staff persons to come back from mat leave
- To help with recruitment, Stacey thinking about implementing formal mentorship program (ie. job shadowing to help staff get the hang of things) and response from new hires has been wonderful. Also trying to think of ways to thank staff for participating in this program - suggests a \$50 gift card to thank staff. Stacey to reach out to staff to see who is interested.
- Also thinking about additional ways to boost retention – thinking about implementing a discount at Bright Starts for parents who have children so that they have incentive to come back to work. This might cost a lot – so would like to put together a proposal for the Finance committee to discuss. Have reached out to other Centres to find out what they do.
- Additional vacation offerings – vacation caps out at 15 years @ 5 weeks. Stacey to consider another cap at 20 years with additional vacation offering. Doesn't cost a whole lot for the Centre as there are not many long term staff (15+). Something to consider for next year.
- Buy back – with the staffing struggle, thinking about giving staff more flexibility re: off-time. Perhaps offer staff the opportunity to buy out some their vacation time; only for those who have earned above the employment standards act.
 - *Won't that help to cover expenses / balance?* Stacey – the staff we hire to come in, cost less... so it would balance a little bit, but we'd still lose a bit of cash.
 - Maybe consider not introducing them at the same time... as some might not see the value in a salary increase vs. vacation time. Messaging might be a bit different if they come at the same time as it might look like it's just a benefit for senior staff.
 - It's nice to have the opportunity to show people they can choose whatever value means the most to them... time or money. It is respectful to give staff the choice.

Other:

- Region of Waterloo Quality Initiatives is a quality program that all licensed childcare centres who get funding must participate in to help them measure quality. They are developing a new framework (Early Years Engage). Will share more in October when the framework is clear.
- Renovation quotes from UW – repurpose one of the washrooms into a multi-purpose room to an additional staff space. Meeting room beside the main office was meant to be Stacey's office but realized there was no meeting room... so has since re-purposed. Cost from UW was \$40K (need to increase ventilation). They don't want to put it out to tender until we know that we're going to do it before they get their quotes.
 - *Is this the gym washroom?* Stacey - yes, we have 2 bathrooms, but only need one. Want to repurpose the other into a meeting room. Large enough to put a meeting table, etc.
 - *Would entry be through the multi-purpose room?* Yes.
 - *How does construction work during the pandemic?* Stacey – would do some during the day, some after-hours. Would not have children in the multi-purpose room while they're doing work. May be able to have the work done while we're closed over the Dec break.
 - *Do staff use this second bathroom? Will they miss it?* Stacey - no, they don't use it. Still have another bathroom they can use.

- *The additional meeting space, may move to the current meeting space?* Stacey – would be beneficial to have the private office, but office can be utilized when I am not there as a meeting space.
- *If turned into a meeting room, will you be low on storage?* Stacey – have been throwing old stuff out that we don't use and have found space in other places.
- *What would the narrative be when we present it at the AGM? While supportive of the idea overall, wonder how often will it be used, or instances on a lack of space.* Stacey – staff will use it every day during the planning time. Staff have had to utilize other spaces especially during COVID because of physical distancing.
- Maybe consider calling it a “staff resource room”. Board agrees with this suggestion.
- Did get a few recruits for committees; committee chairs should reach out to new committee members. Stacey to send out next week to all Committee Chairs so they can reach out.
- Staff surveys – thinking about doing this new year. Stacey had a parent reach out who does diversity & inclusion training. Considering doing work with her to help with wording when communicating with parents.

Motion to approve up to \$50K to be put toward a renovation on the multi-purpose room's second bathroom to turn it into a staff resource room.

- Moved by Julia
- Seconded by Michelle
- All in favour, none opposed, no abstentions
- Motion carried

Treasurer's Report – [full document](#)

- August's highlights – revenue is approx. \$1K higher than budget, expenses approx. \$8K over budget; net income: \$-11181.68. For first time, net income is negative from last month (i.e. no rent subsidy, insurance costs, professional fees, toys + crafts).
 - *Does this include the loft?* Stacey – no, won't be shipped until the end of October.
 - *Can you explain the difference in payroll this month?* Stacey – this is because of increased coverage for summer vacations.
 - *Is \$161K the same every month?* Michelle – yes, mostly. Sometimes extra pay periods do happen per month.
 - As an FYI for new Board members, 6 mos of operating costs are recommended to have in our total cash bucket. We should keep that in mind when thinking about new expenses. Stacey – should recommend moving some of that into the GICs

Annual Review of Program Statement and Health & Safety Policy – [full document](#)

- Every year, Ministry has us review program statement & philosophy. Not recommending any changes this year. Not recommending any changes to the health policy, just need to review it.

Pandemic Policies and new Immunization Disclosure Policy – [all documents](#) (1.14, 1.15, 1.16, 1.17)

- These policies have been updated to reflect new changes from Ministry (reintroducing sensory toys, screening, masking/eye protection, etc.).
- Immunization policy is brand new. Staff must disclose their vaccination status and need to be in compliance, Sept 27. If not in compliance, educators need to participate in education session re: benefits of getting COVID vaccine. Then need to participate in asymptomatic testing 2x a week. Ministry says staff need to do it at home, partnering with THRIVE health app to report their test results (i.e. uploading a picture of rapid test for verification). Also, this double reports directly to Centre and Ministry, which saves some time.

- *Would we want anything that the screening tool doesn't include, but we'd want to keep at the Centre?* (ie. symptoms). Stacey – we can always exceed if we want, we can just add back into the policy. Although – we feel that we are not able to decide higher standards above what the Ministry is recommending as we trust the top medical experts who are guiding us.
- *Can you include symptoms where the child can't attend, but not require a COVID test?* Stacey – no. Just what the tool suggests.
- *How does the disclosure work? Do you keep track?* Stacey – have to provide vaccine receipt from the province. Keeps track and report to the Ministry monthly.
- *Will we have to update our policy if a booster becomes required?* Stacey – will have to figure that out as it comes, as boosters are not yet required.
- *Is double vaxxed fully vaxxed?* Stacey - looks like we should keep our language consistent at “double-vaxxed”.
- *These are Ministry requirements, right? You can be rapid testing even if you don't have a medical exemption, right?* Stacey – correct. They don't have a choice, they have to do the asymptomatic testing.
- *Will this information be public in a data-type of format? Will parents be aware of the percentage of educators vaccinated?* Stacey - you can find this on the Ministry site – stats will be available there on staff vaccination status.
- *Do you know how many educators are currently vaccinated?* Stacey – only two are not vaccinated. One trying to get a medical exemption, but not likely to get it – so will pursue vaccination. Other is partially vaccinated. Other centres made it mandatory, but I think it's because they were struggling to get their staff vaxxed. we haven't had that problem. Our staff have always been forthcoming about their status.

Motion to approve the Health & Safety Policy, Pandemic Policies, and Immunization Disclosure Policy

- Moved by Robilyn
- Seconded by Mariam
- All in favour, none opposed, no abstentions
- Motion carried

Staff Appreciation Event

- ECE & Childcare Appreciation Day is Thursday, Oct. 21; to show our appreciation, the staff engagement committee is planning:
 - Treats for the staff – Board members bring in treats every day of the week
 - Bring in décor for staff spaces
 - Robi to send out an email re: treat schedule (Mon to Fri Oct 21) and to ensure we are following dietary restrictions
 - Soliciting kind words & memories from families, and compiling them for staff into a presentation (presented via Zoom last year)
 - Provide a paid meal during the ECE appreciation event (customized lunch)
 - Years of Service awards to commemorate a milestone work anniversary (monetary gift + framed certificate) – there are 4 milestone anniversaries this year.
 - Each educator also received some hand cream as a gift in their mailbox.
- Robi will be in touch with staff engagement committee to get started on the planning and asks if anyone is interested in helping to reach out directly.
- Stacey notes there was great last year, and they are looking forward to it again this year; a nice external monitor might be a good gift for the staff resource space this year (or laminator).
 - *Is it a formal event, or rather casual?* Robi – structured, brief event that's casual.

- *How do I drop off my treats?* Stacey – ring doorbell, leave treats on the table there. There are approx. 40 staff members.

Vacancy - Vice-President role

- Tetyana has resigned, and we need to fill this role. Robi has come forward with interest in taking on this role. Robi's move to VP would open up another space for a Board member - is there interest in adding another member?
 - Comment: not sure if I see value in bringing another Board member as we have been able to pass motions easily. Board agrees.
 - Should we reach out to new parent volunteers to see if anyone is interested? Discussion resolves that it's better to either reach out to all parents or none. Will keep Board as is for now.

Motion to nominate Robilyn Vanos as Vice-President effective immediately?

- Moved by Kennedy
- Seconded by Michelle
- All in favour, none opposed, one abstention
- Motion carried

New business for next meeting

- Region of Waterloo Quality Initiatives Update (15 minutes) - Stacey

Regrets for next meeting (October 19)

- None

Good news roundtable

- Mariam got a new puppy – 9 wks old!
- Emily's twins turning 2 on Friday!
- Julia's son started in the infant 2 weeks ago and didn't cry today!

Motion to adjourn

Moved by Michelle

Seconded by Julia

All in favour, none opposed, no abstentions.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40pm.