

Bright Starts Cooperative Early Learning Centre Board Meeting

Tuesday, January 18, 2022 at 7:30pm

Chairperson: Kennedy Sherwood

Meeting by Videoconference

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

Meeting called to order at 7:35pm

Motion to approve agenda

- Moved by Emily
- Seconded by Robi
- All in favour, none opposed, no abstentions
- Motion carried

Motion to approve November minutes

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

Executive Director's report

Finance

- Stacey received no feedback from parents on the fee increase
- 2021 funding reconciliation is due in March
- Stabilization funding is coming brought back to help with the new pressures on childcare; Bright Starts to receive \$28K
- 2022 operating funding applications are due in Feb 2; funding amounts are expected to increase by 5% in 2022
 - *Does this funding cover centre expenses or can it be directed toward salaries?* Stacey – yes, can be directed toward both.
- Continuous quality improvement and equality & inclusion grants are also coming (new this year); the Region will be hosting tele-conferences with childcare centres to discuss how these grants should be implemented.
- Workforce funding strategy also in the works (new this year – one time only) – funding meant to help recruitment & retention initiatives re: high quality child care talent.
- Stacey is interested in implementing professional development days for childcare centres; ideas are still in development.
- Notes she also anticipates significant changes in the workforce (as the \$10/day childcare on the horizon); Stacey will update Board as info becomes available
- No longer eligible for rent/wage subsidy; ended in October 2021.
- Stacey has looked for other subsidies that might be available but did not see any others where we are eligible.

Health & Safety

- Testing requirements have changed as our kids are no longer able to go for PCR tests.

- Staff can wear either N95 or medical masks; Bright Starts received a shipment of N95 masks for staff who would like to use them.
- Enhanced screening and isolation requirements - non-common symptoms are back on the screening (i.e. runny nose) and the isolation period is now 5 days.
- Rapid tests can be used to confirm COVID positives/negatives; Bright Starts will allow kids to come back before the isolation period if symptoms have been improving for 24 hours.
- Bright Starts will send 2 rapid tests home with each child at the end of the week – Stacey to send out an email to give families a heads up.
- We didn't get as many as we need for all children, as Region is giving them out re: capacity instead of spaces. Stacey will ask parents to decline them if not needed so we will have enough.
- Bright Starts is no longer required to confirm positive cases to Public Health; originally we were required to report positive rapid tests, but that has now changed.
- Still must report positive PCR tests (if a child has done one).
- Centres is now allowed to assign staff to different cohorts to meet staffing needs due to absence
- Bright Starts has had to move staff around a little bit in order to keep rooms open but have not had to move any children.
- While we are no longer required to report positives, Stacey is still encouraging our families to report as other families would appreciate the info. Stacey encouraged educators to send out positive confirmations through HiMama. Stacey created an excel spreadsheet to track positive cases so that parents can review on their own time, instead of sending out emails for each case.
 - *If families have a positive case to report, would that go through the program or go through their office?* Stacey - will request families to notify the Office. Rapid tests include instructions on how to report positive cases.
 - *Because we're not obligated to report positives, what are the things (symptoms, tests, etc.) we're supposed to report?* Stacey - will address this in her next parent email.
 - *Any promise to get additional tests?* Stacey – it's not clear whether that will happen.
- If absenteeism is above 30%, Bright Starts is required to send out a template notification to families and staff re: COVID symptom monitoring.
- Ministry now requires monthly reporting on third doses for staff. Stacey expects them to change the definition of fully vaxxed to mean 3 doses. Region hosting clinic for childcare providers, some staff able to access a dose when it was offered.

Enrollment

- Infant, pre-school is full in January; 97% full in toddler (Jan), 98% (Feb).

Staffing programs

- Staff received the new salary scale, and it was received well. Stacey met each educator one on one on their situations. Stacey appreciated Emily's help on the presentation she used – it was very well done.
- Stacey to update the policy re: their vacation requests – staff can now see their extra days in an online system.
- 3 educators resigned in December. One has requested to stay on a casual part-time basis.
- Stacey expected one staff member to return from parental leave, but the educator has now decided to stay off until September.
- One staff member is expecting and is due in June. There are also two staff currently on leave.
- Unsure when to open the Preschool 6 program – we don't have the staff to open in March, may open in May so there are good strong staff to go in the program. Lots of students in Conestoga on work placements at that time, hoping to have them interested in full-time when they're done.

Other

- Annual licensing inspection will happen anytime now.
- Resource room renovation coming along nicely; Stacey shared a photo of progress with the Board.
- Preschool loft shipment keeps getting pushed back. She is considering gathering some quotes to see if we can get them custom built.
- A bit of a surprise happened to Stacey before the break – a property evaluation specialist reached out to say that Bright Starts had an outstanding 2013 permit for our building to be built. It is now resolved as we are a non-profit and therefore exempt – so no panic!
- We will add hours of operation to next meeting's agenda
 - *Have any families asked about hours?* Stacey – no. Have told parents we're going to reassess after omicron settles. When we're able to mix cohorts, then we can mix cohorts in the morning, then we can open our hours back to regular hours. Parents can bring their kids between 8-5 and they would be in their own classroom.

Treasurer's report

- October's highlights – revenue is approx. \$45K over budget, expenses approx. \$62K over budget; net income: \$-22,045.97. (3 pay month, payroll expenses re: net loss)
- November's highlights – revenue is approx. \$10.2K lower than budget, expenses approx. \$7.1K lower than budget; net income: \$5,132.26.
- December's highlights – revenue is approx. \$17K lower than budget, expenses approx. \$20K over budget; net income: \$-41,577 (no subsidies – always shows that it's a month behind in December, so this won't look as drastic next month... it will be revised when the money comes)
- 2021 year-end is approx. net income: \$286K. Positive cash flow after the year.
 - Does funding that we know is ending, does that change the budget? Michelle - had to pay a few subsidies back based on changing eligibility. We budget the amount + divide by 12 knowing that expenses ebb and flow and evens out.

Staff sick time

- Staff having to take more time off with the new rules; Stacey is checking in with other centres to see how they're handling it. Most centres are suggesting staff take the COVID benefit that the federal government is offering (\$500/week). Stacey proposed if staff is off for more than 3 days, then 2 days would be covered by Bright Starts (i.e. 5-day isolation period).
- Bright Starts will update our new sick policy now that we know we can't take PCR tests to come out of isolation.
- Two staff off right now with COVID from before break... receiving gov't benefit currently.
- Staff can still qualify if anyone in the household is quarantining, they don't have to be sick.
- Covid benefit normally comes quickly, so staff aren't without the money for a long period of time. If they're off long-term, they would need to apply for EI.
- Board in agreement on these policy changes.

Fees for missed days

- We have confirmation that we only need to close a room now because of staff shortage.
- Bright Starts is going to receive \$28K sustainability funding – we can plan to provide fee credits with this funding as we did in 2021.
- Since the Region is not giving any fee credits back, Stacey will get clarification and would like to give back the 1-day fee to the three rooms that were closed on the first day. Otherwise, the rest of the sustainability funding will go to general operational expenses. Then we can also say the

money's coming from the Region, and not Bright Starts so there isn't any expectation from families that Bright Starts will always re-imburse COVID-related closures.

- Sustainability funding to come through in February.
- Board agrees with this plan.

Revised pandemic policies and vacation policy

- Stacey has updated policies to reflect the new guidelines
- Big changes – taking out any requirements to report; updated serious occurrence reporting, masking + N95, rapid testing, screening policy reflects the provincial screening tool
 - *Is the flowchart through HiMama different from the provincial screening tool? Board members appreciated the flowchart a bit easier to understand. Stacey – they do reflect the same guidelines.*
- Vacation policy – updating extra accrual for each year. Stacey asked staff to ask for a full allotment of vacation days at the beginning of the year to be submitted to help operations run more smoothly. Vacation days can be changed after booked but hoping this will help to ensure staff don't end up with left-over days. Asking them to also take week-blocks if possible. Easiest for Bright Starts to help schedule relief staff.
- Seniority policy – Stacey wants to update that rolling contracts are now included in their seniority at the centre, rather than the date of permanent hire; and update the work week from 35 hrs to 37.5 hrs.

Motion to approve the revised pandemic and vacation and seniority policies

- Moved by Michelle
- Seconded by Mariam
- 7 in favour, 1 abstention
- Motion carried

Update - Region of Waterloo Quality Initiatives

- Stacey made a presentation about the Region of Waterloo's Quality Initiatives (a new checklist for all childcare centres in the Region to ensure consistent quality across Waterloo).
- Leeann Horn will be Bright Starts "inspector" – she is an ECE.
- Regional funding will be more closely tied to the Quality Initiatives; Stacey is anticipating she might need a dedicated person for this on her leadership team.... She is hopeful there will be funding available to hire this person to ensure we are meeting goals.
- Omicron may have thrown the Region for the loop as it wasn't expected so that may change the timeline on these Initiatives.
 - Are there currently annual PD courses educators participate in? Stacey – have partnership with Conestoga's professional resource centre and they offer stuff on an on-going basis. Staff have to do them on weekends and nights... Stacey would also add PD to staff meetings, and these haven't happened because of COVID. PD has been a bit of a challenge. Our Region is awesome at PD. Educators put in lieu time when they take PD courses during off-hours.
 - Would there be other costs from QI other than a dedicated staff person? May make suggestions to replace things in the Centre... but Stacey doesn't anticipate it costing any additional money.

New business for next meeting

- Hours of Operation

- Vote on AGM date
- Filling President's role

Regrets for next meeting

- Julia + Kennedy will be resigning; Stacey to look at bylaws to see if we need to have a President or need to replace any members.

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

- Moved by Julia
- Seconded by Michelle
- All in favour
- Motion carried

Meeting adjourned at 9:03pm