Bright Starts Cooperative Early Learning Centre Board Meeting
Tuesday, November 18 at 7:30 pm
Chairperson: Kaitlin Bynkoski
Virtual Meeting (via Zoom)

Minutes

*** Please note that all relevant documents listed below for this meeting are located in this month's Board of Directors Meetings folder ***

In Attendance: Derek, Avery, Yuntian, Kaitlin, Valarie, Katie, Sean, Janice, Alyssa, Maeve, Patrick, and Stacey
Regrets: Rebecca, Davene, Andrea, and Karen
Absent: None

Meeting called to order at 7:33

7:33 **Approval** of Agenda – **Kaitlin**
Moved by Katie
11 in favour, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
Motion carried.

7:34 **Approval** of October 21, 2025, Meeting Minutes – **Kaitlin**
Moved by Sean
10 in favour, 0 opposed, 1 abstention
Motion carried.

7:35 **Crisis Management Subcommittee Report** – **Avery**

Two memos were submitted for the November 18, 2025 board meeting. The first outlined actions taken by the subcommittee since October. The second, prepared by legal counsel from Sorbara Law, addressing confidential employee related aspects of the case and proposed possible actions.

The memos were reviewed and discussed by the board. No motions required.

7:48 **Operating Budget 2026 – Avery**

- An overview of the operating budget was provided; however, due to ongoing regulatory uncertainty and a scheduled meeting with the Region on Friday, November 21, no formal decisions were made. Funding approvals for minor line items will be deferred until January.
- Avery and Stacey will meet with the Director of Child Services on Friday and will also address the ongoing payroll overpayment issue during this discussion.
- 2025 staff bonuses remain pending; the recommendation is to withhold discretionary bonuses until after the meeting with the Region, with a virtual vote to follow.
- Workforce funding changes require a $2/hour wage enhancement to apply to all paid time (including sickness and vacation), increasing costs. Stacey will seek clarification at Friday's meeting.
- Additional funding considerations include:
    - $12,000 for a large floor mixer plus electrical setup.

- Introducing a vacation buy-out option (1–2 weeks) to policy in 2026.

7:55 Treasurer's Report – Yuntian

- Yuntian provided an overview of October 2025 and YTD financial results.
- Full financial details are available in the *November 2025 Treasurer's Report* PowerPoint, located in the Finance Folder on the Board's Google Drive.
  - October 2025 Highlights: Actual revenue is higher than budgeted ($9,416) due to CWELCC funding and subsidy fees being higher than budgeted; Total expenses are lower than budgeted ($62,100) which includes actual payroll expenses being lower than budgeted wages and salaries ($41,012) AND general and administrative expenses being lower than budgeted ($23,121); Overall, net income is $71,516 higher than budgeted when we account for higher total revenue and lower total expenses this month.
  - YTD Highlights: Total revenue is higher than budgeted ($239,488) and total expenses are lower than budgeted ($70,747, therefore total net income is higher than budgeted ($310,235); YTD actual as % of annual budget is 82.41% (based on 83.33% year complete to date)
  - Balance Sheet Highlights: Positive cash flow of $118,000 in October; However, investments decreased by $20,582; Overall, cash plus investments increased from 1.45M in September to 1.57M in October.

8:02 Executive Director's Report – Stacey

- Stacey provided a summary of key updates. The full report is available in the *November 2025 Executive Director's Report* file, located in the November Meeting Folder on the Board's Google Drive. Highlights include:

Financial updates –

- CWELCC Cost Review
  - The Region provided a Cost Review Report as required by the Ministry, highlighting areas where expenses exceed the median of comparable operators or have increased from 2023–2025, including staffing costs, rent, and program supplies. The report requests explanations on how our practices support quality programs and identification of potential cost-saving opportunities. Currently, no viable savings have been identified without compromising care quality. A meeting with Children's Services is scheduled for November 21 to review the report and discuss responses. If efficiencies are found, a Cost Review Savings Schedule will be developed by December 2025, with implementation extending to December 2028.
  - The Region noted that the Centre is currently operating above the median compared to similar sites; however, there is uncertainty among Centre directors regarding how these comparisons are determined. The upcoming meeting with the Region on Friday is expected to provide clarification.
- 2026 CWELCC Funding
  - Following the Ministry of Education's November 11 announcement on the 2026 CWELCC Agreement, Children's Services will host a teleconference on November 26 to provide an overview of 2026 cost-based funding updates and details on 2025 reconciliation.
- 2026 Enhanced Staffing and New Inclusion Supports Funding
  - Enhanced Staffing contracts with KW Habilitation will end on December 31, 2025. Starting January 1, 2026, operators will use CWELCC

cost-based funding to support additional staffing for inclusion. A new Inclusion Supports funding stream will also be launched, providing annual allocations for eligible expenses such as staffing, professional development, and equipment. Children's Services will host a teleconference this week to outline details. Current changes will result in a loss of approximately $11,000 per month in funding for enhanced staffing. This represents a significant change, and clarifications from the Region will be sought about whether revised budgets can be submitted to account for items directly related to this funding loss.

Health, Safety, and Nutrition –

- Health: Toddler programs hit with fevers in November; in addition, a lot of staff illnesses.
- Child Care Centre Safety Measures – Parking Barriers: Continuing to reach out to the University of Waterloo Safety Office about a permanent solution and to the Region to determine funding for this work.
- Annual playground inspection (conducted in October): no safety concerns identified and only some minor repairs identified.

Enrollment –

- All programs remain at 100% occupancy.

Staffing/Programs –

- Hired a new kitchen staff member who started yesterday (November 17)
- Staff really enjoyed the staff appreciation event
    - Board members reminded that the new initiative from the staff appreciation group is to provide treats once per month to staff; the board is encouraged to continue to sign up for future treat days.
- iPads have been purchased and distributed to all classrooms.
- Performance reviews are conducted annually in November and staff bonuses are provided in December; the board will wait to approve staff bonuses until after the Region meeting on Friday, vote will be conducted virtually through email
- Staff environment survey has been updated for this year and included questions about the staff appreciation event; committee is reviewing and hoping to send out during the first week of December
- During the November staff meeting a workshop was presented in collaboration with Kids Ability and KW Habilitation called "Connecting the Dots: From Behaviour to Engagement". The workshop was well received by staff and consideration is being given to offering this as a workshop for parents in the New Year.

"Other" Updates -

- Digibot Administration Software –
    - Educators began using Digibot for parent communication this month, but initial parent feedback has been mixed due to registration and transition challenges (see feedback below for example). The team is working with Digibot to improve the experience, and despite the adjustment period, the administrative benefits make continuing with the platform worthwhile; a new app release is expected in the New Year.
    - Stacey will connect with the Parent Communication Committee in the New Year once she has met with Digibot.

- Logo Design/Rebrand –
    - Stacey reached out to two companies for quotes for this project; UW Marketing and Strategic Initiatives – Creative Studio and Pine & Pixel
    - UW creative studio is the preferred vendor due to responsiveness to inquiry and affordability - $85 per hour (8-10 hours of work to create the logo)

Approval of expenditures of up to $1,000 for the design of a new logo utilizing University of Waterloo Marketing and Strategic Initiatives – Creative Studio for the project – **Kaitlin**
Moved by Janice.
10 in favour, 0 opposed, 1 abstention
Motion carried.

- Ministry of Education Memo –
    - The Ministry announced a short-term extension of the CWELCC Program to March 31, 2026, allowing more time for provincial and federal negotiations toward a long-term agreement. Additional federal funding is needed for sustainability, and no further fee reductions are expected in 2026.

--- **New Business/Items for next agenda (January 20)**
- None received.

--- **Regrets for next meeting (January 20)**
- None received.

--- **Feedback (from Gmail and Box)**
- Anonymous Parent (Nov 7): "This new Digibot system is awful!!!! You can't select what kind of notifications you get - it's all or nothing. I get an email every time my kid pees. And when it's a photo I have to log in. And I can't even interact with the photo to let the staff know I appreciate the photos. I have to open a browser window and log in every time I have to do something??? It's so clunky!! Every parent I know with a kid in daycare has an app. How did we get stuck with this website?! I get that it has the registration info and health stuff in one place for admin use but it is AWFUL for the parent end. Maybe when they introduce an app this will improve. I hope so. But my guess is that it's going to be a new app with lots of glitches. I hope there is a good reason we switched to digibot (cost saving, huge admin side improvement, etc) because for the parent end it sucks."

Discussion: Stacey to discuss with Parent Communication Committee and Digibot; Considering a plan for more parent communications in the New Year to enhance the Digibot experience.

--- **ADJOURNMENT**
- Meeting adjourned at **8:42**