



Our Mission: We disrupt generational poverty through a primary focus on children & young adults and the specific challenges they face at distinct stages of life.

**Northwestern University Settlement Association
Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee**

**1400 W. Augusta Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60642
Guild Hall**

In Person Meeting – Mask Wearing Optional

Executive Committee members present in person: Chair Amy O'Donnell, Bob Best, Bill Welnhofer, Kathy Elliott, Sami ElSaden.

Guests present in person: Alice Schaff, Tyrone Washington.

Staff present in person: CEO Carole Wood, CFOO Christian Feaman, Chief of Staff Danielle LaPointe, Rowe Principal, Jason Smith, Assistant Secretary Alison Armstead.

Amy O'Donnell, Executive Committee Chair, called the meeting to order 12:05 PM.

Amy requested for the Assistant Secretary Alison Armstead to take the roll.

Public comment

No public comment.

Approval of Minutes of the February 26, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee

Bob Best made a motion to approve. Alice Schaff seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

Board Chair's Report

Amy O'Donnell expressed gratitude for the support received during various events, including the Winnetka Women's Board wine tasting fundraiser. Amy noted that Rowe Principal Jason Smith attended and spoke at the event, and thanked him for his participation. Amy informed the committee that the North Shore Auxiliary Board is hosting a luncheon the week of May 27th which will honor a former board member Beth Boeber.

The first ECE Autism Walk for Autism Awareness Month was a success, with participation from Early Childhood kids, parents, staff, and families. The community showed strong support, creating a welcoming environment for families with children on the spectrum.

There have been compliance issues with CPS, board trainings, and other administrative tasks. Amy reminded everyone to stay attentive to emails regarding compliance, signatures, and conflict of interest forms.

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Amy concluded by thanking everyone for their continued hard work on debt refinancing, charter renewal, and other ongoing projects, acknowledging the many moving parts involved.

CEO's Report

Carole Wood stated that as of April 30, Family Cares continued to make great progress, seeing an additional 13 scholars since the last meeting, bringing the total to 72 scholars. We began Medicaid billing, with projected earnings of \$100,000 to \$150,000 in the first year. Bryan Heidel, Vice President of Family Cares and his team have been very busy, and Camp Erin, scheduled for June, already has 43 campers enrolled, an increase from previous years.

Yasmin Rodriguez, Director of Support Services relaunched of the Golden Agers program, in March, and for the April event, members of the North Shore Board attended and helped facilitate a game of bingo for the participants. Efforts have been made to assist homeless families by providing Food Depository cards, resulting in increased utilization of the food pantry. This uptick includes contributions from Rowe, Early Childhood families, and new arrivals.

The outdoor education program is on track to serve about 900 kids this year, meeting IMC commitments despite staffing challenges. Our consultant Katie, helped redesign the program delivery with less staff, leading to successful outcomes.

The camp is dealing with water erosion issues, and steps are being taken to address these concerns. Seasonal staff hiring for summer camp has been challenging, and the structural deficit of the camp is being scrutinized. Efforts are focused on aligning programs with their financial means or having a plan to raise necessary funds.

Spring break camp for Rowe families, organized by Elizabeth Howard, Alvin H. Baum Family Fund Vice President of Youth and Young Adult Services and Martha Castillo, After School Director was successful, demonstrating that with intentional efforts, more Rowe families can be engaged. This camp served over 100 children, and parents were pleased with the experience.

Consultants have been engaged to help improve camp operations, making them financially viable and enhancing enrollment. The proposal includes creating sustainable and integrated programming across Rowe, and developing high-quality STEAM activities.

The primary goals include understanding the true cost of running the camp, identifying the target audience, determining appropriate staffing models, and creating enriching and sustainable programming. These steps aim to make the camp financially and programmatically stable for the long term.

Carole asked Rowe Principal, Jason Smith to step in to discuss the Rowe updates with the committee. Jason began the report by stating that this year, the school extended the academic year to ensure students had ample learning opportunities. Enrollment numbers have held steady at 680 to 683 students over the past four to six weeks. With only a few weeks remaining in the school year, it was expected that most families would not withdraw their children from school.

The school organized several enriching field trips. The sixth grade and, for the first time, the fourth grade visited the House in the Woods. Typically, this trip was exclusive to the sixth graders, but this year's inclusion of the fourth grade was a significant expansion. Additionally, the eighth graders enjoyed their second consecutive trip to Washington, DC, while the seventh graders had their inaugural day trip to Springfield, visiting the state capitol and meeting a state senator. These experiences were well-received and considered unique opportunities for the students.

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The school's sports program saw growth, providing students with more after-school activity options. The spring sports season concluded with participation in COVID flag football and other activities, marking the end of the sports calendar for the year.

Efforts to attract new students were vigorous, involving both modern and traditional advertising methods. The Director of Students and Family Engagements worked tirelessly, distributing information at local daycare centers, park district facilities, and other community locations. The school offered virtual and in-person open houses to accommodate families' schedules, which helped in boosting registration numbers.

The focus on early childhood enrollment was significant, with ongoing recruitment efforts aimed at local pre-K and preschool families. By the end of the reporting period, about 30 kindergarteners had registered for the upcoming year. The goal was to increase this number substantially before the new school year began.

Academically, the school adopted a two-tiered approach, concentrating on early literacy and advanced applications in higher grades. Two literacy coaches, hired through a grant, worked closely with teachers and students to enhance literacy skills. The school also utilized technological programs to support these initiatives. There was a consistent effort to improve test scores, with spring MAP testing providing crucial data for future planning.

Staffing for the next school year was in progress, with only three teachers not returning. The school issued offer letters and focused on retaining and recruiting high-quality staff. Community engagement remained a priority, with several events planned throughout the summer to maintain and boost enrollment. The end-of-year celebrations provided an additional platform for registration and community building.

Looking ahead, the school aimed to address declining enrollment trends observed citywide. Despite this challenge, the school remained one of the larger K-8 institutions in the area. The leadership team committed to continuous improvement, leveraging test data and feedback to enhance educational strategies and outcomes.

Chief of Staff Danielle LaPointe provided an institutional data update to the committee by walking through our upcoming work with the Chicago Benchmarking Collaborative (CBC). This group comprises peer organizations that perform work similar to ours. They have established a structured system for data collection, which is then compared across the organizations. This not only allowed us to see our performance but also to benchmark it against other similar organizations.

During the Program Integration Committee meeting, the data committee specifically discussed the data collection for early childhood and school-aged children. The tables of those data points were presented on the slides. Early childhood data collection focused heavily on increased school readiness, with several metrics listed, including a larger table for comprehensive review. For school-aged children, the focus was on improved school performance, with additional metrics related to attendance and initiative-taking outcomes.

The CBC, staffed by Christopher House, has multiple full-time staff dedicated to this work. Our organization took responsibility for our portion of data collection and data entry. The CBC has a robust mechanism to analyze the data and produce outcomes. CEOs and program directors from participating organizations meet regularly to review and interpret the data, aiding in focused data collection efforts and strategic planning.

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Danielle continued to her report by stating that one of the challenges we faced was managing disparate data across our programs. The collaboration with CBC provided a structured approach to streamline our data collection and focus on key metrics. This enabled us to track how various program interactions, such as those with the food pantry or camp attendance, impacted early childhood readiness and school performance.

Bryan Heidel worked closely on this initiative and concurrently, we reviewed our programs, with specific examples of data collection for service delivery and family care. We collected data on the number of people served, duration of care, type of service received, and outcomes.

This initiative helped align our data collection with the needs of our development team, addressing the increasing demand from funders for data and proven outcomes. The CBC partnership was instrumental in focusing our efforts in this direction.

The Executive Committee members expressed enthusiasm for this initiative, noting that it was a much-needed step toward measuring the ultimate impact across all our programs. Slide 17 highlighted the importance of establishing a baseline for progress, enabling us to measure the effectiveness of our school improvement programs and other initiatives over time.

We plan to initially focus on fundamental metrics, gradually expanding to include more comprehensive measures that align with our mission of improving the lives of our families and children. This initiative fit well with the operational plan from Cornified, creating a cohesive strategy for data-driven decision-making and progress tracking.

The collaboration with CBC marked a significant step in enhancing our data collection and analysis capabilities. Establishing a baseline and regular review processes will ensure we measure the impact of our mission effectively, guiding future improvements and strategic decisions.

Carole concluded the CEO report by discussing the updates for ECE. Carole informed the committee that Linda McLaren left the settlement, and as a result, the leadership team that worked under her collectively oversaw ECE. Despite this transition, things continued to progress. Our goal, is to promote from within. We identified an internal candidate who was on track to receive the necessary credentials to become the director by the end of June. She had expressed interest in the role, and the team showed strong support for her appointment.

Although she had never been an early childhood director before, we arranged for her to receive mentorship from experts at Carol Robertson and Christopher House. These mentors would guide her in leading an early childhood program. She was a longtime settlement employee with a solid track record, making this an excellent opportunity to reward her dedication and ambition.

The biggest challenge we face is addressing the financial deficit in early childhood programs. The program had been running a deficit since losing PII funding in 2016. Our focus was on recalibrating our approach: exploring the possibility of regaining PII funding, determining the number of additional children needed, and better blending various funding streams to achieve at least a breakeven point.

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Given the strong community response to having an elementary school in the neighborhood, we considered increasing advertising efforts to attract more families from diverse backgrounds, aiming for mixed-income classrooms. However, we understood that this approach was highly discouraged by other early childhood providers, and we recognized the need for more information before proceeding.

We also needed to address the issue of space. Our current building did not support a mixed-income early childhood program. Initially, there was a plan to move early childhood into the middle school building, but that relocation would not occur this summer due to the ongoing reconfiguration.

In conclusion, we continued to make progress despite the leadership transition, with a clear focus on internal promotion and addressing the financial and logistical challenges facing our early childhood program.

Financials

Bill Welnhofner and Christian Feaman delivered the Financial reports and led the discussion of the organizations financial planning. The balance sheet was reviewed, revealing a stable financial position with a positive free cash balance. The March results continued to be consistent with previous months, maintaining compliance and stability.

In April, preliminary numbers showed alignment with our fourth-quarter projections. Despite higher expenses typical for this period, such as stipends for teachers and costs related to supporting special education students, we anticipated savings in June due to the school year's end. This allowed us to offset some year-end costs.

There was a challenge regarding the decision from our financial partners, who were hesitant to move forward without seeing concrete results. However, the overall sentiment and body language from the meetings suggested a positive outcome was likely, albeit delayed by continuous requests for additional information.

Our debt service coverage ratio was a focal point. Initially set at 1.4, it had been revised to a more realistic 1.2, providing a modest cushion. This adjustment was necessary due to the reduced funding and the need to cut costs. The most significant cuts included reductions in administrative staff and expenses, amounting to substantial savings.

We also highlighted that our program expenses had dropped and that we had secured savings by bidding out janitorial services. The major financial concern was the transition from COVID-19 funding and the shift in funding models by CPS, leading to a decrease in overall revenue.

The CPS funding changes, including a move to per capita tuition charges, resulted in a 25% reduction in supplemental aid. This, combined with the lack of COVID-19 funding, meant a decrease in public revenue by \$1.2 million. We had anticipated these changes and based our budget accordingly, though there remained a potential for increased funding based on new CPS decisions.

Despite these challenges, we were optimistic about maintaining our financial health, supported by careful planning and prudent financial management. We closely monitored variances to ensure we stayed within a reasonable tolerance, confident in our ability to navigate the changing financial landscape.

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Closed Session

Bill made a motion that the Executive Committee go to Closed Session pursuant to: Section 2(c)(1) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act to consider the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of one or more specific employees; and (b) Section 2(c)(6) of the Open Meetings Act to discuss the setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the public body. Kathy Elliott seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. The open session was recessed at 2:19 pm and the Executive Committee went into a closed session.

At 2:49 pm, Kathy made a motion to terminate the closed session and to return to open session. Bob seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote. The open session resumed.

Meeting adjourned 2:50 pm

Minutes submitted by Alison Armstead

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