

# PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes

November 20, 2025 | 10:00 a.m.

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## In Attendance, Welcome, Approval of Minutes

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**Present:** Krystal Sanchez, Karissa Bent, Shawn Massingale, Hannah Horvath

**Douglas ESD Staff Present:** Athena Wikstrom, Ronda Osborn, Charlee Scheer, Heather Sewell, Robin Van Winkle

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A motion to approve October's minutes was made by Krystal and seconded by Hannah. It was noted that Krystal's name was spelled wrong in the minutes, and this was asked to be corrected. The motion was carried.

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## Introduction and Opening Remarks

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### **Athena Wikstrom-South - Central Early Learning Hub:**

The Douglas Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting was held on November 20, 2025, and was called to order at 10:05 a.m. Attendees were welcomed and given the opportunity to introduce themselves and their respective organizations and programs.

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## Hub Update

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### **Athena Wikstrom - South-Central Early Learning Hub:**

Athena shared several positive updates across programs and counties. In Klamath County, a provider chose not to continue participating in Preschool Promise this year, which initially resulted in the loss of nine slots. Although the state was not planning to reallocate those slots, the Hub advocated with support from governance partners and Superintendent Andlicia Nicholson. As a result, all nine slots were successfully reallocated and filled the same day the reallocation was announced, restoring full capacity in Klamath County. In Douglas County, all Preschool Promise slots are currently full, with the exception of available slots in Drain.

Community UPLIFT continues to see strong engagement, with referral levels remaining steady and higher than typically expected during the holiday season. Historically, referrals tend to decrease in November and December due to increased seasonal resources; however, that decline has not been observed this year. The Hub will be closed Wednesday through Friday, November 26 through 28, and staff will resume contacting families immediately upon return. Partners were encouraged to continue submitting Community UPLIFT referrals as family needs arise. During the upcoming two-week closure in December, staff will periodically monitor and respond to referrals to ensure families are not left waiting extended periods for follow-up.

Food insecurity remains a significant concern in the community. The Hub has distributed food resource information for families, alongside a flyer from UCAN, to help ensure partners and families are aware of available supports. While SNAP benefits have been issued, rising food costs continue to impact many families, including those who do not qualify for SNAP. The Hub emphasized the importance of keeping food resources visible and accessible to support families during this time.

Additional efforts are underway related to early literacy, which will be discussed further later in the meeting. Family Governance activities were also highlighted as a major success. The Family Governance Advisory Committee continues to meet regularly and will reconvene in the coming weeks for an art project and additional professional development. Recent topics have included wellness journaling, self-advocacy with medical providers, childcare providers, and schools, and education around 504 plans, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and Individual Family Support Plans (IFSPs), including understanding the differences between them. All training remains family-led and responsive to the needs identified by participants, contributing to a highly engaged, dynamic group focused on connecting families to resources and sharing information within the community.

### **Athena Wikstrom - South-Central Early Learning Hub:**

The group continued its discussion from the previous month regarding upcoming Early Literacy Grant funding, noting that applications will be released once materials are finalized, likely in the new year. Prior to opening the application process, the Hub sought to share examples of current and past literacy efforts and to gather partner input on priorities for future funding and Hub-led literacy initiatives across the region.

Several successful literacy projects from the prior year were highlighted. Tribal partners received non-competitive funds to supplement early literacy efforts, including a project by the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, which partnered with a tribal publisher to distribute culturally relevant book kits to families with children ranging from prenatal through age five. The Family Governance Advisory Committee also successfully wrote and received its first grant, which funded Little Free Libraries throughout the region. These libraries emphasize multilingual materials, including English, Spanish, Farsi, Tagalog, Takelma, and other non-English languages, as well as books focused on social-emotional learning, big emotions, potty training, separation, seasonal themes, and family connection rituals. Additional grantees included UCAN Head Start, which implemented classroom literacy backpacks for children to take home, Roseburg School District, which supported literacy-focused crafts and fine and gross-motor skill development, and a private preschool that created take-home literacy kits and expanded classroom materials. The Hub continues to stock Little Free Libraries and plans to place additional libraries in rural areas with limited access to traditional library services.

Partners were invited to share ideas for future literacy support. Discussion emphasized strategies to engage children in literacy when families may struggle with reading or rely heavily on screens. Dialogic reading was discussed as a practice that encourages conversation and interaction around books rather than focusing solely on reading text. Concerns were raised about excessive screen time and its impact on fine motor development, attention, and long-term literacy skills. Participants suggested creating family-friendly resources such as one-pagers highlighting non-screen activities, early literacy strategies, and alternatives for short periods when caregivers need children engaged, such as during meal preparation.

Additional ideas included providing busy books and manipulatives that support fine motor skills, creating travel or "to-go" activity bags for grocery stores or restaurants, and encouraging interactive use of technology rather than passive screen time. Suggestions were made to explore purchasing shared materials that could be placed in Little Free Libraries or modeled for families. While funding is limited this year, there was interest in exploring collaborative grants or partnerships to support broader community-based literacy activities, such as traveling music or theatrical read-aloud programs that could reach families where they already gather. Community partners shared existing efforts and opportunities for collaboration. The Altrusa Club of Roseburg described literacy-focused projects including rotating book kits for child care sites and developmentally appropriate busy bags for emergency rooms and urgent care settings. Interest was expressed in partnering with organizations such as Altrusa and SMART Reading to expand literacy outreach beyond traditional classroom settings. Additional strategies discussed included grocery-store scavenger hunts, picture-based shopping lists, and incorporating literacy and math concepts into everyday routines like laundry, cooking, and setting the table. The conversation expanded to include early math and pre-literacy skills, emphasizing sorting, categorizing, counting, pattern recognition, spatial language, and understanding quantities. Participants discussed the importance of integrating math and literacy through play, music, movement, shapes, and everyday language. Connections were also made between shape recognition and letter formation, as well as the value of developmentally appropriate materials for infants and toddlers, such as mirrors, black-and-white books, and pattern-based activities.

Concerns were raised about access to books in some childcare settings, particularly in-home providers, due to cost, durability, and children's limited attention spans. Shorter, more engaging materials, audio books, music, rhyming, and movement-based activities were identified as effective alternatives to lengthy books. The group emphasized the importance of meeting families where they are, fostering enjoyment and curiosity around literacy, and finding creative ways to help children develop a love of books and learning.

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## Holiday Supports

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### **Shawn Massingale-United Community Action Network (UCAN) Early Head Start/Head Start:**

Holiday assistance programs were reviewed, with clarification that registration for the Christmas for Kids program had already closed, as shopping for participating families was underway. Partners discussed whether additional holiday supports were available in Douglas County that could be shared with families who missed earlier registration deadlines. Questions were raised about the availability of Toys for Tots locally, with uncertainty noted due to inconsistent coordination in recent years. Participants were encouraged to share any confirmed information with Athena (athena.wikstrom@douglasesd.k12.or.us) so it could be distributed broadly, emphasizing the importance of these programs for families experiencing financial hardship during the holidays.

Updated information regarding Toys for Tots was reviewed, indicating that a Roseburg chapter is anticipated for 2025. Current online resources allow for toy donations, requests, and drop-site registration; however, the application deadline for requesting toys appeared to have already passed on November 15. The group noted ongoing concerns about how early registration deadlines often create barriers for families who typically begin seeking holiday assistance later in the season.

Several alternative holiday resources and events were discussed. Dress-a-Child, coordinated through the Salvation Army, was identified as having taken place earlier in November, with a note that Salvation Army programs sometimes remain open until around Thanksgiving. Community holiday events such as tree lightings in Roseburg and Sutherlin were shared as free, family-friendly activities, with Roseburg's tree lighting scheduled for November 30. Additional events included bike-related holiday light activities, light parades, and seasonal festivities that are typically free to attend and accessible for families.

Food support opportunities were also highlighted. Bee's Sweet Treats was noted as hosting a Thanksgiving dinner for families in need, with support from a local grocery store providing discounted food. Event flyers and details were shared in the meeting chat. Additional event details were clarified, including bike-light events that are free for walkers and bicyclists, with safety requirements such as helmets and bike lights.

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## Partner Updates

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**Hannah Horvath – Family Relief Nursery:** The Family Relief Nursery reported several events, including a Harvest Feast for families on Tuesday, November 25, featuring a staff-provided Thanksgiving meal and family games and activities. They also noted participation in Christmas for Kids shopping, a family Christmas party scheduled for December 18 from 3:00–5:00 p.m., and an additional Christmas meal potluck supported by staff for families. The Family Relief Nursery also shared that they are currently enrolling and encouraged referrals for families in the Yoncalla, Riddle, and Elkton areas.

**Ronda Osborn – Community UPLIFT:** Ronda shared that her recent focus was the South County Rendezvous, which had a strong turnout and was described as a positive first event, with the expectation that Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) will continue hosting similar events in the area.

**Heather Sewall - Early Intervention / Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE):** Heather shared updates from Early Intervention, noting recognition activities during Education Week and a recent gathering for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) staff in Myrtle Creek. Heather announced the return of the program's Giving Tree, supporting a nominated family with three boys. Upcoming activities include an ECSC staff training on December 19 focused on appreciative inquiry related to big emotions and behavior, followed by a staff celebration with a white elephant exchange and shared meal.

**Sarah Wheelock - Take Root Parenting Education:** Sarah shared reflections on a successful Dia de Muertos story time and craft event held previously, which brought together families from multiple cultures. Looking ahead, Sarah noted they are offering a resiliency workshop with Anella and a Parent Club Night focused on supporting families during the holidays when children are out of school, with programming planned in Yoncalla.

**Robin Van Winkle - Biz for Kids and Douglas County Child Care Coalition:** Robin shared that her work is largely behind the scenes through Business Champions for Kids and the Douglas County Child Care Coalition. Robin

described the development of a “parent packet” for employers to provide to employees caring for young children, including early learning resources, childcare information, and parent-friendly materials with simple language and QR codes. Robin reported strong feedback from both Umpqua Dairy and a recent presentation to nearly 30 Aviva Health residents, noting the packet’s usefulness for professionals supporting families. Robin also shared that while no major events are planned until January, the Child Care Coalition is actively advancing awareness efforts, including website updates, a radio spot with Kyle Bailey planned for early December, and a News-Review article to support community outreach and messaging about the importance of childcare.

**Shawn Massingale - United Community Action Network (UCAN) Early Head Start/Head Start:**

UCAN Head Start shared that their program will be closed Wednesday through Friday, November 26 through November 28, and for two weeks in December. Staffing needs remain a challenge, with one Roseburg classroom still closed due to teacher vacancies; partners were encouraged to refer qualified candidates. Head Start also shared that they are continuing to enroll children in anticipation of reopening the classroom once staffing is secured. A positive update was shared regarding the Preschool Promise class at Phoenix School serving Glide families, which is currently full. Through grant support, the program has begun providing busing for families enrolled in the Glide Preschool Promise, with appreciation extended to Umpqua Health and anticipated support from The Ford Family Foundation.

**Karissa Bent - Cobb School:** Karissa shared a major update and “win” for Cobb, noting that recent legislation allowing childcare in light industrial zones supported local efforts to rezone their heavy industrial property to light industrial. Karissa described this as a significant step forward and expressed appreciation for county, city, and state collaboration. The group celebrated this progress and acknowledged that further steps will follow.

**Krystal Sanchez - Migrant Education:** shared that their team has found it challenging to plan large events at this time and is instead focusing on being available and responsive to families throughout the season, including supporting minority children as needs arise.

**Additional Group Discussion:**

Partner agencies then shared upcoming holiday activities and enrollment reminders.

A planning update was shared regarding a Back-to-School Bash being coordinated through Umpqua Health and community partners. The event is planned for the end of summer and will be expanded to serve preschool through K–12 students. It will include immunizations, sports physicals, shoes, school supplies, haircuts, and resource connections, along with youth sports physicals and outreach from schools and community organizations. The event will be held at the fairgrounds and is hoping to include county-wide busing supports in partnership with Roseburg School District to reduce transportation barriers. The group was informed that updates and engagement opportunities will be shared as planning progresses, with an emphasis on ensuring early learners are included.

The team discussed strengthening participation in the January meeting, encouraging members to invite partners who support children and families, such as business leaders, child care providers, libraries, and organizations like Altrusa. Members were offered the option of sharing email addresses so new partners could be added to meeting invites. Planning also began for developing a simplified onboarding resource for the group, including purpose, mission, and key goals, to help orient new participants.

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## Adjournment

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**Shawn Massingale-United Community Action Network (UCAN) Early Head Start/Head Start:**

The next Douglas PAC meeting will be held on January 22, 2026, via Zoom.