

Heartland Early Education Policy Council Minutes 5.7.2026

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:

Udana Arceo, Jon Baker, April Rios, Ernesto Ruiz Esparza, Shelly Peters

NON-VOTING MEMBERS:

Jenny Reyes, Sherrie Scott, Linda Loret, Adriana Aranda

GUESTS:

Michelle Hellmuth, Elena Ortega

CALL TO ORDER:

Jenny Reyes called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

CHANGES AND ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:

There were no changes or additions to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

Udana Arceo motioned to approve the Consent agenda items as presented. Jon Baker seconded the motion, which passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Enrollment Report

Sherrie Scott presented the April enrollment report. She stated the Federal Early Head Start program is enrolled at 96%, the Kansas Early Head Start Child Care at 92%, Kansas Home Visits at 100%, and Head Start at 99%.

ELC training update

The English Language Conversation Class consisted of an eight-week series, which commenced on March 2, 2026, and concluded on May 4, 2026. Ernesto Ruiz Esparza, a class participant, expressed a strong interest in enrolling in future sessions. He expressed that the sessions offer an opportunity to practice the English language and learn Conscious Discipline.

NEW BUSINESS:

Michelle Hellmuth presented a series of new and revised policies for approval.

Bylaws – Amendment

Policy Council Bylaws were reviewed, outlining the organization's name and purpose, membership requirements, member responsibilities, training protocols, administrative offices, and the Policy Council's specific duties. Jon Baker motioned to approve the Bylaws with a change within the "Regular Meeting" section. Udana Arceo seconded the motion. The motion carried.

PC Selection Ratios

It is required that at least 51% of Policy Council representation be parents. One representative for Dickinson County, one for Ellsworth County, four representatives for Salina Head Start, and two for Early Head Start.

Jon motioned to approve the PC selection ratios as presented. Ernesto seconded the motion, which carried.

2026-2027 “Past Parent” election

A past parent consists of an individual whose child was part of the program and has exited or aged out. Policy Council advises having two Past parents. This brings experience to share with parents who are new to Policy Council. Jon Baker and Jenny Reyes nominated themselves as past parents. Shelly Peters motioned to approve Jon and Jenny as the 26-27 Policy Council past parents. Udana seconded the motion. The motion carried.

2026-2027 Community Representatives

A community representative is an individual who represents the community of Saline, Ellsworth and Dickinson County. Udana nominated herself as a community representative for Saline County. April Rios motioned to approve Udana as a community representative for Policy Council. Jon seconded the motion. The motion carried.

New policy – CDE130 – Teaching and Learning Environment for Center-Based Classrooms 0-5

The new policy ensures that Heartland Early Education provides high-quality, developmentally appropriate early education and child development services for children 0-5 in an organized learning environment emphasizing nurturing and responsive practices. Jon motioned to approve the new policy CDE130 as presented. April seconded the motion, which carried.

New Policy – CHS145 – Appropriate Supervision of Children

The new policy ensures that staff will follow appropriate practices to keep children safe during all activities, including active supervision of children at all times. Udana inquired about the reason for making all these policies now. Michelle explained that it is a response to updates to the performance standards, to reflect how the program is doing, and to prepare for an expected audit. Udana motioned to approve the policy CHS145 as presented. Shelly seconded the motion. The motion carried.

New Policy PP031 – Communication with Dual Language Learners (DLL) and their families

The new policy ensures staff and consultant/contractors are familiar with the ethnic backgrounds and heritages of families in the program and are able to serve and effectively communicate, either directly or through interpretation and translation, with children who are dual language learners and, to the extent feasible, with families of limited English proficiency. Jon motioned to approve the PP031 policy as presented. Ernesto seconded the motion, which passed.

New Policy PP032 – Staff Training and Professional Development

The new policy ensures Heartland will provide required orientation and maintain a comprehensive professional development system, including annual training and ongoing staff development, to ensure

compliance and delivery of high-quality services aligned with Head Start standards. Udana motioned to approve policy PP032 as presented. Jon seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Revised Policy PP033 – Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential for Classroom Staff

The policy ensures that all classroom staff meet the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential requirement according to their position. April motioned to approve policy PP033 as presented. Udana seconded the motion, which passed.

Revised Policy CHS004 – Safe Sleep Practices

The policy ensures Heartland Classrooms 0-5 will follow the most current guidance and stringent practices for napping and rest time per state licensing and Performance Standards. April motioned to approve the reviewed policy CHS004 as presented. Shelly seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Revised Policy CDE008 – Parent and Family Involvement in Center-Based Classrooms

The policy was revised to ensure Heartland Early Education recognizes parents' roles as their children's lifelong educators, and encourage parents to engage in their children's education by offering opportunities for family involvement. Shelly motioned to approve the revised policy CDE008 as presented. Jon seconded the motion, which passed.

Director Evaluation

Linda distributed the 25-26 Evaluation of Heartland Early Education's Director by the Policy Council.

Parent/Community Reports

- April expressed her appreciation for the Heartland program, specifically noting their successful assistance with her child's potty training. She also reported that her child's classroom recently completed a highly successful field trip to Milford Lake.
- Udana shared a significant developmental milestone, noting that her child has begun to verbalize and recently demonstrated this by saying "bye" to his teacher.
- Linda extended a formal thank you to all members in attendance for their commitment and participation in the Policy Council for the 2025-2026 school year.

Meeting adjourned at 5:53 p.m., motion made by Udana and seconded by Jon. Motion carried.