



702 3RD AVENUE SOUTH
VIRGINIA, MINNESOTA 55792-2797

ARROWHEAD HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL MINUTES

April 8, 2026

PRESENT:

Alicia Varani	VA Toddler Center/Chairperson
Brandi Reamer	EHS Hibbing & West Range
Emily Bolin	Proctor
Patina Eversum	Hermantown
Rachael Johnson	Hibbing II-PC Representative to AEOA BOD
Rob Hietala	AEOA Board Representative
Nicole Larsen	Family Support Specialist
Barb Fedora	Program Manager
Carla Current	EHS Program Manager
Charisse Salo	HS-EHS Program Manager
Connie Derickson	Program Manager
Elyse Lind	EHS Home Base Educator
Emily Checco	Preschool Home Base Educator
Felicia O'Connell	Family Support Specialist
Ileigh Gorham	Disabilities & Mental Health Manager
Jerry Crittenden	Community Relations Manager
Kristine Norberg	Health Manager
Ann Longnaker	EHS Home Base Educator
Meghan Holmes Katz	EHS Home Base Educator
Chris DeGroote	Head Start Assistant Director
Gabe Johnson	Head Start Director
Tracy Sandnas	Head Start Finance Supervisor

SITES NOT REPRESENTED OR EXCUSED:

Babbitt-Open
Chisholm-Open
EHS East Range-Quad 1-Excused
Hibbing I-Open
Hibbing III-Open
Hibbing IV-Open
PSHB-Excused
Two Harbors-Absent
Virginia Infant Center-Absent
Virginia I-Open
Virginia II-Absent

The Policy Council meeting was held on April 8, 2026, in the conference room of the Station 44 Building in Eveleth and via Teams.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Alicia Varani, Chairperson, called the Arrowhead Head Start Policy Council Meeting to order at 9:37 a.m. on Wednesday, April 8, 2026.
- II. **ROLL CALL:** Roll call was taken showing 10 members present. A quorum was established.
- III. **CORRECTION/APPROVAL OF February 12, 2026, POLICY COUNCIL MINUTES:** **Rob Hietala moved to accept February 12, 2026, minutes, supported by Stacey Roepke. Motion carried unanimously.**
- IV. **CORRECTIONS/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:** Add SPA Alternate under Old Business. **Rachel Johnson moved to add SPA Alternate under Old Business, supported by Stacey Roepke. Motion carried unanimously.**
- V. **CORRESPONDENCE:** We received our Notice of Award for our 2026-2027 Federal Grant Application. The new grant runs from 4/1/26-3/31/27.
- VI. **REPORTS:**

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Gabe Johnson reported on the federal side. Arrowhead Head Start has been assigned both a new federal program specialist and grant specialist. Head Start has been working to onboard enough new specialists after the government shutdown to make the numbers assigned to each specialist manageable.

The Head Start Performance Standards are going through federal review. Programs have not seen a draft of the new standards yet. These standards will include changes to the rules Head Start programs need to comply with.

Arrowhead Head Start expended their Nutrition Supplemental Grant on 3/31/26. This federal Head Start grant provided 100 hours of access to a dietician for families and staff, I am moving, I am Learning Training across our program, and equipment to promote healthy movement for children.

Head Start received a 0.6325% COLA for the 2026-2027 year in addition to our regular Federal Grant approval. No application for this funding was needed. That amount came to \$27,334.

On the state side, Minnesota Head Start Association (MHSA) is working with the National Head Start Association on the upcoming National Head Start (NHSA) Conference in Minneapolis. Members of the MHSA are actively involved in planning to get this ready for Head Start programs around the country.

MHSA concluded their quarterly meeting with all the Minnesota Head Start Programs on March 10th.

The NHSA Executive Director, Yasmina Vinci, met with programs from Minnesota in March to discuss what running a program in MN has been like over the past several months.

Construction is ongoing at the Infant and Toddler Center. Arrowhead Head Start opened the toddler room at the Parkview School as of April 6, 2026.

We will be able to remain at the PECC building for Proctor for the upcoming year. The Hermantown classroom will also be moving to that location. Hibbing classrooms will be remaining at the Washington Early Learning Center.

We are working on revisions to our state grant. We are going into year two of the grant. Our funding level is still at \$702,898. **Rachel Johnson moved to accept the Director's Report, supported by Armony Hutchinson. Motion carried unanimously.**

A. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Tracy Sandnas presented the financial statements.

FY 2025 MN HEAD START GRANT: This grant for \$702,898.00 for the period from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. The Current Period Actual Expenditures are \$153,514.67; the YTD Actual Expenditures are \$540,691.71. The balance is \$162,206.29.

FY 2025 FEDERAL HEAD START GRANT: This grant for \$2,544,527.00 for the period from April 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026. The Current Period Actual Expenditures are \$65,293.79; the YTD Actual Expenditures are \$2,642,100.56 A balance of \$(97,573.56) remains.

FY 2025 FEDERAL EARLY HEAD START GRANT: This grant for \$1,821,881.00 for the period from April 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026. The Current Period Actual Expenditures are \$263,655.21; the YTD Actual Expenditures are \$1,729,488.54; The balance of \$92,392.46 remains. A discussion was held on the overspend between Head Start and EHS. The overspend of \$5,181.10 will be expensed over to the state grant.

The January & February credit card report was presented. **Stacey Roepke moved to accept the Financial Reports, supported by Armony Hutchinson. Motion carried unanimously.**

C. COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPORT: Jerry Crittenden reported on enrollment and shared the current enrollment report. Our program was full for both Head Start and EHS. A discussion was held on both acceptance and over 30 in his report. **Stacey Roepke moved to accept the Community Relations Report, supported by Rob Hietala. Motion carried unanimously.**

D. AEOA BOARD MEETING REPORT DECEMBER 16, 2025: Rachel Johnson reported there were new members on the board. The COLA was approved. Rob Hietala brought up the financial struggles Head Start is having due to being flat funded and increased operating expenses. **Stacey Roepke moved to approve the AEOA Board Meeting Report, supported by Armony Hutchinson. Motion carried unanimously.**

VII.

OLD BUSINESS:

- A. FAMILY OUTCOMES REPORT:** Carla Current reported on period 2. Our numbers have increased from the first scoring period. Food and health insurance scored the lowest out of all the categories.
- B. SPA ALTERNATE:** Gabe reported that this position is still open to fill if anyone on the Policy Council is interested.
- C. PARENT FAMILY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Jerry Crittenden reported that the second family events are happening at all our sites. Staff used our nutrition grant based topics for this event with the help of our consultant.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. NEW HIRES:

New Staff	First	Second	Motion Passed
Virginia Toddler Center Teacher 1 Jamie Boes	Stacey Roepke	Rachel Johnson	Approved

- B. FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION WAIVER:** Gabe reported that he sends this in annually. This is for seat belts and restraints in regard to using school busses. Gabe included every site in case we have the opportunity for the school to pick them up in the morning. **Stacey Roepke moved to approve the Federal Transportation Waiver Funding Application, supported by Rachel Johnson. Motion carried unanimously.**

- C. **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:** None.
- IX. **POLICY COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE (NEXT MTG June 10, 2026, at Station 44).**
The following topics were discussed for our next meeting's theme: flamingoes, beach, and tropical animals. The group decided on Fun in the Sun for our June theme.
- X. **PARENT & COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS:** Stacey Roepke shared the MN Discovery Center hosted an Easter event. She attended a stress management release training at the Chisholm library. Next week's library topic is on sexual harassment.
- XI. **MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION:** Gabe reported that Chris DeGroote will be retiring in June. This will be her last meeting.
- XII. **ADJOURNMENT: Armony Hutchinson moved to adjourn the meeting, supported by Stacey Roepke. Motion carried unanimously.** The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Sandnas, Finance Supervisor

Gabe Johnson, Director Arrowhead Head Start