

OKLAHOMA PARTNERSHIP FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 25, 2025 – 1:00 PM

Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness

2915 N Classen Blvd., Ste. 400, Oklahoma City, OK 73106

The agenda was posted at 2915 N Classen Blvd, Oklahoma City, OK 73106 on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, at 11:00 AM.

Call to Order

Marshall Vogts, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM.

Roll Call

Dr. Amanda McCabe, OPSR Partnership Board Secretary, called roll and attendance. The quorum was met.

Members Present

Darrell Strong, Deb Smith, Paula Brown, Angie Clayton, Trisha Hutcherson, Dr. Hokehe Effiong, Tonya Garman, Gina McPherson, Teena Friend, Annette Wisk Jacobi, Marshall Vogts, Dr. Sada Knowles, Melissa Larimore, Dr. Amanda McCabe, Dr. Jennifer Stepp, Dr. Jennifer Pham, Lori Essary, Sharon Morgan

Members Present by Video (Zoom Video)

Annie Van Hanken, Kelly Kay, Carrie Williams

Members Not Present

Shawn Black, Suzie Powers, Jeffrey Cartmell, Ellen Buettner, Natalie Currie, Nellie Sanders, Jacqueline Evans, Melinda Fruendt, Chancellor Sean Burrage, Brent Haken, John Budd, Dr. Jon Pederson, Rachel Proper, Keith Reed

Staff Present

Allison Loeffler, Stephanie Lippert, Daphne Peschl, Jon Trudgeon, Gabrielle Jacobi, Dustin Goad, Kelsey Thomas, Terri Davis, Angela Rodriguez, Brittany Zaring-Hinkle, Mary Griffin, Terri Davis, Collette Sawyer, Wendi Freeman

Guests Present

Madison Wingate, Isabel Rodriguez, Deena Drabek (Zoom)

***Approval of Minutes**

Board Chair, Marshall Vogts, presented the board meeting minutes from the meeting held on April 24, 2025. Dr. Sada Knowles made a motion to approve the minutes without changes, and Deb Smith seconded the motion. Eighteen members voted in favor and two abstained. The motion passed.

Approval and Voting for Executive Committee Members: (Marshall Vogts)

Board Chair, Marshall Vogts, presented the approval of Paula Brown as the Treasurer of the OPSR Executive Committee. Angie Clayton made the motion to approve the nomination of Paula Brown as treasurer, and Dr. Jennifer Stepp seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Review of OPSR Financial Report (Daphne Peschl)

Daphne Peschl, OPSR Director of Finance, stated that the financials shared today are for DHS contracts in FY2025 as of June 30, 2025. Daphne shared that our DHS Base FY25 Budget was \$1,580,000, of which of that amount we spent \$1,540,000. She went on to say that all the Clearinghouse budget of \$2,827,534 has been spent. She stated that we have spent \$5,576,000 out of the DHS CCR&R budget of \$5,623,000. The FY25 PDG budget was \$10,651,000 and of that amount we have spent \$6,278,000. Daphne shared that the OPSR DHS Actuals were \$16,225,348.

(No action is required for review of the budget or financials.)

OCCY Parent Partnership Board (Dena Drabek, OCCY Parent Partnership Board Member)

Dena Drabek introduced herself as a single working mom of two children whom she adopted from Oklahoma's foster care system. She is a member of the OCCY Parent Partnership Board. She shared that OCCY Parent Partnership Board's role is to serve as a trusted advisory resource to help guide decision making across Oklahoma's child-serving systems. She explained that members of the board have many roles that impact these systems and ways to be utilized by various organizations. Members can review new policies and proposals, present at staff trainings and conferences or community events, participate in cross agency work groups or strategic planning efforts, and engage as co-presenters and thought partners in reform initiatives. Ms. Drabek stressed her belief that the members are very effective in these efforts because each and every member brings lived experience as a parent navigating these systems. They know firsthand what works and where families are still falling through the cracks.

Ms. Drabek then shared her personal story with the board to emphasize why she is so passionate about the work being done by the OCCY Parent Partnership Board. As a foster parent, she witnessed both the strengths and the gaps in Oklahoma's systems for children and their families, and how these experiences directly affect school readiness.

She explained that her first child came to her when she was four days old as a foster placement. She explained that unlike a typical parent, a foster parent can't plan or get on a waiting list for childcare before the baby is born. Ms. Drabek shared that it took her ten months to find quality childcare for her in Cleveland County, which is one of Oklahoma's childcare deserts. Once she was enrolled, the teachers recommended that the baby receive occupational therapy for emotional regulation which is certainly a big part of school readiness. She shared that they also utilized the Smart Start Early Birds and Ready for Kindergarten programs. Dena went on to say that these programs helped her to keep track of her

daughter's development, and she received foster parent training hours from helpful virtual sessions. Her daughter is now officially adopted and will start a full day PreK program next fall.

Ms. Drabek shared that her second child had a much different story. He was born with a congenital heart defect. He had three open heart surgeries by the time he entered Kindergarten last year. His doctors advised him to be in any childcare center while he was going through all these procedures in fear of illnesses because of his compromised immune system. He missed years of peer interaction and socialization. She worked with him at home with lessons provided from Early Birds and Ready for Kindergarten. She explained that his most difficult challenge today, at the age of seven, is potty training. She shared that she was so happy to find the YMCA would take him during the summer months even though he is not toileting independently. Ms. Drabek shared that her son's school readiness wasn't limited by his potential; it was limited by the systems and policies that couldn't flex to meet his needs.

Ms. Drabek concluded her presentation by sharing her concerns about barriers that are in place within systems to get children and families the services they need whether it is quality childcare or school readiness opportunities. She stressed once again the importance of OCCY Parent Partnership Board member's lived experiences and how they can and should guide how we build systems that work for all children.

Executive Director Report (Carrie Williams, Executive Director, OPSR)

Carrie shared that over the past quarter, OPSR has made significant progress in strengthening Oklahoma's early childhood system. Key highlights include the expansion of literacy programs, accreditation of support for providers, research dissemination through the annual symposium, and the successful completion of the Outdoor Learning Environments project.

Legislative Update (Carrie Williams, Executive Director, OPSR)

In response to the passage of HB2778, which created the Oklahoma Strong Start Program to provide free childcare benefits for those working in licensed childcare, Carrie stated that OPSR has devoted the past quarter to laying the foundation for successful implementation. This has included establishing the program's structure, developing and launching a system to track enrollment, ensure compliance, and determining payments. OPSR has built key partnerships with compliance consultants and the Child Care Services leadership team at the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, while also gathering critical feedback from childcare providers to test and refine the platform. Following these preparations, enrollment was opened first to providers and then to facility staff statewide, ensuring that the program is both responsive to the field and operationally sound.

CCR&R Update (Carrie Williams, Executive Director, OPSR)

Ms. Williams shared that OPSR's network of eight regional agencies has been busy, continuing to meet the needs of early childhood programs and their staff, as well as assisting families in their search for childcare options that meet the family's needs. She stated that all eight CCRR Regions successfully completed their progress assessment objective, with each of them exceeding expectations. On-site visits were made to each region during May and June 2025.

Ms. William's shared this information about childcare referrals to families during FY25:

- 3,088 families requested childcare referrals Child Care Consultation & Technical Assistance during FY25:
- 2,715 instances of consultation
- 2,143 instances of consultation were provided on-site at the early childhood program
- 1,056 (36%) of programs received technical assistance from a CCRR Consultant

Carrie shared with the board these numbers about childcare training during FY25:

- 266 training sessions were conducted
- 788 hours of training
- 3,710 early childhood providers were trained

Ms. Williams provided these statistics on licensed childcare capacity through the end of August 2025:

- Licensed Child Care slots = 122,943 - down 4,640 slots from a year ago
- Licensed Child Care Programs = 2,908 – down 183 programs from a year ago

Carrie shared that OPSR hosted Conscious Discipline training on September 18th-19th. This training provided high quality materials for 200 early childhood teachers and 100 early childhood administrators. Conscious Discipline is a social-emotional learning program and life practice that teaches adults and children to manage their own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to foster self-discipline, problem-solving, and resilient behavior.

Clearinghouse Update (Carrie Williams, Executive Director, OPSR)

Carrie shared that the Clearinghouse continues to support evidence-based practices and promote statewide learning:

- Round 9 Submissions: Opening October 1, 2025, focusing on School Readiness Pathways (Health, Family Support, Early Care & Education). A virtual Town Hall was hosted on September 22 to inform stakeholders.
- Autism Foundation of Oklahoma: Renewal of the TOCA Project under Title V, continuing statewide training and consultation for childcare providers supporting children with autism.
- Outdoor Learning Environments Project: Completion of all 30 sites, positively impacting 2,352 children, with the final ribbon-cutting in Wagoner.
- Indigenous Families Project: Collaboration with Catalyst News on Rooted Together, with listening sessions and evaluation planning, including an upcoming session on October 5th in Tulsa.

Preschool Development Grant (Carrie Williams, Executive Director, OPSR)

Ms. Williams stated that during the summer of 2025, OPSR advanced key PDG initiatives with a focus on strategic planning, family engagement, program quality improvement, and workforce development:

- Strategic Planning: OPSR finalized its updated strategic plan, aligning efforts across agencies and PDG priorities.
- Parent & Family Engagement: Expansion of Parent Cafés, protective factors training, and distribution of 35,524 books through Reach Out and Read.
- Program Quality Improvement: Expansion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (62 affiliates supported) and accreditation reimbursement for 76 providers.
- Subgrants: Planning finalized for the statewide Conscious Discipline Conference (Sept 18–19, 2025). Continued grants supported local childcare capacity.
- Workforce: Teacher Recruitment & Retention Pilot progressing toward an August 2025 launch.
- Serving Children with Disabilities: Integration of evidence-based initiatives such as Learn the Signs.

Research Director's Report (Carrie Williams, Executive Director, OPSR)

Carrie shared that the Research team has focused on convening stakeholders, advancing dissemination, and preparing for OPSR's Annual Report.

- 2025 Annual Early Childhood Research Symposium: Scheduled for October 6–7, 2025, at the First Americans Museum, featuring keynote speaker Dr. Cynthia Osborne. The symposium includes research presentations, poster sessions, and discussions on suspension/expulsion, childcare access, and family engagement.
- OPSR Annual Report: Draft submitted to Price Lang; revisions are underway for timely submission by November 1, 2025.
- Clearinghouse Collaboration: Provided evaluation support for the Rooted Together: A Cultural Guide for Families of Indigenous Children project.

Public Comments

None to report.

Announcements

Tonya Garman, Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitative Services, shared that the School of the Deaf satellite preschool program in Chickasha had to close due to low enrollment. She explained that her organization is looking for a new centralized location close to the metro, possibly Moore. They hope to have it up and run by the fall of 2026. While they are waiting for the new location, services are still available and provided by their outreach employees. Mrs. Garman also shared a new program that involves inmates in the correctional system. These inmates are being taught a new vocation that involves creating books in braille for young children. The books are called Twin Vision because a braille overlay is placed on top of regular print. This allows a blind child to follow along in braille while a sighted adult reads to the child.

Annette Wisk Jacobi, OCCY, shared that they are very busy with providing Parent Cafes. She wanted to make sure the board was aware of this important resource. She also wanted our members to know that they can create a Parent Café if they choose.

New Business

None to report.

Adjournment

Marshall Vogts asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Deb Smith made the motion, and Paula Brown seconded the motion to adjourn. Marshall Vogts adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Signature: _____

Carrie Williams, Executive Director, OPSR

Signature: _____

Marshall Vogts, OPSR Board Chair