



**Jefferson Ready Start Network
January 23, 2026 Meeting Minutes**

Welcome and Introductions

Charmaine Caccioppi called the meeting to order at 11:03 am. She asked for a roll call and introductions.

Members in Attendance

Jolena Broussard
Charmaine Caccioppi
Yossi Chesney
Gina Easterly
Lili Guilbault
Arielle Hughes
Anita Kennedy

Larry Manshel
Yolanda Motley
Paula Polito
Monique Rouege
Jim Garvey
Libbie Sonnier

Absent

Ruth Lawson
Chad Nugent
Diane Schnell

Scott Walker
Shondra Williams
Kate Wendel

Others Present

Michelle Aguirre
April Catarella
Linda Frantz
Darnester Nora
Olivia Stricklin

Christine Briede
McKenzie Esta
Janai Garrison
Rochelle Rabathaly

Charmaine welcomed guests expressing gratitude to the guests attending the meeting and encouraged them to talk to Paula Polito, Bylaws and Nominations Chair, to express their interest in joining the Board.

Meeting Summary

The Jefferson Ready Start Network advisory board meeting focused on strategic planning, funding updates, and provider engagement initiatives. The board discussed the need to update their blueprint and conduct formal strategic planning, with particular attention to advocacy efforts and provider representation. Key updates included the submission of a state funding application due in February, confirmation of a \$250,000 annual commitment from the Jefferson Parish Council, and the upcoming United Way renewal grant application. The board also reviewed the grassroots initiative's progress, which aims to engage providers in advocacy work, and discussed the need to clarify communication about different types of B3 seats. The conversation ended with plans to

hold future discussions about opening advisory board meetings to the public and potentially hosting a session at a United Way prosperity center.

Ready Start Network Board Leadership

Charmaine referred the Board to their agenda and noted that Board members had received the December meeting minutes via email. Paula moved that the December minutes be approved and Rabbi Chesney seconded the motion. Charmaine asked for questions or comments; there being none, she called for a vote. All were in favor, none opposed.

Charmaine then asked Paula to provide a report on the nominations process. Paula reported that she had received one nomination for the Board Chair position. Ruth Lawson had nominated Charmaine. Given Ruth's absence, Arielle nominated Charmaine and Libbie seconded the motion. Paula opened the floor for additional nominations. Hearing none, nominations were closed, a vote was taken and Charmaine was confirmed as Board Chair with all members voting in favor. Paula then opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chair. Monique Rouege nominated Donna Austin and Paula seconded the nomination. Paula asked for any additional nominations. Hearing none, nominations were closed, a vote was taken and Donna was confirmed as Vice Chair with all members voting in favor. The group then discussed the need to continue seeking family representatives and provider representatives to ensure the board composition meets bylaws requirements. The Board asked Paula as committee chair to follow up with potential new board members who recently communicated their interest including Michelle Aguirre, Ricky Smith, Whitney Brooks, and Kelly Bufkin.

Jefferson Ready Start Network Blueprint

Sarintha reported that the JRSN Blueprint was submitted to the Louisiana Department of Education as required (1/23/26 deadline). She led the board in a discussion of recent updates to the Blueprint, including their partnership with the Jefferson Community Foundation and a three-year funding commitment from the Jefferson Parish Council. Sarintha proposed scheduling strategic planning sessions, either during the next advisory board meeting in March or April, or as a separate session in May. The board agreed on the importance of advocacy work at all levels of government, with Rabbi Chesney and Libbie Sonnier highlighting the upcoming legislative session in March. Board members agreed a strategic planning session should be separate from a Board meeting and suggested a session be held in May. All planning should include provider input as well as broader community stakeholder feedback.

Strategic Planning and Funding Updates

Sarintha reported that the LDE disseminated the Request for Applications for Ready Start Lead Agencies. Applications are due February 13th and JRSN will be applying for the 2-year funding cycle. JRSN's continuation application will highlight the current structure under JCF as the RSN Lead Agency. Sarintha will be reaching out to all Board

members for letters of support. Sarintha also reported the LDE requirement for local fundraising documentation to be reported to the state by January 30th. This documentation is in follow up to the Request for State-Match Funding that was submitted in September. This documentation qualifies JRSN for the dollar-for-dollar match from the state Early Education Fund. Monique shared information to clarify the difference across the three B3 fund sources, including the CCAP B3 seats (administered by the LDE); the local funded B3 seats (JP Council and UWSELA funded, administered by JRSN); and the state-match funded B3 seats (ECE Fund, administered by JRSN). Board members asked Monique to consider renaming the Seats Committee to improve clarity. Rabbi Chesney reminded the group that the seats administered by JRSN are often very small in number. Monique will convene the Seats Committee in February to discuss the application and allocation process for JRSN administered B3 seats, including developing a transparent and equitable process for provider applications, and recommend new naming conventions for different seat types to reduce confusion. In February, the committee will have information about projected funding available for FY26-27.

Update on Early Care and Education Initiatives

Early Education Investment Collaborative. Monique Rouege reported on the grassroots initiative, which aims to engage providers, teachers, and families in early childhood education. Olivia presented a pyramid structure for the initiative, with an advisory council of providers at the top. At the kickoff meeting for the grassroots initiative, providers asked for increased communications around the JRSN Advisory Board and meetings. Monique and Anita Kennedy as Board members and grassroots council members can support this effort to increase communications and connections. Sarintha will work with the web developer to add meeting minutes, board member names and committee information to the JRSN website to increase transparency for providers. Olivia noted that the EEIC team will recruit providers to participate in the grassroots initiative advisory council and facilitate the first meeting of the council.

Grant Applications. Sarintha provided an update on grant applications, including a renewal application for United Way funding. They discussed the new case management component of the United Way application. Paula highlighted the work of United Way's Prosperity Centers in supporting families. Charmaine will organize a future board meeting at a United Way Prosperity Center for board members to learn about available resources and referral processes.

Communications. April provided a communications report, including data on the most recent newsletter with a high open rate. April will ensure all board members and guests are added to the newsletter distribution list.

Early ED Month Kickoff. Libbie announced plans for Early Ed Month activities with the kickoff event at Monique's center, Carlie Care Kids in Gretna. This event will feature the high quality early care and education at Carlie Care and recognize legislative champions, such as Senator Beth Mizell and Senator Royce Duplesis. Local JP Council

members, Councilman at Large Scott Walker and District 1 Councilman Tim Kerner, are confirmed to attend and speak to the state of ECE in Jefferson. Libbie reminded the Board to register for the virtual keynote presentation by Elizabeth Groginsky, Cabinet Secretary for New Mexico's Early Childhood Education and Care Department. Libbie announced that the governor's budget was released and maintains the \$78 million for ECE but advocates should continue their work during the legislative session to ensure these funds continue. Libby agreed to ask about the process for local lead agencies to communicate needs for CCAP B3 contracted seats at the next biweekly meeting with the Louisiana Department of Education, and report back to the Board next meeting.

Announcements. Lili announced that the School Readiness Tax Credit (SRTC) campaign ended with the calendar year on 12/31/25. They raised \$216,000 in tax credits. Board members congratulated Lili and her team on the great work.

With a motion and second to adjourn, Charmaine closed the meeting at 12:18 and encouraged everyone to attend the Early ED month kickoff at Carlie Care Kids in Gretna.