KISHWAUKEE COLLEGE

Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday, October 22, 2026

External Participants:
Aaron Confer – Youth Development Director, Kishwaukee YMCA
Rachel Engel – Director, Walnut Street Daycare Center
Dina Alzeer – Higher Education and Workforce Development Navigator, 4-C of DeKalb
Kendra Nenia – Higher Education and Workforce Development Navigator, 4-C of DeKalb
Samantha McDavid – Coordinator of Early Learning Programs, DeKalb Regional Office of Education (ROE)

Internal Participants:
Jud Curry – Dean of Instruction
Danielle Hardesty – Associate Dean of Instruction
Brett Williams – Director of Grants
Laura Gregory – Coordinator of Employment and Job Placement Services
Lauren Duval – Academic Advisor
Courtney Walz – Director of Development
LaCretia Konan – Associate Vice President of Community Engagement
Meryl Kleiner – Instructor, Early Childhood Education (ECE)

I. College Updates
   A. Minutes from last meeting approved.
   B. Fall enrollment is down slightly from last fall but overall remains stable for the College.
   C. The College has expanded LinkedIn Learning to include students, which offers resources on professional development and employability skills, which can be used as course assignments or activities.
   D. The College now offers AI credential courses that are available to students and staff. These courses are free to complete and focus on AI literacy and application in the workplace.
   E. The College continues its goal of revising student learning outcomes (SLOs) to focus on essential employability skills for success in the workforce.
   F. The College will host a Joint Advisory Committee Meeting on April 7th, 2027 from 11am–1pm with the goal of encouraging collaboration across disciplines and programs.
   G. The College will host its annual Evening at Kish on November 5th, 2026 from 5:00–7:00pm.
II. Department Updates

A. Enrollment is down slightly from last year, but overall stable for the program, averaging 75% - 80% capacity per course.
B. ECE 280, Practicum, will be offered in Spring 2027 after two successful sections in Spring and Summer 2026. Nenia, 4-C DeKalb, will continue developing the practicum on the foundation established by Kleiner.
C. In collaboration with Dr. Samantha Murray of South Suburban College, the online virtual process for credit for prior learning (CPL) has been adapted to zoom while maintaining similar scenarios and learning outcomes.
    i. Since June 2026, there have been 10 CPL inquiries and 6 students completed the CPL process, earning between 3 and 6 college credits each.
D. The College will host the Child Care University with 4-C of DeKalb on Saturday, November 14th (7:00am-4:00pm).

III. ECACE Updates

A. The Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity is gathering data and student feedback with the goal of building seamless transfers for students from two-year to four-year institutions. They hope to identify barriers and gaps that may hinder students or prevent them from succeeding after transferring.

IV. Partner Updates and Discussion

A. External partners report limited encounters with digital badges but are aware of them.
    i. All agreed they would consider digital badges in a hiring decision, but they would not take precedent over previous experience listed on a resume or an official transcript.
    ii. Nenia, 4-C DeKalb, discussed the benefit of utilizing digital badges to:
        1. Denote non-credit credentials.
        2. Document skills gained through programs.
    iii. It was noted that the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential is now available as a digital badge.
B. Confer, Kishwaukee YMCA, reported a very positive site visit with Gregory, thanking her for taking time to meet with him and discuss grant and partnership opportunities.
    i. Gregory highlighted that the Illinois Cooperative Work Study (ICWS) grant is available to employers who have hired or are interested in hiring Kish students.
    ii. Alzeer and Nenia, 4-C DeKalb, will follow up with Gregory for additional information.
C. External partners report that younger employees struggle to effectively communicate with parents and handle interpersonal conflicts with co-workers and staff.

i. Nenia, 4-C DeKalb, plans to incorporate coaching into future ECE 280 courses.
ii. Konan offered Crucial Conversations training, which is free to employers.

D. Alzeer, 4-C DeKalb, noted that employees are more motivated to pursue continuing education when it supports a clear career path.
i. Engel, Walnut Street Daycare Center, suggested connecting opportunities to Great Start.
ii. Curry will explore incorporating career pathway discussions into ECE courses.

V. Next Meeting – Spring 2027 – Joint Advisory Committee Meeting, April 7, 2027, 11:00am-1:00pm