

COLA Application

Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) Narrative

North Early Learning Center Head Start program is governed by the grantee, West Orange-Cove Consolidated ISD. The Head Start program follows the salary schedule set by the Board of Trustees. Annually, the pay scale set for district employees reflects varying increases each year. In addition, a 'step' increase for years of service is awarded to educational salary staff. Salaries paid to Head Start employees reflect these board approved increases. Additionally, to ensure that salaries are fair and equitable, West Orange-Cove Consolidated ISD participates in an annual wage comparability study that compares our salary scales with those of surrounding districts. From this study results, West Orange-Cove Consolidated ISD is shown to pay salary/wages that are in line with those counties of similar demographics.

At this time, the Board of Trustees is considering a 3% increase in Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for the upcoming 2020-2021 School Year. The final approval for this increase will not be made until the summer of 2020. The salary increase of 3% will apply to all staff member positions across the board with the exception of instructional staff that receive a 'step' increase annually.

Budget and Budget Justification

For the 2020-2021 program, all employees for West Orange-Cove Consolidated ISD, with the exception of educational salary employees (those that will receive a 'step' increase), can expect to receive an increase of no more than three percent in wages and fringe. The following list details salary and fringe benefit increases for Head Start staff for the upcoming program year:

- A 3% increase for all staff, not including those that receive a ‘step’ increase, pending approval at the July 2020 Board Meeting
- Salaries for summer family service employees to continue application intake and ensure an adequate waitlist for the 2020-2021 School Year
- An increase in substitute funding that will ensure quality substitutes in the absence of instructional staff

This COLA allotment of \$32,230 for Head Start will offset the proposed 2020-2021 salary increases mandated by our grantee. In past years, our program has had to decrease operational expenses in order to fund approved salary/fringe increases. The breakdown for COLA funding will include salary and fringe benefits increase for all position except instructional staff receiving a ‘step’ increase. Salary and fringe benefits all other staff at a 3% increase is \$25,199, summer advocate for application intake for \$3,486, a \$1,795 increase for teacher substitutes, and a \$1,750 increase for instructional assistant substitutes. This will ensure that high-quality staff is sustainable throughout the school year in order to provide high-quality instruction to students and families.

Non-Federal Match

The non-federal match for the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and Quality Improvement (QI) funds due to the Coronavirus outbreak that created a national emergency is not applicable to qualify for this funding. The decrease amount of community resources predicts the lack of availability for Head Start grantees to meet additional match funds for the 2020-2021 school year. Office of Head Start (OHS) determined on April 3, 2020 the approval of all requests for

waiver of non-federal match associated with COLA and QI. The request of waiver is submitted in the HSES application for COLA and I funding, Section C of the SF-424A.

North Early Learning Center Head Start program is committed to ongoing quality services to our enrolled children and families, as well as to the service area of the community. The addition of the COLA award to our base funding award will ensure that staff wages remain competitive, thereby helping us retain high-quality staff.