

Creating Foundations For Success

On May 3, more than 300 early childhood educators attended the 10th Annual School Readiness Symposium, "Creating Foundations for Success," hosted by Fairfax Futures, the Fairfax County Office for Children and Fairfax County Public Schools. Made possible by a grant from the PNC Foundation, this symposium provided early childhood educators a unique opportunity to interact with nationally recognized presenters who provided strategies for supporting children's school readiness.

The event opened with welcoming remarks from Deputy County Executive Patricia Harrison; PNC Bank Senior Vice President Susan Toewe; the Director of the Fairfax County

Office for Children Anne-Marie Twohie; Director, PreK-12 Curriculum and Instruction for Fairfax County Public Schools Craig Herring; and Fairfax County Office for Children School Readiness Coordinator, Betsi Closter.

Workshop presenters included Erin Ramsey, of the Families and Work Institute; Dr. John Almarode, James Madison University; Kofi Dennis, an early childhood music and movement specialist; Erin Jacob, an artist and educator who focuses on the role the arts play in learning across academic content areas; and Reston Children's Center Executive Director Fahemeh

Pirzadeh. Each spoke about the importance of guiding and supporting children's development as they acquire the early building blocks of executive function skills and social emotional competence.

"The partnership OFC has with Fairfax Futures and FCPS makes this shared day of learning possible. We really appreciate working with our partners to provide opportunities that support the early childhood community," said Twohie.



Presenters and panelists along with representatives of the event's sponsors - the PNC Foundation, Fairfax Futures, FCPS and Office for Children - prepare for the start of the 10th annual symposium.



Employees' Child Care Center Celebrates Staff



May 4-10 was National Teacher Appreciation Week and at the Employees' Child Care Center all of the staff were celebrated including the teachers, administrative and support staff, the cook and the Job Discovery, Inc. kitchen helpers.

“We appreciate the contributions of all of our staff,”

said center director Ruth Stover. “Everyone is critical to our mission to provide quality care for the children of Fairfax County Government employees in a child-centered learning program where children and families are respected and nurtured.”

Families participated in the planning of appreciation events throughout the week including prize drawings for staff, bouquets of flowers, refreshments and small gifts.

CCAR Recruits for the Subsidy Program

This spring, Child Care Assistance and Referral program staff actively recruited income-eligible families living in Fairfax County to apply to receive benefits through the child care subsidy program. The subsidy program provides assistance to working families having difficulty paying for child care. Having received additional funding from the state, staff quickly used this opportunity to recruit families to the program.

CCAR established a Recruitment Campaign Group with the goal of reaching as many families as possible in the shortest amount of time. Group members Susan Jackson, Emily Sareen, Marissa Younts, Mindy Beamer, Jenna Gorab, and Jody Withrow worked with communications staff to develop flyers and posters and use them to reach out into the community in places families frequent. Locations included libraries, grocery stores, public schools, Health Department locations, doctor's offices, coffee shops, community centers, School Readiness meetings and other Fairfax County agencies.



Group members Mindy Beamer, Marissa Younts, Jenna Gorab, Emily Sareen, Susan Jackson, and Jody Withrow, not pictured.

Staff also contacted workers from other divisions and agencies, attended outreach events, family child care provider events, and encouraged current CCAR programs and providers to reach out to families who might be eligible.

“Within a week of distributing the posters and flyers in the community, we saw a significant surge in the number of applications being submitted for assistance,” said Child Care Specialist Susan Jackson. “We are extremely pleased with the success of this campaign.”



Bowler Walks-A-Mile with Early Head Start

On April 3 DFS Director Nanette Bowler with Child Care Specialist Laura Curry-Greene visited Early Head Start family child care provider, Lilian Llanos. This was part of Bowler's personal initiative to experience hands-on the work of DFS employees in each division. As the children ate lunch, Bowler was able to observe how the USDA Food Program is implemented. Bowler learned about the curriculum and joined Llanos in reading books to the children as they transitioned to nap time.

"It was great for Nannette to see the way EHS providers observe the children and use the Portage curriculum to create monthly goals for each child," explained Curry-Greene. "Portage helps the providers to plan differentiated experiences within activities based on the children's individual goals."



SACC Track and Field Fun

SACC's 4th annual track and field meet was held on Saturday, May 3 on the track of Mount Vernon High School in Alexandria. Approximately 400 children ages 5 - 8 from 24 SACC centers throughout the county participated in the event.

The SACC center teachers were committed to coaching and preparing children to participate. In the months leading up to the event, they offered children the opportunity to develop and practice their track and field skills in variety of ways. These experiences were designed to build children's self-confidence and also emphasized the value of team work.

On the day of the event, children enthusiastically participated in the 50-yard dash, 100-yard dash, shotput throw and 4 x 1 relay.

The day was a huge success for each child, their proud parents and the dedicated SACC staff. The kids displayed excellent sportsmanship as they cheered each other on with high fives, and the smiles on the children's faces as they ran down the track were priceless - showing their joy, their determination, and the thrill of both their individual and team accomplishment!



Supporting Dual Language Learners



On April 25 and 26, The Office for Children hosted Karen Nemeth, Ed.M, nationally recognized author and presenter at a professional development event, Supporting Dual Language Learners in Programs for Young Children. Real-world examples, hilarious anecdotes and boundless enthusiasm made Nemeth a captivating speaker for the group of more than 200 early childhood and school age educators and mentors in attendance.

According to Nemeth the fastest growing section of the US population is children under the age of 6 who speak languages other than English. In Fairfax, more than 170 different languages are spoken in the homes of children enrolled in county schools, representing 49.2 percent of county elementary school students. Early childhood and school-age educators need strategies to support the learning needed for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Nemeth presented an overview of the stages of first and second language development with strategies for educators working effectively with young dual language learners and their families. Some of these included the importance of:

- Interaction with others as essential to language development.
- Support of home language, the foundation that supports children's ability to learn another language.
- Use of key words and visual aids in the child's home language, providing for a welcoming environment.
- Frequent use of non-verbal communication like body language and gestures to improve understanding.
- Sharing strategies with families to support dual language development

Participants also had the opportunity to work in small groups to plan ways to implement strategies. A copy of Nemeth's book "Many Languages One Classroom" was available for each participant to take with them to use as a resource in their early care and school-age programs.

"Karen's presentation was a valuable resource for early childhood professionals." said School Readiness Coordinator Betsi Closter. "OFC looks forward to providing more workshops on supporting dual language learners."



OFC Office for Children

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