

STEM In Early Childhood Education

This fall, OFC's Institute for Early Learning hosted its 7th Annual Professional Development Day at the Fairfax County Government Center. Nearly 150 early childhood professionals took part in this event which focused on science, engineering and math (STEM) in early childhood education.

Following the welcome and introductions in the Board Auditorium, the participants took part in three workshops throughout the morning. The workshops were Tubes and

Ramps, Interlocking Structures and Stackables. These hands-on sessions were designed so that the participants would be able to experiment with and experience activities that can be used to stimulate children's interest in STEM disciplines.

IFEL Director Karen Quist explained that, "Many basic concepts that we use every day are actually science and engineering principles. For children, learning about science and engineering in this way is fun." Through these activities educators can lead children through the phases of open-ended learning which are: questioning, predicting, experimenting, and analyzing.



different lengths and sizes, as well as how balls of different sizes and weights move through the tubes or down the ramps. In Interlocking Structures providers tinkered with how to make pieces that interlock from regular household items such as craft sticks, sponges, cardboard and Velcro. They also explored designing a variety of structures with those objects.

Finally in Stackables, workshop attendants used giant Jenga blocks to build structures and see what could happen when pieces were removed. They also determined how high they could build a structure using cups and paper. This event provided participants with a variety of fun, simple ways to engage children in STEM activities.

Working in teams of four or five, participants explored some basic principles of engineering.

In Tubes and Ramps the providers explored what engineering systems could be created with simple cardboard tubes and ramps of all



Federal Preschool Expansion Grant Approved

Virginia is one of 18 states recently awarded grants by the U.S. Department of Education to provide children access to high quality preschool. Building from the successful Virginia Preschool Initiative, Virginia will create a more comprehensive and effective state preschool program called VPI Plus (VPI+). Fairfax County is one of 11 school districts that will participate in Virginia's \$17.5 million Preschool Expansion Grant, which will be implemented beginning with the 2015-16 school year.

The selected divisions throughout the state will offer focused outreach to families and communities, as well as individualized support for children with unique learning needs, including students with disabilities, English-language learners, and children from military families. The Office for Children, and Fairfax County Public Schools will partner to expand services to 70 additional children and families in four classrooms. Two classrooms will be identified in high needs FCPS schools and two will be in community based early childhood programs. The new funds will also provide professional learning opportunities for early childhood educators.

"We are excited to be one of the localities that will participate in this grant," said Rhonda Houck who oversees the VPI program. "This funding will allow us to positively impact more children in our community and support their success in kindergarten and beyond."



Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu speaks to child care professionals at the Flu Prevention Workshop.

Flu Prevention Workshop for Child Care Professionals

During the winter months, colds, flu and other respiratory illnesses are often on the rise. History shows that children under the age of 5, and older children with certain medical conditions (including asthma), are more likely to become very sick when they get the flu. Illness means missed time from school or child care programs for young children and time away from work for parents. The good news is that there are some simple things everyone can do to help reduce the spread of these illnesses.

The Office for Children is partnering with the Fairfax County Health Department to help the child care community limit the spread of these diseases. Child care professionals recently had the opportunity to attend a Flu Prevention Workshop with a hand-washing demonstration

sponsored by the Health Department. They also were able to receive flu vaccinations at no cost.

Participants enjoyed the workshop where they learned how flu is spread, what the symptoms are and everyday steps child care professionals can take to stop the spread of germs and prevent flu. In addition, the Health Department provided materials for members of the child care community to distribute to parents of the children in their care. These materials included information about flu vaccines and prevention.

"We appreciate Dr. Gloria and the Health Department staff for providing such valuable information and resources to county child care professionals," said Jene Moore, director of CEPS.



The Health Department provided a handwashing demonstration.

Children in SACC Take Part in Community Service

Throughout the year, SACC children and staff are making a difference through community service. SACC teachers provide a wide-range and variety of creative opportunities for children to make important contributions to those in need.

This year, several SACC centers have been collecting and donating food, visiting food distribution centers and helping to distribute food to families. Through these efforts, children in SACC have developed an enhanced awareness of the needs of others and a strong connection to their community.

Children attending the Providence SACC program had the opportunity to visit the Bread for the City food pantry to help sort, bag and distribute food donations through the Holiday Helpings program, which provides complete holiday meals to D.C. residents with low-income. The children also created a website to support the charitable work of Bread for the City and help raise awareness for this project. As an incentive to give back to the community the Providence SACC children sent a piece of their artwork to each person who contributed.

Eight SACC centers from the Centreville area took part in the 4th Annual Complete the Circle FoodRaiser! which supports Fairfax County area neighbors in need through Our Daily Bread and Food for Others. Children, families, and staff from Bull Run, Centre Ridge, Centreville, Cub Run, Deer Park, London Towne, Union Mill, and Virginia Run SACC centers formed the largest of the 50 teams who collected food and gathered at Fairfax High School to prepare food bags for distribution to families in need. The nearly 1,000 community participants wore event t-shirts and came together to create an inspiring image of unity. The image created a wonderful Art for the Sky photo featuring the volunteers and the nearly 8,300 pounds of food they collected.

SACC Regional Supervisor Tanya Pullman observed "Providing a variety of opportunities for children to engage in hands-on community service experiences is just one of the ways SACC staff are teaching the next generation of leaders the importance of being caring citizens, and helping them develop a true sense of what it means to work toward making a positive change for others in the world."



Children, families, and staff from Bull Run, Centre Ridge, Centreville, Cub Run, Deer Park, London Towne, Union Mill, and Virginia Run SACC centers at the 4th Annual Complete the Circle FoodRaiser!



Children attending the Providence SACC program help sort, bag and distribute food donations at the Bread for the City food pantry.

ECCC Visits Public Safety Building



Children from the Employees Child Care Center had the opportunity to take a walking field trip to see the site of the new public safety building under construction near the Herrity and Pennino buildings. The children were excited that some family members were able to come along for this field trip.

Project Manager Andy Miller, along with staff Geoff Kimmel, Eileen Gasteiger, and Tara Henderson met with the group in the lobby of the Pennino building. They handed out fun yellow construction hats to each of the children as souvenirs. Once the group was all gathered, they made their way to the sixth floor of the Herrity building where they had a bird's-eye view of the construction site. Miller explained the functions of various machines and answered many questions from the children.

The group rounded out the trip by walking to the fence line beside the site to get a closer view. The children enjoyed this opportunity to learn about the way buildings are constructed, how various machines work and the staff whose jobs are related to construction.

O F C Office for Children

This employee newsletter is published by the Office for Children, a division of the Fairfax County Dept. of Family Services. If you have any questions, contact Angela Morlu at 703-324-7528 or Nancy McDonough at 703-324-8042. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc.



A Fairfax County, VA Publication



Reasonable accommodations made upon request; call 703-324-8000 or TTY 711.