

## SACC's Annual Orientation



At the annual SACC orientation, the conference center rooms were brimming with nearly 700 teachers, eager to learn about SACC's new curriculum, Global Adventurers: Making Connections Around the World. Following welcoming remarks by SACC Director Anne Goldstein and OFC Director Anne-Marie Twohie, SACC supervisors Beth Leggat, Damon Terrell and Kevin Mathews presented different aspects of the curriculum.

In keeping with the cultural focus, a professional bagpipe player led the teachers from the opening session to cluster trainings with their regional supervisors. In these sessions, staff had the opportunity to engage in a discussion about creative ways to implement this year's five curriculum focus areas and newly developed supporting characters. Each table brainstormed ideas for experiences to go with each one of the focus areas, based on a particular destination or country. Field trips, special visitors, short and long term projects, and culminating events were shared that could be used throughout the year.

Next, staff moved through a series of workshops featuring cultural activities that could be integrated into the children's learning experiences. Each center's staff attended a variety of sessions exploring various world cultures, art and traditions; building community; helping children connect to global environmental issues; and applying Mind in the Making information to help children develop the seven essential life skills.

Staff explored sports and fitness in sessions including "Cricket - The World's Second Most Popular Sport"; "Rugby with Children," which demonstrated ways to introduce rugby through familiar children's games; and "Adapting Activities to Include All Children," which provided guidance on how to implement inclusive recreation activities.

There were several workshops presenting the dance, music and culture of different countries including Scotland, Ireland and India. Irish Step Dancing and Masala Bhangra Fitness and Dance were among the hits in these high energy workshops.

Sessions on writing included diverse topics such as inspiring creativity through image based writing, the fundamentals of storytelling, and using adventure books to focus on other cultures. Each of these sessions helped prepare teachers to tell stories creatively and guide children in finding their own narrative voices.

At the end of the day, SACC teachers left invigorated and equipped with a wealth of ideas and experiences to kick off this year's curriculum.



# SACC 2015-16 Global Adventurers

SACC unveiled its 2015-2016 curriculum focus at its recent staff orientation. Addressing the room of teachers, SACC Program Administrator Beth Leggat explained that, "Children will virtually travel to exciting locations around the globe with opportunities for exploration and discovery as they become Global Adventurers, Making Connections Around the World!"

Beginning in October of 2014, a committed team of SACC field staff, administrative staff and Regional Supervisors worked collaboratively to develop the curriculum. Regional Supervisor, Damon Terrell explained that, "Early on, we knew that we wanted to incorporate an element of character recognition into the curriculum this year. We worked together to develop five characters that will be used to support and enhance the children's experiences and learning as they embark on this journey."

A backstory was created to show how the characters, came together, and to introduce their unique interests. The Global Adventurers are winners of the International School of Discovery Scholarship Contest and began their adventure at the 2015 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, where they were immersed in the culture of Peru. This adventure set the stage for how the characters would be used throughout the year, to support the curriculum as the children in the SACC program "visit" three different global destinations exploring the food, technology, artistry, customs, environment, sports and fitness, and many other aspects of the cultures.

Leggat explained, "This year's curriculum goal is for children to have fun while exploring the similarities and differences between themselves and others around the world. As they take on the role of story chasers, atlas adventurers or one of the other characters, we hope they will develop valuable lifelong connections."

Meet the SACC designed characters and learn about their unique interests:



## Global Pioneer, Tinker

Tinker is from Peru and loves robotics and innovations. Tinker will encourage children to explore global destinations and cultures through experiences with science, technology, engineering, architecture, math, and wildlife conservation.



## Atlas Adventurer, Addae

Addae is from Ghana and loves water sports, soccer and rugby. Adventures with Addae will challenge children to eat healthy and be active through fitness, sports, and outside exploration.



## Story Chaser, Astoria

Astoria is from the United States with ancestors from Greece. She loves exploring the who, what, when, where and why of places, people, and things. Astoria's quest for knowledge will inspire children to investigate, research, write and tell stories about their travels and world cultures.



## Culture Champion, Maddox

Maddox is from Japan. He experiences destinations through the language, customs, food and lifestyles that make each culture unique. Maddox will introduce children to the traditions of different cultures, and provide opportunities for children to participate in community service locally and globally.



## Image Maker, Isla

Isla is from Scotland and enjoys experiencing destinations and cultures through the visual and performing arts. Isla's love for creative expression will inspire the artist, designer, singer, musician, dancer, performer and dreamer in children.



# Head Start Welcomes Families!



Fall brings an end to summer and the start of a new school year for the Head Start program! Greater Mount Vernon Community Head Start staff welcomed newly enrolled children and families during several orientation events. Families were introduced to the many ways that Head Start works with families to help prepare their children for school. They were able to meet the staff and learn about the services that the program provides.

Head Start is a national child development program that serves income-eligible families with children from birth to age 5, and expectant parents. The program is designed to prepare children for success in school by enhancing their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development.

“This is an exciting time of the year,” said Head Start Director Jennifer Branch. “For many children, it is their first time riding a school bus, or being in a classroom for a full day. Head Start gives children the opportunity to learn valuable lessons that will prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. It is essential to involve parents in this transition.”

During orientation, family members received information on health requirements for children, including immunizations, well child exams and various screenings that are provided, such as hearing, vision, and development. Additionally, parents talked with staff about the emphasis that Head Start places on nutrition as an important part of healthy development and overall school readiness.

Essential to the Head Start approach is the relationship created with families. At the orientations, Family Service Workers explained how Head Start partners with parents to establish family goals and identify community resources that can help with meeting these goals. Families also learned about opportunities to engage in the program in various ways such as being a participant on the parent committee or policy council, and volunteering in classrooms and on field trips.

Family Service Worker Deborah White shared that, “These orientations give us a chance to meet families and introduce them to the program and staff. It’s a great start to the school year and we look forward to partnering with families as the year progresses!”



# Institute for Early Learning



The Office for Children's Institute for Early Learning provides professional development opportunities for early childhood and school age professionals. Instructors develop and teach research-based courses that support educators in providing child care that is safe, healthy, and contributes to children's overall success. These classes also help meet the training requirements child care professionals need to maintain their license or permit.

This year, IFEL has expanded its services to bring even more educational opportunities to programs in the community. Currently, IFEL offers instruction in more than 30 locations around the county by partnering with all 23 branches of the Fairfax library system, as well as offering courses in several county buildings and community centers. This increased access provides greater convenience for professionals to attend classes close to where they work or live.

In addition, IFEL offers a variety of webinars allowing participants to access instruction online. This fall IFEL is offering some new topics, including tutorials on online resources available through the Fairfax County Public Library, and the use of social media to enhance professional development.

Along with providing a catalog of courses for the early childhood community that helps educators meet their required training hours, IFEL instructors have also begun providing on-site mentoring services to child care programs, facilitating more in-depth learning.

IFEL's diverse course offerings include a variety of topics such as neuroscience and brain development, fostering social-emotional development, music and movement experiences, early writing and literacy, and supporting children with special needs. Some newer offerings include the use of educational technology in early learning programs, professional

development via social media, eBooks for young readers, integrated science and art-based experiences, and helping children with sensory integration challenges.

IFEL Director Karen Quist explained, "We are always looking for ways to create added value to our courses. Recently, we have begun using the OFC Facebook page to post video of class activities and links to articles that provide more information about topics discussed during classes."

Quist also reports that efforts to streamline the registration process continue. Starting with November and December 2015, registration will take place every two months. Each course flyer will combine two months of professional development and training classes, allowing educators to plan farther ahead to take their preferred courses, while making the process more efficient.



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