

Neighborhood Teams Host Family Events School Readiness the Focus of Community Outreach

Neighborhood School Readiness Team members joined together this summer to offer experiences that support children’s success in kindergarten. Families and children participated in these fun neighborhood events held in Falls Church, the City of Fairfax, and Alexandria.

Fairfax County Public Schools, Fairfax County Public Library, and the Office for Children worked together to plan two events at the City of Fairfax Regional Library. The first, Math Magic in May, introduced families to some developmentally appropriate activities and books that encourage math exploration. At a Playful Learning, Puzzles and Pizza event, families tried hands-on learning experiences such as reading, solving puzzles, sculpting playdough, drawing, and watercolor painting.

A variety of community partners including the Office for Children, Fairfax County Public Schools, Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services, and the Fairfax County

Health Department sponsored a National Night Out Literacy Event at Mount Vernon Woods Elementary School in Alexandria. The community residents enjoyed food and fun activities like yoga, games, story time with the Fairfax County Police Department, and a visit from the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department.

The Neighborhood School Readiness Project supports children’s successful transition to kindergarten by building community through neighborhood teams. These teams bring together stakeholders such as educators, community, county, school, and city representatives to support children’s success in school and beyond.

Another community school readiness event was also held at the Woodrow Wilson Library in Falls Church in August. School Readiness Coordinator Betsi Closter said, “These events are an exciting way for families to become familiar with tools and resources that can increase their children’s success in school.”



1. Families and staff gather for a Playful Learning, Puzzles and Pizza Experience.
2. Families and children try hands-on learning experiences.
3. Fairfax Fire and Rescue greet residents at the National Night Out Literacy Event.
4. Families try yoga at the National Night Out at Mount Vernon Woods Elementary School.

IFEL Debuts Online Learning System

Professional Development Available On Demand

IFEL Skyprep provides educators access to online professional development 24/7.



The Institute for Early Learning recently launched a new Online Learning System. Through this system, early childhood educators can log-in using an internet-connected device and take courses at their own pace, any time of day or night.

To begin, educators first participate in an introductory webinar to learn about the system. Once this is completed, they are given access to create an account in OFC Online Learning. After creating an account, educators can choose from a selection of courses featuring Institute for Early Learning instructors. The online courses include information about an early childhood topic as

well as hands-on activities that can be offered to young children.

The online courses are organized into video-based modules. As educators complete a module within a course, they are able to progress to the next module. The system tracks their progress, and enables educators to stop and start courses on demand. At the conclusion of a course, a training certificate is generated and saved in the system.

There are currently five courses available including an overview course as well as Creative Painting, Math for Early Learners, Natural Temperaments, and Sharing Stories with Children. New

courses will be continuously developed by the IFEL team and some will feature prominent early childhood leaders. IFEL is also working with the Fairfax County Park Authority to create online courses featuring nature-based learning.

Online courses provide a great way for early childhood educators to continue learning and growing at times that are convenient for them. As new courses are developed and added to the system, a wide variety of professional development topics will be available through this convenient, engaging, video-based eLearning system.



CCAR Hosts Open House

Families receive help with child care subsidy applications

During the week of July 24-28, Child Care Assistance and Referral hosted Open Houses to help families with filling out their applications for the child care subsidy. The Open Houses were held in each of the regional offices: Annandale, Fairfax, Reston and South County. CCAR Director Flor Philips explained that CCAR's goal is to do everything possible to make it

easier for families to navigate the application process. Families are waitlisted in the order in which they applied for the program. Efforts began when program staff reached out to applicants near the top of the waitlist to tell them that there were some available slots in the program. The next step for families was providing all the paperwork to verify eligibility. Many families needed support throughout that process, so the Open Houses were a good way for families to access

that support directly. Philips said "We realize that the child care subsidy is essential for many working families in our county, so we used a variety of methods including mail, email and phone calls to contact families to attend our open houses and get help completing the application process." Families appreciated the support. Philips said efforts would continue after the open houses to reach additional families who were unable to attend.



Excitement and Adventures at SACC Camp Discovery

SACC Camp Discovery offered children a summer filled with excitement and adventures. In 27 locations across the county, rising first through seventh graders enjoyed many opportunities to participate in experiences that nurtured their creativity and developed their talents and skills.

Each camp location offered three cabins designed to appeal to the artist, performer and athlete in every child. Staff in the Artist's Cabin provided the opportunity for children to explore a variety of art forms such as textile art, painting, and the world of 3D art and sculpture. Children with an interest in theatre had opportunities in the Performer's Cabin to learn the different dance styles of the decades, choreograph their own dance routines, recreate their favorite films through shadow light performances and put on their own circus. In the Athlete's Cabin staff introduced children to the sport of rugby and provided the opportunity for children to develop their skills in basketball, soccer and baseball. During track and field week, children showed off their speed and endurance in an exciting center event.

Field trips provided some extra opportunities for fun. Children in the Performer's Cabin were amazed and entertained by the incredible acts of UniverSoul Circus and enjoyed live

performances at a variety of theatres including Imagination Stage. As part of SACC's partnership with the Washington Mystics, children learned dance routines choreographed by the Mystics choreographer which they practiced and then performed on the court before and during half time of a Mystics game. Artists explored the connections between the fine arts and science at the Discovering the Art in Science Expo held at the Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center. At the Expo children participated in hands-on experiments that taught them about light, color, density and temperature. They also had fun visiting local art studios and museums. Learning new sports, taking part in skills clinics and participating in multi-center soccer and flag football tournaments were just a few of the highlights for children in the Athlete's Cabin.

Best of all, children enjoyed making connections during Camp Discovery. Through engaging in service projects they made connections to the community around them. Through shared interests and experiences, children made connections to new friends. By providing guidance, support and encouragement SACC teachers developed meaningful relationships with the children. These friendships and experiences will stay with the children for years to come.





IFEL Continues “Going Green”

learning experiences and quality learning environments for young children. These continuing education classes also help meet professional development requirements for permitting and licensing.

The Institute for Early Learning offers professional learning opportunities for educators. In-person courses and online sessions provide educational opportunities that support quality

The Institute for Early Learning has been “going green” for several years by reducing the amount of information that is sent through the mail. Our IFEL flyer and webinar listings are posted on the Office for Children’s website.

Beginning with the November/December 2017 classes, for which registration starts on October 11, 2017, IFEL will notify early childhood educators about the in-person courses through email. IFEL staff is currently reaching out to educators to encourage them to update their contact information on file so they can continue to receive information about classes in the future. Educators can contact IFEL staff at childcareclasses@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-3044.

EAT and RUN Encourages Healthy Habits Fun Activities Instill Excitement in Educators and Children



care providers to implement these strategies for good nutrition and physical activity.

“The children enjoyed washing the fruit with water, making the smoothie and drinking it.”

The participants had a lot of positive things to say about the experience and how it has helped children to be more involved in food preparation, as well as influencing children to make healthier choices:



Community Education and Provider Services recently offered several sessions of its award-winning class EAT and RUN for Fairfax County family child care providers who participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. This fun and engaging program promotes healthy eating and physical activity in family child care settings.

“I just want to say thanks so much for providing us with such a good book (activities).”

“Before doing this activity the children did not like celery; after this activity, they enjoyed celery, hummus, and pretzels mixed together.”

Courses were offered in June and July to encourage providers to incorporate these techniques from the “EAT and RUN” book into their day to day programs. CEPS also uses follow-up home visits to work with family child



“The children learned what a measuring cup is and how to measure the correct amount of liquid.”

“It was my first time taking the class, I would love to take it every year!!!!”