

Nurturing Creative Thinking in Young Children

Fairfax Futures hosts 14th Annual School Readiness Symposium

Early childhood educators are uniquely positioned to help shape young creative thinkers and prepare them for the future. On April 21, over 200 Fairfax County early childhood educators participated in Fairfax Futures' 14th Annual School Readiness Symposium: Nurturing Creative Thinking in Young Children. Participants were welcomed by Supervisor Cathy Hudgins and keynote speaker Dr. Rebecca Isbell. An early childhood consultant, speaker and author from East Tennessee State University, Isbell introduced key strategies and practical tools to help inspire and



Keynote speaker, Dr. Rebecca Isbell, invigorates the audience with her passionate speech on inspiring young creative thinkers.

nurture creative thinking in preschool-aged children.

This year's workshop presenters included Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning teaching artists, Kofi Dennis and Maria Tripodi; Lisa Mufson Bresson, co-author of NAEYC's bestselling book, "Big Questions for Young Minds: Extending Children's Creative Thinking"; and the Office for Children's Institute for Early Learning team.



Participants in this workshop led by Kofi Dennis use musical instruments, voice and colorful props to engage with the song "Rainbow Fish."

Dennis taught a West African rhythmic call and response classroom management strategy. Through simple beats to recognized children's songs, participants learned how they could incorporate listening skills, self-regulation, movement patterns, clapping sequences and following directions in child care settings. Switching between English and Spanish throughout her session, Tripodi introduced educators to basic dance concepts, music and literature to inspire creative movement and language.

Bresson showcased the use of recycled materials to help educators explore creativity with children and how to process thoughts through high-level and open-ended questions. Lastly, the IFEL team rounded out the symposium in their "Let's Make Music" workshop where educators

stretched their creativity by using everyday objects to build simple musical instruments. The session demonstrated how creativity in music influences positive brain development.



Maria Tripodi introduces educators to basic dance concepts they can apply in child care settings.

This professional development opportunity was made possible through a generous grant from the PNC Foundation and in partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools and Fairfax County Office for Children.



Early childhood education partners and presenters prepare for the start of the symposium. L-R: Sallyann Bergh, incoming executive director, Fairfax Futures; Steve Day, vice president, PNC Bank; Sup. Cathy Hudgins; Joan Isenberg, professor emeritus, George Mason University; Rebecca Isbell, keynote speaker; Lisa Mufson Bresson, workshop presenter; Vera Steiner Blore, outgoing director, Fairfax Futures; Anne-Marie Twohie, director, Office for Children



Celebrating Child Care Professionals Week

At their May 1 meeting, the Board of Supervisors proclaimed May 6-12 as Child Care Professionals Week in Fairfax County, to thank and recognize educators in more



than 2,300 programs including family child care homes, centers and preschools across the county.

The Board joined with many other organizations nationwide in acknowledging early childhood professionals and their important work supporting families and providing early care and education for children from birth through elementary school.

Several members of the county's Child Care Advisory Council including Wynne Busman, Monica Jackson, Courtney Park-Jamborsky, Scott Stroh and Pam Tinker were on hand to accept this recognition. Representatives from early childhood associations and child care programs were invited to share in the proclamation.

Supervisor Linda Smyth, read the proclamation, then commented that,

“Child care is extremely important to our families. We all know that it is the first step in learning and school readiness and continuing that as children age... Your role is enormously important, and we thank you for all you do for our children to get them ready for their next steps in school.”

Citing high demand for quality local child care providers, Supervisor McKay called “child care, one of the most important issues in the county.” Supervisor Hudgins concluded by driving home the need for the Board to keep its focus on early care and education to help all children and families thrive regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Afterward, the Office for Children and CCAC hosted a reception to celebrate.

Employees' Child Care Earns Prestigious Rating

The staff at the Employees' Child Care Center is committed to providing an early learning program focused on continuous quality improvement. To this goal, ECCC participates in Virginia Quality, the state's voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System.

As part of the VQ program, early care programs are assessed over a period of several days to determine the level of quality of the environment and interactions within the center. In ECCC's most recent assessment, the center achieved a Level 5 status. This is the highest possible level awarded by VQ.

“Research shows that quality early care and education has a positive impact on children's development and contributes toward their success in both school and life,” said ECCC Director Ruth Stover. “It is a special opportunity to do this work supporting families. We are thankful for the families who entrust their children to our care.”

For more information about Virginia Quality, please visit their website at www.virginiaquality.com.



**Committed to Quality
Early Learning**



SACC

Heroes in the Community

Service to the local and global community has been an integral part of the 2017-18 SACC school year curriculum – Heroes, Trendsetters and Icons. Through a variety of engaging experiences, children explored the stories of remarkable people, both in the present and throughout history, and were then encouraged by their SACC teachers to explore their own passions, skills, talents, and the causes they value. Children also identified ways they can develop their positive attributes and affect change in the world around them.

Here are some examples of projects that have been taken place at SACC centers around the county:

1. **Kings Glen SACC** enlisted the help of other area SACC centers to make superhero props such as capes, masks and magic wands. The props became part of Super Hero Kits and were distributed to local hospitals. The kits empowered children to become a Super Hero and inspired them to have strength and courage.



2. Parents and children from **London Towne SACC** worked together to make blankets for Project Linus, a program that provides blankets for children who are undergoing medical treatment in the hospital.



3. Children at **Vienna SACC** learned to crochet hats and donated them to local organizations such as INOVA Children's Hospital and area senior centers.



4. As part of an ongoing partnership, children from **Shreveewood SACC** presented the veterans of VFW Post 9274

with a handmade garland to show appreciation for their service.

5. The children at **Deer Park and Union Mill SACC centers** participated in Red Nose Day to raise awareness of child poverty. Through the project children developed empathy for others, and were inspired to create a positive change in the community— one red nose at a time.



6. Children at **Hayfield Secondary SACC** decorated white mugs with original artwork and donated them to Community Residences. As a non-profit organization, Community Residences offers supportive housing as well as physical, mental and emotional services for individuals with disabilities.



7. The children at **Hayfield Secondary** adopted a school flower bed that had been overtaken by weeds and nurtured it into a wonderful place to sit and read a book.



8. The children at **Saratoga SACC** partnered with the school to collect pop-tabs for the Ronald McDonald House located on the INOVA Fairfax Hospital campus. By collecting the pop-tabs, the Ronald McDonald House is able to financially support and provide housing for families while a child receives medical treatment in the hospital.





SACC Picks Up STEAM

Fairfax County School Age Child Care recently hosted its second annual STEAM Fair at the Providence Community Center, in partnership with Neighborhood and Community Services' Technology Program. Children from Cunningham Park, Flint Hill, Marshall Road, Mosby Woods, Oakton, Providence Community Center, Vienna, Waples Mill, Westbriar and Wolftrap SACC centers participated in the event. In preparation, SACC teachers worked with children to formulate hypotheses, conduct experiments, document their observations, form results based conclusions, and learn firsthand about the scientific method.

This year's focus also gave children an opportunity to explore the A (Art) in STEAM. The art component of STEAM experiences inspires creative thinking and encourages innovative interpretations and solutions to problems.

Children and their families were greeted by Shawn Garrett, SACC Head Teacher at Cunningham Park and emcee of the event, and by Janet Young, Director of Youth and Teen Programs for Providence Community Center. At the fair, children enjoyed presenting their findings to the audience and demonstrating their experiments!

Following the children's presentations, everyone enjoyed exploring STEAM through a series of fun and educational activities offered by a variety of exhibitors such as Nike, 3D Print, and Cyberjutsu.

"The STEAM Fair featured education and fun" explained Marshall Road SACC Teacher Kenton Fisher. "This is a great opportunity to collaborate with staff in Neighborhood and Community Services to bring a program to the community highlighting scientific discovery."



Fairfax County

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 Search: OFC.



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