



A Deeper Dive in Childhood Resiliency

Early Childhood Educators Enjoy Opportunity to Expand their Learning

This summer Fairfax Futures hosted the 17th Annual School Readiness Symposium, their signature event for the early childhood community. The topic was **Fostering Joy in Young Children ... the Road to Resiliency**. Keynote speaker, Dr. Nefertiti B. Poyner, Ed.D, from the Devereux Center for Resilient Children, shared how early childhood educators can create positive experiences for young children that nurture confidence and build resiliency. Her presentation focused on:

- Making connections between adult-child relationships and self-regulation;
- Defining and providing examples of risk and protective factors;
- Suggesting intentional, developmentally appropriate experiences that can promote joy and resiliency in young children.

Following the virtual event, participants were invited to continue exploring the topic by participating in small group breakout sessions. The sessions, held virtually throughout the summer, were facilitated by early childhood educators, and explored five unique topics:

Risks and Rewards: Building Resiliency through Age-Appropriate Risk-Taking

This group explored the importance of healthy, age-appropriate risk-taking in the development of a child's self-confidence, resilience, executive functioning abilities and risk management skills.

Using Allyship as an Educator

Participants discussed allyship and the ways they could use their power and privilege to support marginalized children and their families.

Now and Forever...The Power of Partnering with Families - Co-facilitated in Spanish and English

This session discussed the *Now and Forever* books and explored six strategies adults can use to strengthen children's protective factors.

Early Childhood Educators Are Planters of Dream Seeds... Let's Celebrate!

"Dream seeds" are opportunities and experiences that build resilience and change lives. In this session, participants did a shared reading of *Because* by Mo Willems and discussed their role as planters of "dream seeds."

Reimagining Equitable Early Childhood Learning Environments for Young Children and Families

This session explored the potential gains children may have experienced from being home with their family during the COVID pandemic and how educators can help to strengthen more equitable learning environments for children and families.

The opportunity to explore topics in a small group setting with peers was an enjoyable and illuminating experience for both participants and facilitators.

"Providing the opportunity for Fairfax County's early childhood educators to share their knowledge and to celebrate their important contributions to our community is an honor. Sharing a learning space with such committed

educators is inspiring and transformative," said Bernice Mayfield, OFC facilitator of the Dream Seeds session. Educators shared their "because," inspiring reasons that brought them to where they are today and illustrated how each person's story has an impact.

Tara Macbeth, director of Mount Vernon Presbyterian Preschool and participant in the Risks and Rewards session, shared, "The class itself was very well planned out, well presented and the content very informative. I love learning about things that are new to me! I'm always seeking ways to build our students' resiliency. Risk taking was not something I had really connected with resiliency, but it makes so much sense now after taking the class!"

Fairfax Futures also received positive feedback about the way the facilitators conducted the sessions. "Sometimes we look outside of ourselves for the answers to many questions, worries, doubts and fears. This amazing experience took us on a journey of self-care. On the end of this journey, we found love, peace and happiness within ourselves," said Sandra Barksdale, a family child care educator, who participated in the Allyship session.

"We are grateful for the PNC Foundation's generous sponsorship of this year's Symposium and breakout sessions," said Fairfax Futures Executive Director, Sallyann Bergh. "Our goal this year was to both celebrate the hard work and creativity of early childhood educators as they cared for young children during the pandemic, while also providing strategies related to the topic of resiliency to support children and families moving forward."



Head Start and Early Head Start Return to a New Normal

Back to school is always an exciting time! Greater Mount Vernon (GMV) and Family Child Care (FCC) provide classroom learning experiences year-round, but fall signals the start of a new year, with new children and families enrolling in the program. The first days are full of hugs, bus rides, new friends and learning the daily routine.

Transitioning to early childhood programs creates extra challenges during a pandemic. Our early childhood teams prepared for the children and families by continuing screening protocols and equipping the programs with necessary health and safety supplies, such as masks, sanitizer and disinfecting wipes. Educators continue to practice physical distancing in the learning environments where feasible, encourage children to wear their masks, and take children outside as much as possible. Everyone is committed to ensuring that children feel safe, nurtured and are having fun in spite of the challenges of the pandemic.

The return to a new normal included addressing staff and FCC partners' well-being by providing self-care strategies. Staff were provided with emotional toolkits that support incoming children and families' needs and offer opportunities to thrive by implementing a trauma-informed care approach. Tabitha Evans, an FCC Specialist shared, "One of our partners really stepped up to the challenge of providing services during the pandemic by putting together a set of community resources for her families, such as food, seasonal clothing and holiday gifts."

Program staff and educators have a renewed sense of energy in welcoming back their little friends. They're all looking forward to a new year full of possibilities!

First Lady of Virginia Pamela Northam Goes Back to School!

On Friday, September 10, First Lady of Virginia Pamela Northam visited Centreville Elementary School and Main Street Child Development Center in Fairfax County as part of her annual back to school tour highlighting the important work of early childhood educators and recognizing all they continue to do to support children and families during the pandemic. The First Lady was joined by Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay, U.S. Senator Tim Kaine, Delegate Dan Helmer and Sully Supervisor Kathy Smith. During their visit, the delegation toured classrooms, chatted with staff and engaged with children. At Main Street Child Development Center, children were even treated to a fun harmonica performance by Senator Kaine!



SACC Curriculum Inspires Children's Creativity

SACC's school year curriculum, KIDS INCORPORATED: Making an Impact One Idea at a Time!, is inspiring children to explore their interests, believe in their ideas and dream big! Through exploration, research and engaging experiences, children will think outside the box and use their entrepreneurial skills to create small enterprises that focus on three types of businesses – services, goods and products, and experiences. Once children identify an idea for their business, they work together to explore the concepts of planning and development, creating a brand, and marketing. Children at SACC Centers across the county are using their creativity, connecting with their peers and having fun!



Children at **Fort Hunt SACC** worked with mixed media to design a logo for their Fox Creations business, named after their school mascot. They



also enjoyed learning about guitars and were excited to write a jingle for Fox Creations.



Children at **Kilmer SACC** celebrated fall by painting unique designs on pumpkins. It was a messy, fun and successful alternative to carving pumpkins. The children enjoyed decorating their “Pretty Porch Pumpkins” and were excited to take the pumpkins home to display on their balconies and porches.

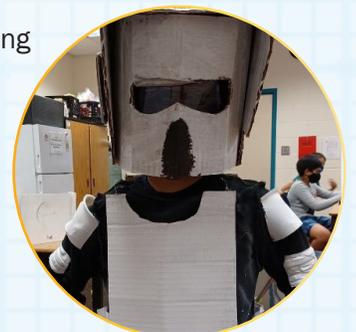


Children at **Canterbury Woods SACC** created Boo Bags with Monster Munch for rehabilitation nurses at Virginia Hospital Center. These small tokens of appreciation helped bring big smiles to these community heroes who care for patients recovering from the COVID-19 virus.



Children at **Poplar Tree SACC** have been working on creating costumes of their favorite television and movie characters (Star Wars and Marvel so far). Once children determine the character they want to recreate, they brainstorm

ways of making the costume using materials like cardboard and duct tape. The children enjoy showing their creations to their classmates and are creating buzz for their budding costume design company.





Helping Families Find Quality Child Care in Fairfax County

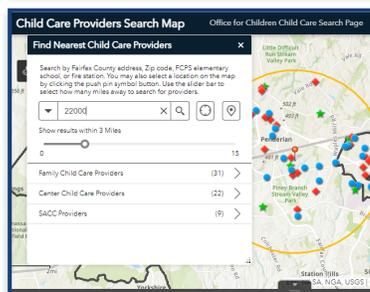
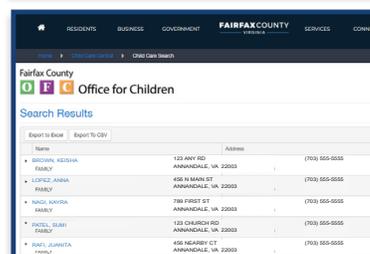
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofcsearch

Finding safe, high quality child care is one of the most important decisions facing many families in our community, and the Office for Children provides several resources to help families make the best choices for their children.

OFC maintains an online, searchable database of approximately 2,000 regulated center-based and family child care programs in Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church. Programs include the full range of programs from large state licensed centers to small county permitted family child care homes. This database has an advanced search capability that allows families to search by specific features to help meet their needs. For example, families can search for child care by zip code, elementary school, neighborhood, and/or languages spoken in the program. Additionally, a map search function is available with the ability to search and download the list of child care programs based on the search criteria used. To search online, visit: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofcsearch

The OFC website also provides families with information on what to look for when choosing a child care program for their child. From examples of important questions to ask, to what types of considerations that families should look for when visiting a program, the information on the website can help families choose the best place for their child. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/office-for-children/ccar/choosing-a-quality-child-care-program>

Families that may need more assistance in finding a child care option that best meets their needs can also contact an OFC child care specialist in our Child Care Assistance and Referral program: 703-449-8484 or via email at OFCCARInfo@fairfaxcounty.gov.



Children 5-11 are now eligible for COVID-19 vaccines!

Vaccinating children against COVID-19 protects not only the child, but the entire family, including parents, grandparents and younger siblings. Visit <https://www.vaccines.gov> to find a location near you.

Fairfax County

O F C Office for Children

This employee newsletter is published by the Office for Children, a division of the Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services. If you have any questions, contact Gwen Jones at 703-324-7137 or Nancy McDonough at 703-324-8042. Fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc.



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