

OFC Welcomes Infant & Toddler Connection

Infant & Toddler Connection of Fairfax-Falls Church is the newest member to join the OFC family. Starting in July, program Director Susan Sigler, and 97 ITC staff transitioned under the Department of Family Services umbrella as part of the Office for Children.

We would like to extend a warm welcome to ITC," said OFC Director Anne-Marie Twohie. "OFC has partnered with ITC for years, and its mission of offering services to support children with special needs and their families is aligned with the School Readiness continuum. ITC's work is integral to the mission outlined in the Equitable School Readiness Strategic Plan."

Early Intervention Services

The Infant & Toddler Connection provides service coordination, assessments and early intervention services

for infants and toddlers (up to age 3) who are not developing as expected or who have a condition that can delay typical development.

These services include developmental screenings and assessments and support of motor skills, cognitive skills, communication skills, self-help skills, and social-emotional skills.

Early intervention focuses on helping parents and other caregivers discover ways to help their child learn during everyday activities and routines within their natural environments and participate in desired community activities. In addition, ITC supports families through:

- Facilitating connections between families with shared interests.
- Guiding families to appropriate resources.

- Connecting families to advocacy groups and services.
- Organizing social opportunities and peer-appropriate interaction.

Community Collaboration Yields Great Outcomes

Through collaboration with other county agencies, the medical community and child care programs, ITC helps children reach family-determined goals and outcomes. And, once children reach age 3, staff helps them transition beyond early intervention to the community setting of their choice for further support, if necessary.

ITC has four regional offices to serve Fairfax County, Fairfax City and Falls Church City residents. During Fiscal Year 2017, ITC served a total of 3,642 children, touching close to 10,000 residents including parents, caregivers and early childhood professionals.





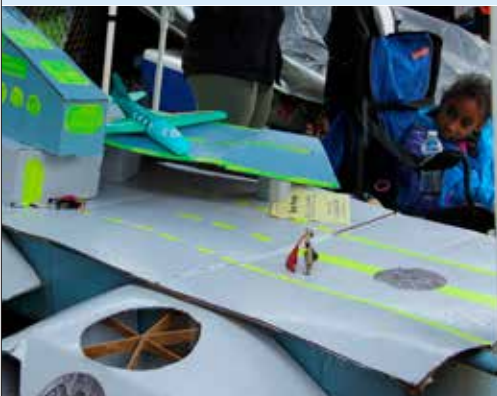
Children from Sleepy Hollow SACC proudly row their boat , "Picassoism."



OakView SACC designed one of two SACC boats inspired by the books of Dr. Seuss.



Children in the "U.S.S. Bonnie Brae" (named for their SACC center) take to the water.



A child from Belvedere SACC waits to test the seaworthiness of their cardboard replica of the "S.H.I.E.L.D. Helicarrier," featured in several Marvel Avengers' movies.

Rain Can't Dampen their Spirits!



Children from Waples Mill SACC paddle to shore in their boat inspired by Bryce Harper of the Washington Nationals baseball team.

SACC Centers Enjoy Annual Cardboard Boat Regatta

In June, approximately 150 children from 15 SACC centers and their teachers participated in the 29th Annual Springfield Days Cardboard Boat Regatta at Lake Accotink. In preparation for the regatta, children spent several weeks researching, designing, constructing and painting the cardboard boats with their teachers. From Dr. Seuss and Harry Potter to Bryce Harper of the Washington Nationals, all SACC boats represented SACC's school year curriculum — Heroes, Trendsetters and Icons.

At the regatta, children enjoyed the opportunity to talk with Fairfax

County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova about this year's SACC curriculum. With their boats on display, children explained to Chairman Bulova, who was one of the judges of the event, why they chose to design their boat after a specific hero, trendsetter or icon.

Even the pouring rain couldn't dampen the spirit of the regatta! Families gathered underneath umbrellas and proudly cheered on the children as they raced in their cardboard boats. The enthusiasm and dedication of SACC children, families and teachers truly made this a regatta to remember!

Head Start Hosts Event for all Ages

Families Learn Skills to Improve Organization



Parents and children try yoga, breathing exercises, and mindfulness activities at this Head Start parent engagement event

Parents and children with Head Start and Early Head Start, along with older adult residents of Gum Springs Glen apartments, recently joined together at Greater Mount Vernon Early Head Start for a Parent Engagement Day. The half-day event featured a variety of



Head Start organizers open participation at this event to also involve the older adult residents of Gum Springs Glen apartments.

workshops aimed at supporting positive family interactions.

Eboni Queen, owner of Organize by EB, led the first workshop on organization. She provided tips on time management, storage and decluttering. She also discussed how to establish routines for meals, sleep and playtime.

The Toddler Yoga workshop explored age-appropriate postures and movement, breathing exercises, and meditation/mindfulness activities parents and children can do together. This was led by Jennifer Mueller, the director of Breathing Space Family Yoga.

The final workshop was led by Early Head Start Teacher Julie Grajeda. Parents discovered that gardening

can be a fun way to engage with their children. The children expressed joy and fascination with using the gardening tools and helping their parents.

This was the second EHS activity to involve older adults living at Gum Springs Glen. Virginia Wells, an older adult resident was thrilled to lead participants in an art experience that day. EHS parents participating in these joint events can connect with older adults and form positive relationships.

HS policy encourages EHS/HS parents to be actively involved in all aspects of children's learning and development. Parent Engagement Days help parents to partner with EHS/HS to support the lifelong success of their child.

First Responders Visit ECCC

Children in the Employees' Child Care Center were excited to visit with a firefighter and emergency medical technician from the Bailey's Crossroads Volunteer Fire Station. The EMT, Michael Garcia, was familiar, as his child attends ECCC.

The emergency staff introduced themselves and explained their jobs in a way that the children could understand. Each first responder wore their uniform to help familiarize the children with how emergency personnel would appear in case of an emergency. They explained how the heavy fireproof garments worn by firefighters are designed to protect them when putting out fires. They also shared some general safety rules with the children.

The children came forward, one by one, to try on the heavy firefighter helmet and give high fives. Afterward, everyone went outside to tour the ambulance and learn about the equipment. The children enjoyed the opportunity to ask questions and were especially excited to receive a red firefighter helmet of their own!



Children with the ECCC loved learning about the work firefighters and EMTs do to help keep people safe.



Literacy Peer Share Supports VPI Partner KinderCare

Workshop Boosts Understanding and Implementation

You might never suspect that a group of educators playing the kazoo are learning about literacy. As it turns out, it is a natural way to explore the sounds, intonation and patterns of language in a unique way.

In the latest Virginia Preschool Initiative Peer Share on literacy integration, early childhood educators and their VPI mentors discussed using the kazoo and other sound and rhythm games such as call and response patterns for classroom transition times or fun interludes.

VPI recently completed this four-part Peer Sharing series on literacy that was designed exclusively to support staff with the 11 VPI partner KinderCare sites.

Focusing on the KinderCare curriculum allowed the participants to explore ways to integrate these literacy techniques in their daily routines.

Research emphasized in each session

“VPI has used the peer share model for our professional learning series over the course of this past year,” said Lynn Cartledge, VPI mentor. “It has proven to be an effective way to engage early childhood educators in conversation with one another. This helps to solidify the knowledge that educators retain after the workshop, which they can then use to enhance the experiences of young children.”

Each session, began with a community building experience that created a comfortable environment for educators to share with each other. Using early childhood research articles as resources for a specific topic of discussion, the educators explored four areas of literacy: oral language and vocabulary (especially with dual language learners), phonological awareness, early reading, and early writing.

In addition to trying out new activities during the sessions, participants were given materials to take back to their programs and encouraged to implement many of the new strategies they learned. At each following session, they shared lessons learned, art work, or documents from the experiences they offered to the children.

Educators’ Learning Enhanced by Sharing with Peers

Most educators provided feedback that listening and learning from each other was the most beneficial part of each session. They commented that this peer share created an awareness of ways to improve and enhance the educational experiences they offer. For instance, lessons learned included:

- “How children learn in levels and steps, importance of early literacy for foundation, interesting methods of making learning joyful and engaging.”



- “Read the same book with kids many times and ask questions; use journals”
- “Create a new environment around my classroom, keep dual language in my teaching”
- “I learned about how what we teachers do is so important for children and effects [sic] the way they grow, mentally, emotionally etc. I learn about the library”
- “Using more puppets, and creating new and more creative and inviting reading activities can help the child develop and improve reading/ writing skills”
- “Involving parents at home with literacy”

The Virginia Preschool Initiative supports quality early childhood education programs for children at risk for school failure. Children are eligible for participation in VPI if they live in families with low incomes, are 4 years old by September 30 of the school year, and reside in either Fairfax County or the City of Fairfax.

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.



A Fairfax County, VA Publication



Where a TTY number is not indicated, use 711/ Virginia Relay. Reasonable accommodations made upon request; call 703-324-8000.