Vanderbilt Child and Family Center is proud to amplify the Owls Developmental Kindergarten program. Licensed by the State of Tennessee Department of Education, the program is open to children turning five years of age on August 15th; school starts on Monday, August 8, 2022.

Wonder

Discovery

Explorations

A learning focus on 21st Century Skills: creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. A learning framework that prioritizes Nature Education - children's knowledge creation will be informed by their exploration of the Vanderbilt University campus.

Kindergarten Teacher

My name is Nea McKeehan, and I am thrilled to be returning as the Owls Kindergarten Teacher for the 2022-2023 school year.

The Owls Program provides a unique educational experience for children following a nature based educational philosophy and an emergent curriculum. I am excited for the year ahead and look forward to learning and exploring with the Owls!

I grew up in Columbia, South Carolina and enjoy visiting family and friends there frequently. I moved to the Nashville area last summer from Denver, Colorado where I resided for sixteen years with my husband, Chad, and son, Gordy. We enjoyed our time in Colorado and felt fortunate to be surrounded by the Rocky Mountains where we spent a great deal of time hiking, biking and enjoying a variety of outdoor activities in the snow! While in Denver, I completed the Stanley British Teacher Preparation Program and earned my Master’s Degree in Educational Psychology. I taught kindergarten for two years in Denver Public Schools and spent twelve years at Paddington Station Preschool and Kindergarten as a teacher and as the Director of Preschool and Kindergarten from 2019-2020.

It is my belief that children learn best when they are in a safe and nurturing environment where they feel comfortable to take risks and to express themselves as individuals. Every child has a unique experience in the world, and it is important to honor and value each child for who they are and for the individual gifts and talents they each possess. I am looking forward to meeting the children and families participating in the Owls Kindergarten Program and to beginning this exciting adventure together!

Early Childhood Educator

My name is Bryan O’Callahan, and I am entering my fourth year at The Acorn School. In addition to teaching full time in preschool classrooms, I have been a part of K-Camp (the preschool summer camp capstone experience) each July and was a mentor for the early childhood education apprentice pilot in collaboration with the Next Steps program in 2021-22.

I am beyond excited to be a member of the Owls Developmental Kindergarten community and will be managing the before school program from 7:30 AM – 8:30 AM in addition to coordinating rigorous outdoor adventures on the Vanderbilt University campus.

Born in New Orleans and raised in central Florida, I attended Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond for both undergraduate and post-graduate study in political science and education. After graduating, I began working as a special education services provider at an elementary school in Brooklyn, New York. After several years of teaching elementary school, I began teaching Pre-K and loved the freedom to explore and create that the preschool environment provides.

I believe in an inclusive classroom community where all members feel valued, are able to share their talents, collaborate creatively, and are encouraged to grow through an engaging and rigorous curriculum.

Optional playdate meet-up at Owl’s Hill Nature Sanctuary for the Family Firefly Hike on Friday, July 22, 2022. Please use the link to sign-up!

https://www.owlshill.org/family-firefly-hikes
Kindergarten Readiness

Too often families are influenced by marketing forces that seek to package and sell readiness through expensive learning materials. This is unfortunate and unnecessary.

VCFC understands that the attitude and disposition children bring to exploring the world with all five senses develops the skills that will support their successful year in kindergarten. This, importantly, includes the development of social and emotional competencies cooperatively in relationship with peers and caring adults. The following is a simple checklist of habits a child should ideally have before the first day of kindergarten.

- able to ask an adult for help using spoken words
- able to identify own feelings, and use the words for feelings (e.g., glad, mad, sad) in the primary language spoken at home
- able to focus for 15 - 30 minutes (e.g., listen to stories, painting, play a boardgame, ride a bike) - does not include screen time.
- able to wait 5 - 15 minutes (e.g., “I want a popsicle” “Ok, in ten minutes.”)
- able to manage an experience of “No” (e.g., “I want a popsicle.” “No, we are eating dinner in 20 minutes.”)
- brushes teeth and gets dressed without adult assistance
- cleans up 5 – 30 toys (e.g., legos) without adult help
- climbs or lifts something that makes them feel very powerful (e.g., helps carry a bag of groceries inside, hikes a hill, lifts the laundry basket)
- counts to 20 in the primary language spoken at home
- draws a self-portrait with crayon, marker, or pencil
- makes their own bed
- recognizes their own printed first and last name
- understands the concept of kindness as being considerate and respectful of others and their things
- visited the public library (wonderful if child has own library card)
- washes hands for 20 seconds
- wipes own bottom without adult assistance

Each rising Owl kindergartner is encouraged to observe and study an owl this June and then draw it!

Please use a black pen or marker on a piece of 8 ½" x 11" paper. Make sure your first and last name are printed on the bottom of the page.

Please submit your drawing by Wednesday, June 22nd to:

Ms Linda Wilson
linda.l.wilson@vanderbilt.edu

VCFC will use owl drawings received by deadline to create the 2022-23 Owls Kindergarten Field Trip t-shirt!

Awesome owl resources:

https://www.tn.gov/twra/wildlife/birds/barred-owl.html


https://www.owlshill.org/visit

https://warnerparks.org/northern-wintering-birds-now-in-nashville/

https://tnstateparks.com/parks/radnor-lake

SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR EARLY MATH SKILLS

Anno’s Counting Book
A Book of Numbers
Feast for Ten
My Granny Went to Market
My Bus
The Napping House
Shapes, Shapes, Shapes
Ten, Nine, Eight

https://earlylearning.mnps.org/countdown_to_kindergarten/kindergarten_readiness/early_math_skills

Parents are encouraged to feel affirmed in all the rich learning that takes place in their home.

“Math is everywhere! Early math skills develop at home, in preschool or daycare, and anywhere that young children and adults have opportunities to play and learn together. For example, early math skills can develop at home while doing chores or cooking, and also while playing at the park, during a trip to the supermarket, or at the bus stop—though this is by no means a complete list.”

https://familymath.stanford.edu/math-snacks/