

Vanderbilt Child & Family Center

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“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”
– Maya Angelou

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A note from the Executive Director

VCFC has experienced tremendous opportunity this winter engaging more deeply with Vanderbilt commissions and departments, and Nashville organizations committed to identifying resources that support families while understanding the obstacles that inhibit work life balance. These relationships are foundational to creating strategies and tools that lead to further implementing meaningful solutions.

Gathering content, really listening and so that recommendations can be responsive and relevant, requires time and patience. It is the partnerships that drive these activities. Especially useful has been my participation in the Staff WAVE (Women’s Advancement and Equity) commission, serving on the Work Life initiatives committee allows me to be present to hear the lived experiences of Vanderbilt employees.

All of this work is only possible through the spirit of collegiality. It is a privilege to be on this team, to work within a learning community that initiates crucial conversations for inter-departmental collaboration, and that supports innovative thinking.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Seabolt, Ed.D.



“Emergent curriculum is a method of planning and curriculum decision making. . . It describes curriculum that is responsive to children’s interests, and is meaningful, relevant and engaging for each child.

Emergent curriculum:

- ❖ has a strong theoretical background
- ❖ is inquiry and play-based
- ❖ is responsive to children’s interests, strengths and aspirations

This approach allows educators to respond to observations of children, build upon their strengths and scaffold their learning.”

– Rhonda Livingstone, **ACECQA**



VCFC spotlights Ms Rashonda Escoffery who received the Division of Administration Service Award for creating a co-worker Wellness Program and in recognition for her innovative teaching for The Acorn School!



Mission: The Acorn School commitment to innovative teaching in early childhood education is founded upon a vision of children as capable and competent citizens of the world possessing an infinite capacity for wonder and discovery

Vanderbilt University’s SEMO supports our community by identifying, inspiring, innovating, and quantifying environmental management and sustainability initiatives that positively impact the campus community, surrounding community, and the environment. Director Andrea George has engaged VCFC in partnership with SEMO and this has inspired our early childhood program to reflect on ways our practice can evolve to engage children in good earth stewardship and as environmental educators. This is how the annual Upcycled Art Project was born in 2019!

Every classroom participates in this opportunity to amplify the children’s interests through emergent work by utilizing as many recyclables/loose parts as the children’s imagination allows: boxes, tubes, milk jugs, etc. Being mindful of mouthables and chokeables, parents and other VU departments contribute “collections” to the classrooms to support this project – check with the site director if you have any safety concerns about any upcycled items.

The rule is that no supplies can be purchased for these projects - only existing materials found in closets and the resource room on site, and items recycled and gleaned from deliveries.

Documentation may include the following categories:

Beautiful Buildings (transforming trash into a type of playhouse)

Busy Hands (group project with many helpers, and not too much adult work)

Creative and Crafty (kid initiated and created - utilizing several materials in interesting ways)

Innovative Inventions (kid created - serves a purpose to solve a problem)

Guests, including from different departments of Vanderbilt University, will be observing our work beginning the week of February 17th and for celebration during the Week of the Young Child (April 2020).

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VCFC Family Services has been privileged to forge a new and exciting partnership with the Council on Aging of Middle Tennessee. Our **Caregiver Coaching Initiative** has allowed for expansion and a greater opportunity to provide services and resources to caregivers in the Vanderbilt Community.

We kicked off the program with a Lunch and Learn on January 22nd, with a focus on navigating elder care. We were pleasantly surprised by the turnout, reaching 40 attendees from various departments across our institution. Participants left feeling empowered as caregivers and were given resources and useful information to help along the journey.



It's time to get excited about VCFC's Summer Camp Fair 2020! The Summer Camp Fair is a free event featuring day & over-night camps, Vanderbilt sponsored camps, and programs from the Nashville Metro area. This year we are partnering with Employee Appreciation to host the expo during Vanderbilt Family Fest prior to the Women's Basketball game! Come meet camp representatives, gather information and ask your questions! There will be a DJ, food tastings, face painting, inflatables, games and activities galore!

The Summer Camp Fair and Family Fest will take place on Thursday, February 20th, 5:00-6:30 PM in the Memorial Gym. Basketball game tipoff is at 7:00 PM.

You must register to attend this event at:
<https://hr.vanderbilt.edu/employee-appreciation/2020-pre-game-fan-fest.php>.

Registration will be open until Friday, February 14th.



Since then, we have hosted a focus group for Vanderbilt leadership and department managers which provided content for our next lunch and learn, *How Can Team Leaders Support Employee Caregivers?* If you are a manager with staff members who are caregivers, you don't want to miss this opportunity to gather resources and strategies to best support these unique members of your team. Join us on Tuesday, February 11th from 12-1 PM in the Godchaux Nursing Annex, Room 160.

For more information about these and other services provided by VCFC Family Services, feel free to contact Toya Cobb, Family Services Coordinator, at toya.y.cobb@vanderbilt.edu or VCFCservices@vanderbilt.edu



Creating a learning environment that encourages children to explore the world with all five senses requires teacher mindfulness. The Acorn School teachers reflect on where there is opportunity to more fully investigate the scents, sounds, tastes, colors, shapes and textures in our lives, within our daily routine, both in the classrooms and on the playground, by taking time to observe children's interests and expand on this by structuring activities that further engage their innate curiosity. Loose parts in active play do not confine learning to one particular discipline but reflect multiple domains to educate the Whole Child.



The VCFC Curriculum Committee has been convened to identify opportunities for The Acorn School to investigate research-based practice to inform curriculum implementation that aligns with our program's foundation of social-constructivism and strong value for play. The Curriculum Committee is comprised of fifteen members, including early childhood educators from each of The Acorn School's child care centers and faculty and graduate students from Peabody. The committee has held five committee meetings beginning in August 2019.

Through the shared understanding that evolving program quality requires fidelity to stated mission, goals and values, the committee seeks to support program growth and the development of curriculum strategies around the culture and community of VCFC. The committee is currently pursuing opportunities that will enhance The Acorn School's teacher training, professional development and systems as this will inform and enhance the child and parent experience.



Through observation and assessments of program, the committee has made recommendations that will create a more systematic process around gathering child data through an observational methodology and how this is shared with colleagues and parents in order to enhance programmatic communication regarding emergent curriculum. The committee is currently working towards the next steps in this process which will inform Spring professional development activities for The Acorn School.



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Child and Family Center

Mission: Vanderbilt Child & Family Center (VCFC) provides support and resources to the community of Vanderbilt families across the spectrum of life. As reflected in our provision of new parent support, early childhood education, family life resources, and elder care support, VCFC values the university's commitment to the education of the whole person and cultivation of lifelong learning.

VCFC's Advisory Task Force (ATF) was established in Summer 2018 to assess the current programs, resources, and services provided by the Child and Family Center, and to research the changing and complex needs of working families at Vanderbilt to understand and recommend how the department can respond appropriately. The white paper published in April 2019 outlines this work.

<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/child-family-center/files/VCFCATF-FinalReport-2019.pdf>

The issue of child care access was a priority question for this body to interrogate, both wait list management and the need for affordable access to high quality child care, an issue for many Vanderbilt employees and post-doctoral scholars. An outcome of this work was announced in January 2020 in a letter to The Acorn School parents, and this information will also be provided to Wait List families.

In summary, VCFC will be able to double the amount of university affiliated children accepted off the Wait List (compared to years past) for an August 10, 2020 start date. While this does not alleviate the list, which expands daily, it is a welcome step forward to supporting more university families to onboard sooner. This capacity is created due to both the end of the VUMC SLA in June 2020 which releases over 100 child care spaces back to the university, and possible through our site directors' conscientious group size management within the available facility (we re-measured and advocated with our licensing body.)

Vanderbilt Child and Family Center's The Acorn School has the expressed objective to support children's healthy growth and development through a dynamic early childhood care and education program. VCFC relies on its website www.vanderbilt.edu/child-family-center to effectively communicate to families: program links will be refreshed in February 2020 including The Acorn School Calendar and Parent Handbook. Additionally, VCFC will convene a Town Hall Meeting on Monday, March 30, 2020 at 8:30 AM in Commons 235 to share the program vision and goals, including for facility planning, with the university community.

Summary of The Acorn School Program Updates Effective July 1, 2020 The Acorn School hours of operation will be 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

Effective July 1, 2020 The Acorn School will close for five in-service dates per school calendar year in alignment with findings from VCFC's ATF professional development sub-committee.

Effective July 1, 2020 The Acorn School tuition rates will increase by 15%

The Acorn School early childhood program rates remain significantly under Nashville market rates compared to peer organizations, however VCFC appreciates this tuition increase is larger when compared to years past and sought to provide families as much notice in advance of July 2020 implementation as possible considering the budgeting process timeline.

Effective July 1, 2020 The Acorn School will implement an Opportunity Vanderbilt-inspired tuition adjustment program

To support full time Vanderbilt employees' access to affordable, high quality child care, scholarships in the amount of a 50% tuition adjustment will be available for families with a gross income at or below \$49,999 annually; and in the amount of a 20% tuition adjustment for families with a gross income between \$50,000 and \$74,999. *The application process will be explained on the VCFC website with applications due by June 1, 2020.*