Welcome to

The Acorn School
AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
Philosophy

The Acorn School provides a Whole Child (mind, body, spirit) approach to early childhood care and education. Inspired by social-constructivist systems thinking theories, educators know that children’s conceptual understandings emerge through their engagement with the world.
Social Constructivism

All children grow and thrive in the context of close and dependable relationships that provide love and nurturance, security, and responsive interactions. (Webster-Stratton, 1999).
Play

“Play is often talked about as if it is relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.”
- Fred Rogers

The Acorn School teaching practice reflects the research-based understanding that play is essential to children’s health and well-being, and foundational to children’s construction of knowledge.
Emergent Curriculum

The Acorn School emergent curriculum requires teachers to hold an image of the child as someone actively seeking knowledge. To guide our teaching practice, the teacher must actively observe and identify the interests and needs of the child, as each child we teach is unique. The learning environment is designed by teachers and reflects their observation of the play schemas of children, demonstrating that activities responsive to children’s interests provide meaningful learning opportunities.
Infant Program

Adults have influence over and responsibility for children’s developing self-concept by the way they engage with, speak to, and respond to children.
Toddler Program  (12 months by August 2020)

Young learners newly mobile are excited to explore the world with all five senses. With gentle coaching from nurturing teachers, children learn to manage big feelings and engage successfully with peers.
Twos Program  (24 months by August 2020)

All humans want to feel respect and self-worth and a sense of belonging which occurs in coordination with primary routines, classroom activities and the design of the learning environment.
Preschool Program

By perceiving children as curious, competent and capable of self-control, and honoring their interests and needs, adults will enable children to explore their big ideas, solve problems, and respond to others with kindness and empathy.
K-Camp

K-Camp is a transformative nature education summer program for PreK children entering elementary school. K-Camp provides rising kindergartners an opportunity to confront change through the joyful adventure of exploring the buildings and grounds of Vanderbilt University with risk and rigor!
Parent Partnership

The Acorn School recognizes the pivotal role parents play in their child’s education, honoring the parent as the child’s first teacher. Through consistent and respectful verbal and written communication, parents and early childhood educators strengthen their relationship, united to support a shared understanding of the unique child. Specific activities include:

- Teacher Meet and Greet
- Back to School Night
- Bi-annual conferences
- Week of the Young Child.

Parents may also:

- support surveys
- hiring panels
- The Connect Group (in support of teacher appreciation)

These foundational relationships contribute to a positive school climate.
Nature Education

Play in nature is especially important for developing capacities for creativity, problem-solving, and intellectual development (Kellert, 2005). Licensing requires outside play every day that the temperature registers between 32 and 95 degrees Fahrenheit. The Acorn School welcomes children in play clothes with bug spray and sunscreen applied at home (teachers will reapply by noon and as needed.)
Research Partnership

The Acorn School values lifelong learning and adult education, serving as a demonstration program and hosting colleagues from across the globe.

Through an established partnership with the Peabody School of Education and Human Development, The Acorn School serves as a site for observation and training and provides values aligned research opportunities that may inform individual child well-being as well as ongoing assessment for program quality.
FAQ’s

The Acorn School is open twelve months a year Monday - Friday from 7:00 AM - 6:00 PM

The New School Year begins August 10, 2020 and ends August 4, 2021

➢ Classroom Open House is August 7th from 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM This is opportunity allows parents to meet their child's teacher, identify classroom

The Acorn School is closed on the following holidays observed by Vanderbilt: Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, day after Thanksgiving, Winter Break, New Year’s Day, and Memorial Day. (VCFC may offer Labor Day care to faculty and staff scheduled to work - a survey will go out beginning of August 2020.)

Additional dates of closure for teacher in-service:
August 6-7, 2020; October 23, 2020; January 18, 2021; and May 21, 2021

The Acorn School will close on any additional Chancellor holidays if and as these are announced

There is no tuition proration for dates of closure or child absences.
Transition

Children are required to be signed in at school by 10:00 AM *(an exception will be made for pediatric appointments, with note, and for rare emergencies.)*

Parents must sign-in electronically at the front desk and check-in verbally and visually with the teacher at both Drop-off and Pick-up times.

Parents are encouraged to create a strong and consistent drop off routine that supports your child’s transition into the classroom each day.
Well Child
The Acorn School is licensed as a Well Child program by the Tennessee Department of Human Services. Children must be able to engage in the daily rhythm of the The Acorn School program to attend. Parent partnership is necessary to comply with the Well Child Policies.

Parents assess their child’s health and wellness based on the child’s behavior as a first indicator of ill health before arriving at the child care center. If upon arrival teachers identify that the child is not well enough to attend, the child will be sent home with the parent. These policies are defined in The Parent Handbook in an effort to protect the health and safety of all children enrolled in the program.
Next Steps

The Acorn School admits children through rolling enrollment twelve months per year as spots become available. VU families are allowed one right of refusal when offered a spot in The Acorn School before being moved to the end of the wait list.

The majority of spots will become available for an August 10, 2020 start date, families will be informed of an age-eligible spot for this start date by February 2020.

To secure the offered spot the following mandatory steps must be completed:

1) One parent/guardian must attend a mandatory orientation & tour
2) To commit to the spot, parent/guardian completes and submits the Emergency Information and Authorization Form (failure to submit this within 2 business days after tour results in forfeit of spot)
3) Parent/guardian must submit a completed enrollment packet at least five business days prior to the child’s first day of school (due by June 1st if child begins program August 10th)

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