

Annual Report to Families 2015

April 20, 2015

Dear ECDC Parents,

As an academic service unit within the School of Education, Health, and Human Performance (SOEHHP), we submit annual program reports to College of Charleston (July) and our national accreditation body, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in May. These reports are published on our website (<http://ecdc.cofc.edu/licensing-and-accreditation/index.php>) as well as our annual re-certification materials for the *NatureExplore* program. 2015 reports will be posted before the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year and I would highly encourage you to read them!

We will be requesting survey feedback from you soon that will provide us with new data to help set goals and priorities for next year. The purposes of this letter/report are to (a) describe how our program evaluation process works, (b) explain how your thoughts and ideas inform the process, (c) share summarized data, and (d) update you on actions taken during the 2014-2015 academic year to address both internal and university goals.

Executive Summary

ECDC strives to be a community that reflects the University's diversity goals. Our population this year included:

- 53 enrolled children (47 families)
- 28% minority representation
- 9% bilingual children (5 languages other than English)
- 7% children with special needs

The annual evaluation process is systematic (*See Section 1*) and incorporates feedback from multiple sources (*See Section II*). Feedback and data analyses are used to identify goals related to families, children, and staff (*See Section III, Tables 1 and Section IV, Table 2.*) and those of the university (*See Section IV, Tables 3 & 4*). Highlights of activities and actions included:

- Many activities planned to celebrate the 40th anniversary of our program
- Maintaining high quality standards via NAEYC accreditation, *NatureExplore* certification, and DSS licensing
- Active participation of all levels of our staff in professional development and scholarly activities
- Maintaining a high level of service to our university as a resource for students, faculty, and staff
- Leadership in the greater early childhood community and advocacy activities that will contribute to improving the lives of LowCountry children
- Upgrading of security systems and procedures
- Continued dialogue and Improvements in school/home/school communications
- Campus and community partnerships that support continued development of our commitments to learning through play, emergent curriculum, global perspectives, literacy, sustainability, and outdoor education.

I. ECDC Program Evaluation Process

Our *Program Goals Assessment Plan* is published on the ECDC Website "Mission" page <http://ecdc.cofc.edu/about-the-center/mission/index.php>. The template for this plan displays a timeline of evaluation activities that take place over the course of each academic year. These activities provide us with feedback from families, lead & student staff, and campus faculty/staff related to our overall goals for (a) children, (b) families, and (c) campus. It also outlines how we analyze and report our findings to take actions for continuous program improvement.

II. How Your Thoughts and Ideas Inform the Program Evaluation Process

While we are not like a traditional preschool or child care program and our parents do not have governing authority, we need your feedback, support, and participation to continue developing our program and maintaining our standards of excellence. We gather feedback through:

- New Family Surveys (Fall)
- Annual Family Surveys (Spring)
- CofC Faculty/Staff Surveys [for those who use ECDC for practicum/research] (Spring)

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- Annual ECDC Staff surveys (Spring)
- Unsolicited Feedback (emails, conversations, conferences, etc.)
- Parent Advisory Committee
- PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) activities and meetings
- Conferences with families, teachers, and/or the director

Feedback from families is primarily useful for monitoring our standing goals for children and families. But because so many of you are either faculty or staff members at the College, your ideas are often also very helpful for furthering the ways we serve and interact within our campus community. Those of you who work outside the College assist us with making connections in the local and Tri-County communities.

III. Summarized Data

Beginning of the Year (New Family) Surveys: As we consider the feedback/data we gather, we are looking for both general themes and direct connections to specific goals. Fall 2014 Beginning of the Year Surveys (NFS) were formatted as an online survey, thinking it might increase convenience for families, but we only had a 37.5% return rate (18/47) which is less than prior years when we did paper. But the results over the 9 questions were 99.57% positive, indicating families felt welcomed, accepted, and comfortable with the way transitions were managed. Of particular interest to us was response to school (vs. home) visits prior to the opening of school. 66.7% of responses indicated no preference, with an equal number (3 each) or 16.7% favoring either home or school in particular.

Annual NAEYC Family Survey: Side-by-side comparisons of the annual Family Survey data collected each spring for the past three years show that our families overwhelmingly believe we have a very strong program across all ten categories (overall 2014 survey score 97.3% positive) and that we also continue to make improvements noticeable to our families. The high response rate (41/45 = 91%) also provides confidence that feedback is representative of our parent group.

Table 1. Spring 2014 Family Survey Data Results

Focus Category	# questions in category	Positive Response %	Themes among comments
Relationships	6	96.3	<i>Parents view this area as a particular strength but one family would prefer detailed daily information about their individual child.(12)</i>
Curriculum	2	97.2	<i>Parents are highly satisfied with curriculum, in particular incorporation of children's individual interests and family culture (3)</i>
Teaching	3	97.4	<i>Parents highly satisfied with teacher qualifications and interaction; one family indicated they wish they could participate more in the classroom.(11)</i>
Assessment	8	96.0	<i>Parents feel informed about their child's progress; several indicated they would be open to alternate means of reporting/sharing assessment data(15)</i>
Health	3	99.1	<i>Parents particularly pleased with information sharing about specific health issues. (4)</i>
Families	15	99.1	<i>Uniform level of satisfaction about supports provided to families; one family would prefer more communication about daily activities of their individual child.(15)</i>
Community	3	93.3	<i>One family indicated they would like to be more involved in ECDC support for the larger community, but don't have time.(2)</i>
Leadership	6	99.6	<i>Uniform support for leadership/management; one family would like more support or home/school/home transitions after master teacher is gone for the day.(8)</i>

The two themes most represented in comments across these data were:

1. *Families feel a strong sense of community at ECDC and a high level of confidence in the quality of the program. We continue to be encouraged that families recognize and support the unique nature of our*

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program, its mission, and our ongoing efforts. Nearly 85% of our families volunteered during the year with social, fund-raising, educational, or service activities. Next year we would like to hit 100%!

2. *Building and maintaining effective home/school/home communications and transitions continues as a high priority.* Finding a balance between what families want and what we can realistically provide is an ongoing challenge that is also complicated by the logistics of fluctuating arrivals/departures and our great dependence on student support staff. Parents responded positively to our graduate assistants' involvement in classroom and program websites, blogs, and newsletters. We also had a high number of families who indicated they understand and feel positively about our assessment and progress reporting process.

IV. Actions to Address Internal & University Goals & Priorities

Table 2. 2014-2015 Actions Responding to Family Priorities

Identified Priority	Actions
Try different means of establishing home/school relations and easing children's transitions to home	Conducted pre-fall term visits at school. Beginning of year surveys revealed this works at least as well as home visits. These will continue in 2016 with targeted home visits in special circumstances.
Continue to look for ways to share information about group and individual children's activities	Teachers each email a bulleted "daily report" during planning time to give parents a "snapshot" feel for how the day is going. This has been very successful.
Streamline reporting tool(s)	Beginning of year surveys were conducted with online tool. This didn't work; response rate was lower than with paper. <i>Annual Report to Families</i> limited to information most pertinent to surveys, with work more connected to university/program goals reported in CofC Annual Report
Provide print copies of assessment reports/narratives	Teachers are now providing parents with either electronic or paper copy of children's assessment report at conference.
Improve pick-up time transfer of information between student staff & families when the master teacher has already left for the day	Classroom logs created to improve AM/PM/AM communications among the lead teacher & assistants; increasing use of small whiteboards to convey daily routines information [to save paper]

Table 3. 2014-2015 Activities & Actions Related to Program Mission & University Goals

Goal Area	Priority	Actions taken in 2014-2015
Program Quality	Begin 2016 NAEYC re-accreditation prep	Folios regenerated; materials organized; <i>Intent to Renew</i> submitted; 4 th Annual Report submitted
	Maintain <i>NatureExplore</i> certification	Re-certified through June 2015
	Maintain DSS licensing	Relicensed 9/2014 through 9/2016
	Implement 40 th Anniversary Activities	October 3 community celebration; 3-part discussion/film series completed 4/15
	Other [Security Issues]	New security system elements installed including replacement of existing camera and installation of 2 new cameras with additional monitoring station; new internal communications system will be purchased for 2015-2016 to relay announcements to families for emergency situations;

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		alternate off-site evacuation site secured (Unitarian Church Gage Hall)
Research & Professional Development	Begin data collection for longitudinal study	Still in pre-approval process, but many participant contacts were made via 40 th anniversary activities
	Identify appropriate conference opportunities for professional development	CJ, MW, JH presented at ACT conference; SJ attended MEPI; PG & JH attended US Play Coalition/Clemson; CJ will present at Summit June 2015; CJ presented keynote at conference in Madison, WI; CJ presented 2 graduate students' ECDC documentation work as conference session in Madison, WI; CJ attended NCCCC Chicago, NAEYC Dallas
	Continue support for CofC faculty/student research	One faculty-sponsored research project conducted over Fall/Spring semesters involving 4 graduate students
	2014-2015 Teacher read book	Completed Chaille, C. (2008). <i>Constructivism across the curriculum: Big ideas as inspiration</i> . Boston: Pearson
	Other	Received grant funding for four graduate students to attend ACT conference; set up online system to provide staff with Blood Borne Pathogens annual training; CJ had 2 entries accepted for publication in <i>Sage Encyclopedia of ECE</i>
Service to Campus	Continue service on 2015-2016 EC Summit Planning Team	5 th Annual Conference June 2015
	Continue to develop collaborations across campus	Multiple activities with personnel from Grounds/Sustainability on "loose parts" initiatives & gardening
Child Advocacy & Community Collaborations	Continue to build & seek mentoring relationships with other early childhood programs & initiatives	Participated in writing successful \$1.3 million grant for <i>First Steps</i> to establish three new Early Head Start programs; continuing to serve as mentor for implementation team;
	Continue collaborations with community groups that focus on best practices and teacher professional development	Began mentoring activities with teachers from GreenWorld & Island School (local) and ReggioDay School in Columbia, SC; co-planned and conducted panel discussion with community groups on childhood environmental education @ Memminger Elementary School
	Continue engagement in regional/national efforts that advocate for high quality early childhood education	<i>Cradle to Career Summit Planning Team</i> ; CJ began three year term as board member of National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers (NCCCC); received \$2500 grant from Coastal Community Foundation to support children with special needs;

Table 4. Facility/Program Use as Demonstration/Laboratory Setting

Visitors	492
Practicum/observation hours	805
# CofC Course sections represented	19
# Departments represented	3
CofC Graduate Students employed	12
Volunteers	2
CofC Undergraduate students employed	27
Faculty Sponsored Research projects	1 (pre-post Fall/Spring) with 4 graduate students

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Visits from teachers at other schools	GreenWorld, Island Academy, Reggio Day School (Columbia); visiting scholar from China, East Coast Migrant Head Start; First Steps, Corpus Callosum
Hosting professional organizations	Pre-Conference Day Tours for members of <i>Association of Constructivist Teaching</i>
Visits by therapists	81
Visits from other university students	MUSC Psychiatry Residents

Final thoughts

2014-2015 was a particularly happy year because we celebrated 40 successful and productive years with families and children. We met many new [old] friends and learned a lot about the history of ECDC that we didn't know before. I hope that this report is helpful and I thank all of you for your openness, honesty, and willingness to provide us with feedback and to participate in this process.

Sincerely,



Candace Jaruszewicz, Ph.D.
Director, Miles ECDC