From the Director’s Desk…

Welcome to a new school year at the VCU Child Development Center! We have a dual mission at the CDC: to provide high-quality care and education for the children of VCU faculty, staff, and student families; and, to provide a high-quality learning lab for student clinical experiences, faculty research, and community outreach and education.

For the first part of our mission, the care and education of your children, we have some exciting changes already underway. We have updated our Creative Curriculum resources to provide better research-based activities for your children. We are focusing on using community resources as educational tools for the children (take a moment to look at the photos outside room 101 and 102, of the children exploring campus during their units on transportation!). We will also be sharing some of our best moments with you through weekly class e-mails and a new Shutterfly account so that you can get a peek into your child’s day at the CDC.

As a learning lab, we have a busy semester ahead of us, hosting over 100 VCU students in their clinical experiences for education, psychology, occupational therapy, and other programs. We are excited to share the world of early learning with the VCU community.

With a new year, a new Director, a freshly-stamped accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and the celebration of the School of Education’s 50th anniversary, we are poised to ask some big questions, such as “Who are we?” and “Where do we want to be in the future?” This year will be one of strategic planning, so that we can create our roadmap for the future. During the course of the year, there will be opportunities for family involvement in this process, and we hope that you will take advantage of the forum to share your experiences at the Center and help us plan for the future.

This newsletter will give you an overview of what's coming up and who's who here at the CDC. Here’s to a great year of learning and growing together!

Dr. Alyson Williams, Director
VCU Child Development Center
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Greetings G1 families and Happy Fall! We are excited about the new lessons and activities that will take place during this new season. We will kick-off in September with our Family/All about Me theme. Our children will begin to understand the cultural difference of our friends as we explore each other’s families. We will look at how each family structure is different and unique by looking at family photos and collages. Next, we will explore the fun happenings of the fall season. This will be one unit that will be broken down into sub-themes like Apples, Pumpkins, Leaves, and Colors. We will take community visits and explore our surroundings on VCU’s campus to see how things change during the fall. For example, we will hunt for leaves that change color on trees and bushes. Finally, we will explore the Thanksgiving holiday and see how each family celebrates this occasion. Our class will begin to understand the importance of being thank for each other during this time. We always welcome and encourage parents to participate in any activity that takes place in our classroom. Our children get really excited to see new faces, so come on and hang out with our fabulous toddlers!
Classroom News

Fun in G1
Room G2, Ms. Karen Turner & Ms. Brittany Dix

The end of 2014 is closing in fast and 2015 will soon be knocking at the door. Our class has had a busy year, and to help us continue on that trend, we will explore seasonal themes things related to fall including apples, leaves, pumpkins, turkeys and the upcoming holidays. Our class, along with the rest of the CDC, will take our annual pilgrimage to the pumpkin patch and take a hayride to the field to pick out a pumpkin. As the leaves begin to turn color, the children will take a buggy ride or two through the neighborhood to not only experience the color changes in the leaves but the changes in the weather. Closing out the year, we will explore the sights and smells of the various holidays by making gingerbread and latkes, lighting a menorah, painting with branches of a fir tree and scratching cinnamon on sandpaper.

As you know, Ms. Brittany Dix will soon be moving up to Room 202, and we have been holding interviews for the new G2 teacher. We hope to have an announcement in the coming days… stay tuned!

Room 102, Older Toddlers, Ms. Juil Stirrup & Ms. Emily Eaton

We have been busy bees in Room 102! During the past several months, we have been learning about healthy eating, farm animals, shapes, camping, the beach and oceans. We are having a blast closing out the summer with a unit focusing on nursery rhymes! With cooler weather (hopefully) approaching soon, we are getting geared up to study the fall, pumpkins, the concept of real vs. pretend, families and Thanksgiving! As always, we place a focus on having fun and helping the children make healthy and safe choices during the day. We are so excited to welcome our new friends and we are all looking forward to a fantastic rest of 2014!

Room 101, Ms. Lori Do & Ms. Benita Thompson

Room 101 is looking forward to the season of fall. For the beginning of the school year, we will become more familiar with the exciting day that we will be having at school getting to know our fun filled schedule and routine so we can have a great time as we continue to learn throughout the days. We will learn about ourselves with our dinosaur friends while incorporating “All About Me”. Fire Prevention Week will be in the month of October, so this is a great time for learning how to practice fire safety techniques like STOP, DROP, and ROLL. Finally, it is National Apple month in October as well. There will be lots of learning going n as we talk about tasty apples and all of the creative ways we can use them. It is going to be a fabulous new school year!
Greetings from the Room 201 Stars! We are excited to be starting off a new school year. We have been adding energy to the classroom with new learning toys, a rug, and calendar all designed to facilitate learning math and language concepts. During September, we will be composing classroom rules, learning about ourselves, family and friends, as well as safety, especially fire safety. We will also be appreciating Hispanic language and culture, discussing Columbus Day, and watching how the season is beginning to change. We will be “Math Explorers” as well, working on identifying numbers, counting, naming shapes and sorting items. October will be “Fall Celebration Month” with pumpkins, leaves and apples in the forecast! As always, we encourage Room 201 Star parents, to participate or share something they enjoy with the students. The new CDC Shutterfly photo sharing page will be documenting with photos, our creative curriculum.

Room 202, Ms. Marilyn Alston

Welcome to all of the "Jewels" and their families. I am excited about polishing the "Jewels" as they prepare for their next important level of education. The school year will begin by exploring the characteristics and responsibilities of a "Jewel". The children will also explore simple mathematics concepts, language arts, and fire safety. In addition, the children will celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. Ms. Brittany Dix will soon join 202 as the co-teacher.
Meet the CDC!

We know there are a lot of names and faces at the CDC. We hope the following “cheat sheet” will allow you to get to know us a little bit better. There is a bulletin board of teachers just outside the offices, and we hope you will stop by and visit.

ADMINISTRATION and FACILITIES

Alyson Williams, Ed.D., Director

I joined VCU in January of 2014, and am thrilled to be leading the CDC. Prior to joining the CDC, I lived in Alexandria, VA, and was Director at two early childhood programs sponsored by Federal agencies (the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center at the Smithsonian Institution and Tiny Findings at the U.S. Government Accountability Office, both in Washington, DC). I have held several other positions in the field of early childhood education, including: teacher for infants, toddlers, twos, and Kindergarten; research assistant for Georgetown University, Virginia Tech, and The George Washington University; and evaluator for public charter preschools in Washington, DC. My educational background includes a B.A. in English and an M.A.T. in Early Childhood Education, both from James Madison University; and, an Ed.D. in Educational Administration and Policy Studies from The George Washington University. My dissertation research focused on the professional identities and career decisions of highly-qualified infant-toddler center-based teachers. When I am not at the Center, I am often participating in the early childhood community, where I serve on the Board of the Richmond Early Childhood Association (RECA) and the Editorial Board for the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). I am new to Richmond, but have spent most of my life in Central Virginia, in such exotic locales as Charlottesville, Fredericksburg, Harrisonburg, Nelson County, and Orange County. I am enjoying getting to know Richmond, where I spend time fixing up my old house and gardening with my boyfriend, caring for my dog and three cats, checking out new restaurants (suggestions welcome!), reading, and playing with my niece and three nephews, who are now just a few blocks away.

Samaria Pryor, Kitchen Manager

Not Pictured: Jane Washington, Administrative Assistant; Kenneth Williams, Maintenance; Shirley Scott, Kitchen Assistant
Meet the CDC!

Christeena Claiborne, Teacher (G1)

Greetings! My name is Christeena Claiborne, and I am one of the toddler teachers at the CDC. I have been working at the CDC for three years, and I am enjoying every minute of it. I received my Bachelor of Science degree from Howard University in 2010 majoring in Human Development with a concentration in Early Childhood Education. Many do not know, but I started my undergraduate career majoring in mathematics. In spring of 2007, I did some volunteer work with the Howard University’s Early Learning Program. I fell in love instantly with the work, and changed my major that day! I enjoy working with toddler/preschool ages because I witness so much growth during these critical stages, and it amazes me to see how much they can learn while being in my care as their teacher. Some of my favorite things to do while away from work are spend time with my family and friends, go to church, and travel. I am currently a first year graduate student at VCU and enrolled in the Counselor Education program. I am fortunate to be a part of the CDC family, and I will continue to strive for greatness while working with the children who come through my class!

Nakita Battle, Teacher (G1)

My name is Mrs. Nakita Battle, and I have been working at VCU Child Development Center for almost 16 years. I am currently working towards my Associates Degree in Early Childhood Education while attending J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College. I feel like it has not been that long, but I like what I do as a teacher. I love working with children because I get to see them grow and see them learn so much while teaching them. I don’t have any children, so I always treat the children in my class like they are my own while teaching them during the day at the CDC. Being a teacher gives me hope that I’m doing what I can to help them grow and to move on to new things, and that is really exciting for me.

Brittany Dix, Teacher (G2—Moving soon to 202)

My first job as a teenager was childcare in a Health and Fitness Center. From there on, I realized I wanted to work for children. My interest probably sparked earlier than that; my mother quit teaching public school when she had me and began a In-Home Childcare. Therefore, I was her little helper. I graduated from Old Dominion University in 2008. Unable to find work in Norfolk, I moved home to Richmond. I began part-time work at an alternative school working with teenagers who had been expelled from the school district. In 2011, I began working for The Virginia Home for Boys and Girls, where I worked as a Alternate Teaching Parent. Due to the long and excessive overnight hours, I applied for the position to work with VCU Child Development Center. The interview committee saw my dedication and interest and gave me a chance! I have been happily servicing toddlers ever since! :)
Meet the CDC

Karen Turner (center), Teacher, G2
Karen is pictured with Nakita Battle, Christeena Claiborne, and Emily Eaton, discussing strategic planning for the CDC.

Benita Thompson, Teacher, 101

Lori Do, Teacher, 101
Meet the CDC!

Emily Eaton, Teacher (102)
Before landing full-time in the field of early childhood education, I had the opportunity to serve children as a Sunday School teacher and Nursery Coordinator, babysitter, and finally a literacy and math tutor to homeless girls in Guatemala City. When I returned to the United States in 2004, I realized that working with young children was one of my passions, and the rest is history! I taught for 6 years at Grace Covenant Child Development Center and then was finally persuaded by a VCU CDC parent to apply for an open position here. I worked with Ms. Karen for a year in G2, and have been in my current classroom for 2 years. My other passions are nature, animals, and music! I especially like to ride horses and play the violin. I also love to play board and card games, and spend time with family and friends.

Juli Stirrup, Teacher (102)
Hello CDC families! My name is Juli Stirrup. I am 30 years old and the mother of a beautiful little boy, Vernon, who will turn 2 in January! I lived in New York until my family moved to Richmond when I was 13 years old. I attended Saint Gertrude High School and graduated from VCU in 2006 with a Bachelors Degree in Spanish. Since graduating I have worked for Head Start, Chesterbrook Academy and Chesterfield County's Adult Education Program. I also spent a year living in Nicaragua and taught English and Science to elementary school children. Teaching has been a passion of mine ever since I can remember. In addition to working with the children in Room 102, I currently teach a literacy level English class two nights a week with Henrico County's Adult Education Program. I love spending time with my family, cooking, visiting fun Richmond spots with Vernon, and taking our dog, Pickles, running. I have one younger sister, a step sister, two step brothers and a beautiful nephew and niece. I am so happy to be a part of the VCU CDC’s staff of fantastic teachers and I look forward to getting to know all of you!

Glynis Broy, Teacher (201)
Greetings! My name is Glynis Broy and I am thrilled to be teaching your children! I have worn many hats in education, including Speech-Language Pathologist, Assistant Principal and District Exceptional Education Program Manager in Savannah, Georgia. I relocated to Richmond August of 2013 and was very excited to start at the CDC in April of this year. On a personal level, I adore my husband, John and have two lovely stepchildren, Danielle and Julian. I love children and animals, especially my polydactyl tuxedo cat, Kevin. I hope to get to know you all and your families and appreciate the welcome I have received from staff and families since I started my new career. Here’s to a great year for us all!
Meet the CDC!

Mary Stuart Smith, Teacher (201)

Mary Stuart Smith is delighted to be at the CDC. She was graduated from Sweet Briar College with a BA in English, recently took a course in Teaching Reading through the Content area at VCU, having now completed 21 hours of graduate work at VCU. She has recently become certified to teach Adult ESL in addition to ESL in PreK-12th grade. Mary Stuart is an avid fan of all performing arts in Richmond especially the Virginia Rep, Richmond Symphony and Richmond Ballet. Mary Stuart is a volunteer for the Richmond Symphony Orchestra League and manages their social media Pinterest and Twitter accounts. Apart from supporting the performing arts in the RVA area, she also enjoys genealogy research, visiting her daughter at the University of South Carolina, an seeing her son and his new kitten, Perseus, on Mulberry Street here in the Fan.

Marilyn Alston, Teacher (202)

My name is Marilyn L. Alston. I have been an educator for 38 years in public, private, and state facilities. I received my B.A. degree from North Carolina Central University. I majored in art and minored in music and education. I continued my educational studies at New York University, where I received my M.A. degree in Art Education for Colleges and Universities. My post-graduate studies have been at the City University of New York, VCU, Virginia Tech, and J. Sargeant Reynolds. The major focus of my studies at these institutions of higher education has been multicultural studies, early childhood education, education, mentoring, and north American wildlife. My teaching career began in the New York City public school system. While there I served as a classroom teacher, school liason and coordinator for the Black Studies program, grade music leader, and an Ethnic Studies cluster teacher. I have also taught in the Richmond public school system. My responsibilities included teaching in the gifted and talented program, ESL teacher for the adult education program, and teaching art in various schools in the city. I have spent the last 26 years of my teaching career here at VCUCDC. I have been fortunate to serve as a kindergarten teacher, pre-school teacher, mentor, and guest lecturer. I enjoy music. I find it to be very soothing for my mind and my soul. I have been singing as a soloist and in choirs since the age of four.
Cati Howard
Cati Howard graduated from Radford University in May 2010 with a Bachelor’s of Science in English. After college, Cati relocated to Richmond, VA to pursue a job with the Children's Museum of Richmond as a teacher in their Stay and Learn program and later as their Party and Rental Coordinator. After spending three years in birthday land at the Museum, Cati briefly worked for Goddard School in Chesterfield, VA. As of April 2014, she has found her niche as an assistant teacher at the VCU Child Development Center. A native of northern Virginia, Cati has eight brothers and sisters, which has afforded her plenty of experience working with large groups of children. While not working, Cati enjoys visiting her large family in Manassas, VA, voraciously devouring books (mostly Stephen King), and spending time exploring Richmond with her German Shepherd, Bella Boo.

Azalea Flores
Hello! My name is Azalea Flores and I am currently a senior at VCU majoring in Psychology and minoring in Religious Studies. I volunteered last semester with the toddlers for my Human Services Fieldwork course and loved the CDC so much that I decided to apply and was blessed with a position in early March. I have taken several courses here at VCU to help with understanding different stages of development and principles of learning and cognition prior to working at the CDC. El Salvador is my birthplace and I can speak both Spanish and English. I have a passion for helping others and love to meet new faces!
OFFICE and TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Lisa Burnham
Lisa has been working with children and parents for over twenty years. She has a B.A. in Child Development from Florida State University and her M.A. in Mental Health Counseling from Lesley University. She has been fortunate to work in various school settings as an educator and counselor throughout her career. Some of her loves include animals, cooking (as well as eating), yoga and football! Lisa moved with her family from Florida last year due to her husband’s job. They are happy to call Richmond home and now live in the West End.

Gretchen Buis
The magic, the wonder, of childhood perhaps that’s what I am all about. Though I have a B.A. (Sweet Briar), M. Ed. (U. of R.), and M. A. English (VCU); postgraduate teaching certifications (PreK-12); and am now in my 31st year of teaching (2 year olds, kindergarten, English 6-12, Theater Arts K-12), students - big and little - are my forever teachers. (My loves: my son and daughter who, in spite of me, grew all the way up!)

Catilin Crow
Caitlin was born in San Francisco, California. She holds a BFA in Photography and Film and Non-Profit Administration from Virginia Commonwealth University. She spent 3 years as an Artist-In-Residence Teaching Assistant for children’s art classes with the San Francisco Arts Education Project and is well versed in a variety of media including painting, drawing, sculpture and ceramics. She is also a California Student Art Scholar in Dance and hopes to teach Zumba fitness to adults and children in the near future. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, working on freelance projects and cooking.

Not Pictured: Caroline Heil, Ally Dickerson, and Sarah Robinson
STUDENT WORKERS

Maria Foy
Hi, my name is Maria Foy and I am a senior at VCU. I am majoring in early childhood development and will be pursuing my master’s degree in education. I have worked with elementary school children over several summers as a camp counselor and have cherished working with children every since. I love to bake and make arts and crafts, paint, drawl and color. I know how to play the French horn, mellophone, flute and piccolo. I also enjoy watching movies and working out!

Tierra Hardin
I was born and raised in Northern Virginia (Alexandria). I then moved to Woodbridge, Va and attended Lake Ridge Middle school and Graduated from Woodbridge Senior High School. I attended Virginia Union University my first year of college majoring in Social Work before transferring to Virginia Commonwealth University where I am at now and just recently decided to change my major to early and elementary education.

Sarah Porter
My name is Sarah Porter. I am currently a second-year graduate school student working to receive a M.Ed. in Counselor Education with a concentration in school counseling. I graduated from George Mason University in 2013 with a B.A. in Psychology and a minor in Arts and Visual Technology. I have worked as a summer camp counselor for children with social, emotional, and learning disabilities at Camp Ramapo for Children in Rhinebeck, New York. I have also previously worked as a lifeguard at my local recreational center in Virginia Beach, Virginia for four years. Because my father was a Commanding Officer in the Navy, I have grown up living overseas for the majority of my life. I have lived in many places, which include Thailand, Italy, Washington, D.C., Rhode Island, California, and Japan. I absolutely love being here in Richmond; it’s been such a wonderful change! I can’t wait to explore and discover more of this amazing city!

Kate Boheim
Candis Shaw

Not Pictured:
Elanna Stammer, Christina Cornejo, Faith Hillard, Gabrielle Saunders, Desiree Zayas
Fundraising

The CDC is funded primarily through tuition payments; however, those payments do not cover the entire cost of operating the program. We seek your help with our fundraising efforts, including those listed here and on our website.

Since 1997, schools, charities, churches, community groups, and clubs in the continental United States have collectively earned more than **$26 million in cash and rewards** through FundingFactory's 100% free fundraising-thru-recycling program. Together, FundingFactory and the CDC are making an impact on the environment by keeping *cartridges and small electronics out of landfills*.

The CDC will collect, pack, and ship used inkjet and toner cartridges, cell phones, MP3 players, digital cameras, and GPS devices to FundingFactory. The CDC can then choose to accumulate points and spend them in the rewards catalog or request a check payment. There is a box for collecting these items on top of the teacher mailboxes. If your office would like to participate, please contact Alyson.

Scholastic Corporation is the world’s largest publisher and distributor of children’s books and a leader in educational technology and children’s media. Scholastic creates quality educational and entertaining materials and products for use in school and at home, including children’s books, magazines, technology-based products, teacher materials, television programming, film, videos and toys.

The VCU Child Development Center earns a **FREE $3 book coupon** every time a parent places an order (of any value) and points are awarded towards additional books based on the total amount spent by CDC families. Orders are all online, using code HLZ46 (Teacher: Dr. Williams). Orders are due the 15th of each month and will be distributed on arrival.

Tax-deductible donations may be made to the CDC through the VCU Foundation. Our account number is 040577. Your donation ensures that the Center continues to provide high-quality care and education to the VCU community.
Every parent at the CDC is a member of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). The PAC works to provide special events for CDC children and families, as well as to work with Center administration as the voice of the CDC families. We hope you will be involved.

Officers are elected each year. Current officers:
Rosalyn Hargraves - President
TBA - Vice President
Melanie Goodman - Treasurer
Gustavo Angeles, Lara Coggin - co-Secretary

Upcoming events are:
- The fall picnic is now set for Friday October 24th.
- Next PAC meeting: at 4:30 pm on Thursday October 9th
- Children’s events planning is underway. We will probably do something pet/animal (Raging Reptiles, Traveling Petting Zoo, etc.) related in November and Soccer (SCOR) in January.
VCU Child Development Center

Important Dates

2014-2015

VCU CDC follows the University calendar (http://academiccalendars.vcu.edu/) and is closed on the holidays and professional development days listed below. In addition to the dates below, the Center may be closed on other dates for further professional development.

10/17/14 Pumpkin Patch Field Trip (VCU Reading Day)
11/26/14 CDC CLOSES @ NOON for Thanksgiving Break
11/27-28/14 CDC CLOSED for Thanksgiving Break
12/12/14 CDC CLOSES @ NOON for Family-Teacher Conferences
12/22/14-1/2/15 CDC CLOSED for Winter Break
1/19/15 CDC CLOSED for MLK Day
3/12-13/15 CDC CLOSED for Professional Development
3/19-20/15 CDC CLOSED for VAECE Conference (Richmond)
4/29/15 Zoo Trip (VCU Reading Day)
5/25/15 CDC CLOSED for Memorial Day
6/5/14 CDC CLOSES @ NOON for Family-Teacher Conferences
7/3/14 CDC CLOSED for Independence Day
8/12-14/15 CDC CLOSED for Professional Development