

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN- WHITEWATER
Children's Center
(NAEYC Re-Accreditation)
OPR Executive Summary -December 2003
Introduction

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) created its accreditation program in 1985 to set **professional standards** for early childhood education and help families identify high-quality childcare and early childhood education programs. To earn NAEYC's accreditation, a program conducts a self-study to determine how well it meets **the standards**. After necessary improvements are made, the program is observed by independent, professional NAEYC validator(s), and then reviewed by a national NAEYC commission. The Centers need to go through re-accreditation process every three years to maintain accreditation.

The self-study process (parent questionnaires, staff questionnaires etc.) and program description for the NAEYC re-accreditation were completed and all the materials were mailed to NAEYC in the first week of February of 2002. The Children's Center validation visit occurred on April 2, 2003. The Children's Center's validated program description was reviewed by the NAEYC commission and the Center was awarded re-accreditation in June of 2003, for the fifth time.

Mission of the UW-Whitewater Children's Center

The mission of the center is to offer high quality, reasonably priced childcare to students with children. The center is part of The Division of Student Affairs. Although the center's first responsibility is to ensure childcare for student families, the Center also provides services for faculty/staff and community families for an affordable non-student rate.

The Children's Center also serves as a model program and on-site training facility for students in Curriculum and Instruction, Communicative Disorders, Elementary Education, Physical Education, Special Education, and School Psychology etc.

The mission and goals of the Children's Center are directly related to the Division's and University's goals, particularly in the areas of retention, experiential learning, enhancing student transitions, providing exceptional facilities and services, and creating community partnerships.

Measurable Outcomes / Selected Findings and Observations

The NAEYC commission commended the Children's Center program and staff for outstanding efforts in pursuing the self-study and was pleased to award re-accreditation. To bring the program to an even higher standard of excellence, the Commission suggests reviewing and addressing the recommendations in the report. Criteria cited in the report are based on the validator ratings and comments, the program's ratings, and director's comments.

- **Interactions among teachers and children:** The Commission commended the staff for the warm and positive interactions that resulted in a high level of compliance with this component.
- **Curriculum:** The Commission commended the program for providing a curriculum that encourages children to be actively involved in the learning process by providing children with opportunities to explore many developmentally appropriate activities and materials, and allowing children to make decisions in accordance with their own interests.

- **Relationships Among Teachers and Families:** The Commission commended the program for the high level of compliance with this component. Recognizing the importance of a reciprocal relationship between families and programs is essential to ensure that programs are meeting the needs of the children and families that the program serves.
- **Staff Qualifications and Development:** The quality of the staff is the most important determinant for the quality of an early childhood program. Research has found that staff training in child development and/or early childhood education is related to positive outcomes for children such as increased social interaction with adults. The Commission commended the teachers and assistants who fully meet the qualifications criteria.
- **Administration:** The Commission commended the program for administering a program efficiently and effectively, ensuring that all involved persons, staff, children, and families are included. Effective communication creates an environment that facilitates the provision of good quality care for children.
- **Physical Environment:** The Commission commended the program for creating an environment -both indoors and outdoors -that fosters growth and development for children.
- **Health and Safety:** The Commission commended the program for the high level of compliance with this component, ensuring that children and adults are protected and enhanced.
- **Nutrition and Food Service:** The Commission commended the program for providing children with good nutrition and education regarding good eating habits.
- **Evaluation:** The Commission commended the program for the high level of compliance with these criteria. Ongoing evaluation and assessment is critical to ensuring and maintaining a quality early childhood education program.

Selected Recommendation

Staffing: An important determinant for the quality of a program is the way in which it is staffed. Well-organized staffing patterns facilitate individualized care. Having consistent and stable teacher schedules have an important effect on the quality of the program. NAEYC recommends that every attempt be made to have continuity of adults who work with children within each day and over extended periods of time, so children spend the majority of the time interacting with the same person each day.

The Children's Center has a full-time lead teacher academic staff with a teaching license and university degree in each classroom. As a University Childcare Center, the center relies heavily on work-study and student assistants. Approximately 45 to 50 university-student part-time teacher assistants work in the Children's Center 3 to 10 hours a week, scheduled around their class schedules. The NAEYC commission recommended that the Children's Center staffing pattern should be improved.

Development of New Goals /Resources

NAEYC bases teacher to student ratios in mixed classrooms on the age of the majority of the children in the classroom, except when infants are included in the classroom. The Children's Center does not serve infants, and the classrooms are based on 2-3 year olds, and the second, older classroom serves 4-5, and 6 year olds. The teacher to student ratio for the 2-3 year old classroom with a majority of 2 year olds would be 1 to 7, and only 14 children could be accommodated (the regular class size is 16 because of the mixed 2-3 ages). NAEYC recommends a ratio of 1 to 10 in the 4-5-6 year old classroom. The goal of the Children's Center is to provide a quality educational program and to serve as an educational learning environment for students in the College of Education. The Children's Center will have a 1- 4 teacher to student ratio in order to attain these educational objectives and provide quality care for students with special needs.

Reducing the number of Teacher Assistants will create a better organized, consistent, and permanent teacher assistant schedule to bring the program to an even higher standard of excellence and compliance with the selected recommendation.

A combination of Regular Paid Student and Intern Student positions will be used to create a more stable and consistent staffing pattern for the Children's Center. The intern and additional regular paid student positions will be funded out of the current budget, as well as future increases in user fees.