Child Development Lab
College of Health & Human Sciences
School of Family, Consumer & Nutrition Sciences

ANNUAL REPORT 2015
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A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am pleased to provide the 2015 Annual Report for the FCNS Child Development Lab. This report provides information that encapsulates all the great effort and commitment the CDL has for students, children & families, and our greater NIU community. The CDL continues to maintain the highest levels for quality care as indicated in our accreditation earned through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Gold Circle of Quality through ExceleRate Illinois.

This past year, the CDL experienced changes in leadership, teaching staff, and the physical environment. Given these challenges, the CDL has stood strong teaching and mentoring undergraduate students while providing an exemplary model of care and education for the children and families. Our staff is impressive in their abilities to navigate through these competing demands. This report will highlight the important work that is done each day in order to support student learning and development while providing the highest level of care to children and families.

Lisa Schmidt
Co-Director for Operations
Mission Statement

The three part mission of the Child Development Laboratory, operated by the School of Family Consumer and Nutrition Sciences is to 1) provide students with a supportive mentoring experience to enhance their understanding of young children and their families through observation, participation, and research; 2) facilitate faculty and students’ research in child development and early childhood; and 3) provide an exemplary model of care and education for children from families whose parents are students at NIU, work at NIU, or live in the community.

Value Statement

The Child Development Lab has prioritized the importance of diversity by providing professionals-in-training with quality educational experiences while working in partnerships with staff, children and families from diverse backgrounds in a family-style, mixed-aged setting that will facilitate healthy growth and development of all children.

Vision Statement

The Child Development Lab will continue to model excellent care and education for early childhood professionals through the practice of mixed age grouping while developing partnerships to increase the inclusion of families, students and staff of diverse backgrounds.
Providing an Exemplary Model of Care

The CDL has been a NAEYC Accredited program since 2006. Re-accreditation was successfully earned in 2011; and currently, the CDL has been working on the re-accreditation process again for 2016. Accreditation must be maintained each year and a thorough self-study and external review is conducted every 5 years. NAEYC Accreditation represents the mark of quality in early childhood education.

Parent and teacher program surveys were conducted in the summer of 2015. Fifty-one percent of the parent surveys were returned and 92% of the teaching staff surveys were returned. Survey results provided valuable information for self-study and quality improvements.

Results of the parent survey indicated some the following criteria to be strengths of the CDL:

♦ The teacher takes good care of my child, helps my child learn to get along with others, and is a good teacher.
♦ I am comfortable with how my child is learning and how my child’s progress is measured.
♦ I generally feel respected by the program staff and that my contributions are valued.

The following parent survey feedback indicated areas to grow:

♦ I have received information throughout the year about handling emergencies.
♦ The program helps me get to know other families in the program and encourages us to support each other.

♦ When program evaluations are completed, I receive information about the findings.

Based on parent feedback, the CDL has made intentional quality improvements to address these concerns.

The NAEYC candidacy application and required documentation regarding staff credentials and qualifications were successfully submitted in August 2015. Following the successful candidacy review, the CDL provided a NAEYC Accreditation Kick-off Training during a professional staff development day in August to reacquaint all staff with the process of re-accreditation, the revised NAEYC Standards, and the NAEYC Classroom Portfolio system. The 5 year review will be conducted in the spring of 2016.

In January 2015, the CDL made the successful transition from the former Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS) rating of 4-Stars to the Excelerate Illinois Gold Circle of Quality. This process involved a re-assessment of director and teacher qualifications, curriculum, and continuous professional development.

Because the CDL is at the highest circle of quality, we receive an additional 20% add-on reimbursement rate from what is currently received from Illinois in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). The add-on rate assists the program in maintaining and continuing to make improvements for the CDL.
Student Learning in the Child Development Lab

The CDL provides the critical infrastructure needed to support NIU’s unique Child Development emphasis within the Family & Studies Program which includes a semester-long, time-intensive practicum with young children.

In 2015, the Child Development Lab was the practicum site for 34 undergraduate students. Each student plans and implements developmentally appropriate, anti-bias, multicultural and emergent curriculum; uses assessment materials for curriculum planning and identifying developmental skills; and, applies theoretical concepts to practice.

Students who complete their practicum in the CDL are better prepared and marketable for their future careers. This helps makes NIU an institution of first choice among prospective students in the region and well prepared to succeed in future employment.
Student Learning in the Child Development Lab

At the end of practicums, students completed a final reflection regarding their experiences at the Child Development Lab. The following includes some anecdotal data illustrating student learning at the CDL.

1) What are the most impactful experiences you have had at the CDL?

- “One of the most impactful experiences has been learning about the language we use with children and how much it impacts them. It really took me by surprise with how much of a difference the way you say something can make. The children respond very well to positive guidance and language.”

- “Seeing the progression in my primaries from the beginning of the semester till now. Working with them & their families to see what other ways, as a team, we can help the children progress, while also voicing opinions & listening to each other.”

2) Describe the growth you have seen in yourself over the course of the semester. What did you discover about your teaching style, your classroom interactions, and how you function as a team?

- “I have seen so much growth. I have improved my interactions w/the children, making sure tasks get completed, & adjusting to the schedule & demands of working with a mixed-age classroom. I learned that I am a very dedicated, creative & flexible teacher & I work very well with a team.”

- “Over the course of 16 weeks, I learned a lot about myself. Lead teaching was a great opportunity for me to see my teaching style. I have learned that classroom curriculum is all about the children’s interest. I have learned how to talk to children and help them identify their feelings and the feeling of others.”

3) How prepared do you feel for your future professional experiences?

- “I feel well prepared because I feel like I have all the skills to help me be a teacher in a classroom now.”

- “I feel really prepared. This is my first experience and it was one that I’ll never forget. I have such high expectations of what a center should be like that it will be hard to find something like the CDL. I’ve gotten my foot in the door & now I know what to expect.”

- “I feel very prepared for my future professional experience, especially when it comes to talking with families. I will know what to do and how to handle certain situations.”

- “Very prepared right now is how I feel because I gained so much knowledge and experience from my classroom that opened my eyes to a lot on how to be successful working with children so it is always a positive experience!”
Innovative Student Training

The CDL collaboratively partnered with the School of Nursing to conduct progressive and innovative crisis-response simulation experiences for the practicum students.

These pioneering simulation experiences place students in life-like emergency scenarios (i.e., choking child, baby not breathing, staff member getting hurt in classroom/sudden illness) facilitated by the Nursing Simulation Coordinator. Following the experience, there is a debriefing session with discussion.

Students in the CDL are all certified in pediatric and adult CPR/First Aid, and the simulations provide students critical kinesthetic learning they will not experience in any other early childhood setting.

In spring 2015, the CDL conducted 2 simulations; one at the beginning of the semester and one at the end. We asked students for feedback regarding their level of preparedness in the second simulation. One hundred percent of students reported feeling more prepared and less anxious for the emergency scenarios in the second simulation. The emergency scenarios were different from the first to second simulation experience.

The CDL completed a total of 4 simulation experiences for the students in 2015.

Debriefing feedback from Students:
♦ “I had to quickly direct staff to take children to another room. I had to think quickly on my feet.”
♦ “We learned how important team work is in an emergency situation. Responding quickly is critical.”
♦ “I tried remaining calm. I used a direct and clear voice when I gave directions (to others).”
♦ “I learned that I need to do something—don’t be afraid of ‘hurting’ someone giving CPR.”
♦ “I gave (my co-teacher) a break from the CPR. Waiting for emergency response can take a while and I didn’t want her getting tired.”
♦ “I need to remember to check and make sure the scene is safe, then check for signs of breathing.”
♦ “We need to make room for the first responders and move furniture.”
♦ “Remember to delegate teachers to attend to the other children. Get them away from the situation.”
Capital Improvements

The past year has been marked with significant quality environmental improvements at the CDL. A permanent wall was constructed separating the ITT East and West classrooms. This wall provides the necessary noise/sound and visual barrier for each room; along with, teacher work space complete with a counter, cabinets and drawers for storage. All classrooms had new carpet installed, and the preschool room also had new vinyl/wood flooring as well. All window blinds were replaced throughout the center.

During construction, the CDL was able to remain open for operations without disruption of care for families or a disruption in the practicum student learning experience.

The project was guided and monitored by the NIU Architectural and Engineering Services along with the Environmental Health and Safety Department to ensure the highest levels of safety for the children, students, and staff.
University Research & Participation

A total of 675 observations were documented in 2015. The chart above represents the percentage of observation booth visitors in 2015 by department.

NURS 410: 25 students in spring 2015, 21 Students in Fall 2015

The CDL is proud to be included as a clinical rotation site for the nursing pediatric clinical. This collaboration has assisted in strengthening the health and safety component of our Cognitive Development Curriculum Content Area while also providing the nursing students an opportunity to learn more about child development and ways to interact with children when discussing health related topics.
Community Outreach

Professional Organizations

*Ecila Scaife:* Co-Faculty Advisor for the Northern Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children (NIAEYC) Student Satellite.

*Kristi Hayward:* Multicultural Committee; Professional Development of Teachers and District Employees, DeKalb.

*Lisa Schmidt:* Northern Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children (NIAEYC); President July 2014 to present.

Community Events and Trainings


Organized and planned NIAEY annual professional development conference at Kishwaukee College hosting certified instructor for Conscious Discipline.

*Week of Young Child* Children’s Book Drive. Donations of children’s books benefited Safe Passage, domestic violence shelter; DeKalb.

STEMfest; NIU convocation Center, DeKalb.

NIU, School of FCNS - Courses Taught

*Kristi Hayward*  FCNS 332 Inclusive Program Planning for Children Ages Three to Eight and Their Families

*Clarissa Luke*  FCNS 331 Inclusive Program Planning for Children Ages Birth to Three and Their Families

*Lisa Schmidt*  FCNS 231  An Observational Approach to the Study and Assessment of Young Children

*Lisa Schmidt*  FCNS 498 (3) Professional Seminar in Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences

*Lisa Schmidt*  FCNS 490 Practicum in Infant and Child Development Laboratories

Demographics

**Staff Diversity**

- Caucasian
- African
- Asian
- Hispanic

**Family Diversity**

- Caucasian
- African
- Asian
- Hispanic

Family Affiliation

- Faculty/Staff
- Student
- Community

Multi-Lingual Families

17%
Financial Summary

**Income**

- Tuition: 5%
- CACFP: 6%
- ExceleRate: 0%
- Grants: 89%

**Expenses**

- Personnel: 10%
- Food Service: 5%
- Classroom Supplies: 5%
- Contractual: 80%
Child Development Lab Faculty Advisory Board

Thomas Pavkov  Chair; School of Family, Consumer & Nutrition Sciences
Shi-Ruei Sherry Fang  Professor; CDL Co-Director for Academics, Family & Child Studies Area Coordinator
Florensia Surjadi  Professor; Family & Child Studies
Lisa Schmidt  Co-Director for Operations; Child Development Laboratory
Kristi Hayward  Master Teacher; Child Development Laboratory
Clarissa Luke  Master Teacher; Child Development Laboratory
Jamie Kenney  Child Development Supervisor; Child Development Laboratory
Casey Manson  Child Development Supervisor; Child Development Laboratory
Jessica Rodgers  Child Development Supervisor, Child Development Laboratory
Ecila Scaife  Child Development Supervisor; Child Development Laboratory