

# The Children's Journal

News from Campus Child Care for parents, advocates and all who work to provide quality early care and education for children and their families.

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### OUR MISSION

The Office of Child Care and Family Resources promotes the academic and professional goals of the University of Wisconsin community through the administration of early education and family support programs.

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## Message from Cigdem



I hope that everybody is staying healthy and doing well. We have been anxiously awaiting the announcement of a COVID-19 vaccine for our youngest. Perhaps, we will hear about that soon. For the time being, the

Omicron variant continues to present significant obstacles for our campus and network childcare centers, including full or partial classroom closures due to positive COVID-19 test results.

We are still optimistic and excited that cases are on the decline in Dane County. In addition, enrollment numbers for campus centers are back to pre-pandemic levels with growing waitlists. Currently, our biggest challenge is how to retain our skilled and dedicated early education workforce. Over the past two years, campus and network early educators have experienced high levels of work-related stress and compassion fatigue. The increased demands on these teachers have been leading to burnout and unusually high staff turnover.

Our primary focus has been finding ways to support the emotional health of our early educators. With valuable input from center directors, we are providing funding for wellness initiatives that encourage creativity and cultivate

wellbeing. Our desired outcome is happy and healthy teachers and safe, happy, and high-quality early childhood education programs.

Research suggests that outlets for teacher creativity can play a supportive role in stress management, finding joy, and rebounding from the inevitable setbacks in life. Furthermore, creative growth and self-efficacy also have been linked to teacher wellbeing. I have been working with our campus childcare directors to create relaxing spaces where teachers can unplug and engage in artistic projects during breaks and staff meetings. As one example, the Child Development Lab is creating a “re-charging station” for its staff. The station will include essential oils, Google Home to access music, eye masks, comfortable furniture, and massage elements.

As you know, we’ve established the COVID-19 Relief Fund. We are grateful that income from this fund makes it possible for us to support the wellbeing of our teachers through reflective practice training, self-compassion resources, and healthy foods for some staff meetings. To make a gift to this fund, please visit [supportuw.org/giveto/OCCFRfund](http://supportuw.org/giveto/OCCFRfund).

As always, we are deeply appreciative of your commitment to our efforts.

## CCAMPIS Grant Awarded to OCCFR

We are pleased to announce that our office has received the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The total award amount is \$875,828.00 over a four-year cycle. The purpose of this grant is to alleviate some of the financial burden of childcare costs for student-parents and to provide high-quality care to their children in the early stages of development. This support will allow student-parents to focus on their studies, increasing the likelihood of enrollment retention and degree completion.

The Office of Child Care and Family Resources continues to advocate for the diverse

student population at UW-Madison, especially single-parent and first-generation households. Student-parents compete with their non-parent peers in a rigorous academic environment while parenting and working. This federal funding for childcare expenses comes at a crucial time. Student-parents consistently rate the cost of high-quality campus child care as an obstacle to their academic success. CCAMPIS funding helps level the playing field as it gives low-income families access to high-quality care for their children. OCCFR Director Cigdem Unal is the author and PI of this grant.



## We appreciate your generous support!

### Connie L. Wilson Child Care Center Fund

Dr. David Price  
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Connie Wilson  
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### Lynn E. Edlefson Fund for Early Education Advancement Fund

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### New Campus Child Care Initiatives Fund

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Sharyl Kato  
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### Office of Child Care and Family Resources Fund

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Sharyl Kato  
Tasha Larson-Lohmiller  
Jacquelyn Leckwee  
Gregory Leckwee  
Dr. Katharine Lyall  
Kathleen Martin



## A Rose, A Thorn, and A Bud: Reflections from Two Years of COVID-19

**I**t is hard to believe that two years have passed since COVID-19 arrived in Wisconsin. The pandemic has been stressful but has also offered opportunities for growth. Through it all, we have seen roses or positive moments, thorns or areas for improvement, and buds or the beginning of a beautiful blossom.

At the Child Development Lab, we prioritize the importance of self-care and compassion for early care and education teachers. Teachers need to be well to work with young children and their families. By supporting teacher wellbeing, we are investing in child and family wellbeing. When the pandemic started, we discovered new ways of connecting with children and families. Virtual platforms enabled us to hold dance parties and teacher story time on Zoom. Families appreciated the regular connection to their beloved teachers and having something that felt “normal” in a time that was anything but normal.

Children were able to return to the CDL in June 2020. Enrollments were low as families slowly transitioned back to child care. Teachers worked longer hours to provide consistency with coverage until we were able to bring student interns back to the program. Children, families,



and staff acclimated to wearing masks. Space was divided to reduce crossover, and we started working in classroom pods. New COVID-19 policies and procedures were implemented, including daily health checks for children and regular testing for staff. The vaccination finally became available in early 2021. Things were looking up.

In fall 2021, enrollment reached full capacity. However, with the arrival of the Delta variant, we experienced many close contact exposures and positive cases. Shortly thereafter, the Omicron variant emerged, which was even more contagious. Just when we thought that we could not be stretched any thinner, we were forced to close classrooms. Families and staff were hit hard but have remained strong every step of the way.

Moving into the endemic phase, we are reflecting on what we have learned and experienced along the way. Reflective practice has supported our educators’ self-care and kept us strong before the pandemic and throughout. Reflection will continue to be an important tool for our program’s continued and future growth.

— Jill Riley

Director, Child Development Lab



## Paying Up: The Cost of High-Quality Child Care

**A**ccess to high-quality child care remains a pressing need for faculty, staff, and student parents at UW–Madison. However, the cost of high-quality child care does not come cheap. Affordability is an ongoing concern as the cost of care, especially for infants, often exceeds the cost of tuition or even a yearly mortgage on a middle-class home. As of fall 2021, the average cost of full-time care for infants (0–2 years of age) was approximately \$26,555. While this is a hefty price tag for lower-income employees and student-parents, high-quality child care delivers necessary developmental outcomes for our youngest.

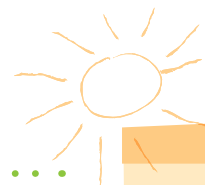
Despite steep tuition rates, one of the biggest misnomers about high-quality programs is that they are highly profitable. Especially in the wake of COVID-19, this is simply not the case. Child care is a very regulated business with substantial liability and operational expenses. Labor is by far the most expensive line item in center budgets. In order to retain the best and the brightest, teacher compensation must be competitive and match and/or exceed the salary packages of comparable organizations, notably the Madison Metropolitan School District. Campus early educators cannot

afford to place their own children in the centers in which they teach. As a consequence, there has been significant teacher turnover. Low tuition rates and paying top-tier teachers a living wage is an unsustainable financial template. Then, Wisconsin state licensing has strict provider/child ratios. For example, the infant/teacher ratio is one teacher to every four babies. The only way to increase capacity is to hire more teachers and pay them what they deserve.

Last September, Janet Yellen called child care “a textbook example of a broken market, and one reason is that when you pay for it, the price does not account for all the positive things it confers on our society.” At least the federal government has recognized the need for a larger investment in the ECE field and funding to defray the exorbitant cost of care. The stalled *Build Back Better* Act includes millions of dollars to reduce the cost of care for many families. Until such legislation passes in the Senate or other financial models emerge, we’ll need to continue to pay up for the cost of high-quality child care.

Teri Stratton





## Teacher Spotlight: Tera Sarow from Eagle's Wing

**How did you get interested in the field of child care and early education?** I have always wanted to work with children, even from a young age. I can remember telling everyone I wanted to be a kindergarten teacher. As time evolved and I started college, I was able to get a part-time job at Eagle's Wing and I fell in love with the younger-aged children.

**What is something important a child has taught you?** I think some of the most important things would be don't take life too seriously—laugh at anything and everything. Be you! Be unique! Don't be afraid to be your true self and be silly. Live in the moment—children don't tend to worry about the future and what it will bring, but rather they are here, in the present, living their best life with the people around them.

**What gives you the greatest sense of accomplishment in this noble profession?** I think seeing children figure something out for themselves—when a child has been working on something (like putting together blocks or balancing or walking or climbing, etc.), it is awesome to see them accomplish that and work through that.



**What is the one thing you wish that the general public understood about the early childhood education profession?** I wish the general public understood how much growth and development occur in the early years. We aren't just "babysitting" and children aren't just "playing," but that through the play, they are working—they are learning—and we, as early childhood educators, are helping them through and nurturing their independence along with their social-emotional needs (their own and with others). If people understood this and the important role this plays in a child's development, now and in the future, I think they would see that funding early childhood education is essential.

## Development News

**One of my favorite affirmations is "Remember to take in the good."**

Especially during a time of crisis like a two-year pandemic, there is still abundant goodness in this world. We need to open our eyes fully to see it and to hold it closely in our hearts. In the context of campus child care at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, we have witnessed early educators calm children in tear-soaked masks. We have seen weary directors comfort frustrated parents. We stand in awe of the extraordinary resilience that our centers have demonstrated in the face of illness, staffing shortages, and families in turmoil. Indeed, we have taken in the good.

We are also deeply grateful to donors who have made significant gifts to campus child care. Our fundraising focus has been the growth of the Office of Child Care and Family Resources Fund. The purpose of this fund is twofold: to offset thousands of dollars lost during the COVID-19 closures of our centers and to support the emotional health of our early educators. To date, gift revenue has climbed to over \$25,000. We've

been able to assist our centers with teacher compensation, reflective practice training, and early childhood mental health consultations. These professional development and wellness opportunities have played a critical role in the emotional wellbeing of our early educators. We will use donor gifts to provide our centers with necessary operational funds to help mitigate the serious threat of teacher burnout and attrition. This is currently our top priority.

You clearly understand the value of our services to UW–Madison families and the urgent needs of our campus and network childcare providers. Your ongoing support will ensure the long-term survival of campus child care. As always, we appreciate your consideration of a gift to the Office of Child Care and Family Resources Fund. Here is the link to this fund: [supportuw.org/giveto/OCCFRfund](http://supportuw.org/giveto/OCCFRfund). Do not hesitate to reach out with questions or concerns about how your gift will best serve our children and childcare community.

*Teri Stratton*

Professor Robert Miller  
Lynette Miller  
NVIDIA  
Heather Orth  
Kevin Orth  
William Richner  
Joan Richner  
Mary Shapiro  
Kenneth Shapiro  
Heather Stutz  
Dr. Anthony Sturm  
Erica Turner  
Dr. Linda Tuchman-Ginsberg  
Alan Ginsberg  
William White



### Student Child Care Scholarship Grants Fund

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Dr. Zeki Beyhan  
Andrea Bosquez-Porter  
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Lianne Burnson  
Dr. Martha Casey  
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Thomas Smith  
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### University Staff Child Care Grant Fund

AFCME Local 2412  
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Professor Emerita Patricia Lasky  
William Richner  
Joan Richner  
Sally Rowe  
William Bauer  
Hannah Strelchenko



\*Gifts received March 2021–February 2022

## Student-Parent Testimonials

"Without CCTAP funding, we simply would not be able to attend graduate school. CCTAP funding is the primary factor that allows our family to thrive as a two-student-parent household. We could not begin to pay for childcare without this funding, and if one of us had to stay home with our child, we could not make do on only one student stipend. Additionally, the child care we receive with this funding is amazing, and we know we couldn't otherwise afford to give our child the gift of high-quality early childhood education. We couldn't feel more grateful and blessed to receive CCTAP funding."



"I could never have made it to graduation without the OCCFR! Their financial support enabled me to enroll my son in high-quality child care while I was pursuing my master's degree. The OCCFR has given me confidence that I can succeed as a student parent, and I'm now continuing to pursue a PhD in population health here at UW-Madison while raising my second child. If you are wondering whether UW-Madison supports its student parents, here is your answer!"

- Angela Ablaberdieva, MS, Chemistry  
Graduated Fall, 2019  
Pei Wang Fellowship