

FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY'S RICHARDSON CENTER FOR THE CHILD (RCC)

Short Summary

The primary mission of the Gail and Terry Richardson Center for the Child (RCC) at Francis Marion University (FMU) is to develop and disseminate best practices for teaching low income children and to help them develop the readiness skills required for school success.

The RCC is a comprehensive early childhood service and research center. The Center, which opened its doors in August of 2008, includes a best practices childcare facility to serve a diverse group of children from birth to four years of age. In addition, the RCC functions as a laboratory school with two FMU classrooms, where faculty teach early childhood education, psychology, and nursing, and directly observe preschool children and their teachers. The Center also has a clinic to identify developmentally delayed children and design interventions. Critical to its mission is service to the community and research. The Center is adjacent to and works in cooperation with the Pee Dee Education Center, a consortium of 19 Pee Dee region public school districts. A South Carolina First Steps (CDEPP) program to serve at-risk children also is housed at the Richardson Center for the Child.

Demographics:

- *Target Settings:* Rural, suburban
- *Target Groups Served:* RCC serves a diverse group of children (birth to four years of age) but primarily seeks to develop strategies for working with children of poverty. Approximately 15-20% of the preschool children that are served qualify for fee assistance. This number includes 10 CDEPP children from Florence District One.
- *Schools/Districts Served:* Currently the Center serves 65-70 preschool children. Most of the children served are from Florence District One, but the Center serves all of the Pee Dee area school districts.

Research and Evaluation

The development of program/initiative is based on/grounded in what research? Describe the evidence that shows the program/initiative works. Description of data collection and analysis should be included.

Year 2010-2011 data concerning the teaching mission of the Center is encouraging with 13 Francis Marion undergraduate classes in early childhood education and psychology and six graduate psychology classes taught full time at the Center. During that same year, 166 FMU students spent 1,263 hours in the preschool classes gaining variable experience working with children 6 weeks to four years. Over 20 FMU biology students built a nature trail and FMU Spanish students offered Spanish training to three and four year olds. In addition FMU athletic teams came to the center and worked with the children.

Parenting stress and ecology education research is conducted at the Richardson Center by Psychology and Biology faculty.

Program Resources

- *Annual Cost:* Information not available at this time
- *Funding Sources:* Parent fees, grants, donations and state appropriations
- *Staffing Needs:* The Center employs professionals, graduate students, and undergraduates and also utilizes many volunteers

- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs:* This 15,000 square-foot facility is located on a site near the Pee Dee Education Center on the campus of FMU. The \$4.7 million building includes a child-care wing of two infant rooms, two toddler rooms, two rooms for the three- olds, and two rooms for four-olds; an office area for psychology and education faculty members; a central lobby and library that function as a family waiting area; a clinic with observation and assessment rooms; and an outdoor play area.
- *Partner Organizations:* Francis Marion University, Pee Dee Education Center, South Carolina First Steps

Contact Information: Dr. John R. Hester, Francis Marion University, 843-661-1635, jhester@fmarion.edu

