



Virginia Marx  
Children's Center  
at Westchester Community College

# Parent Handbook

*"a place to explore, learn, create and discover"*

## **WELCOME from Susan Zucker, Director of the Virginia Marx Children's Center**

**Welcome to the Virginia Marx Children's Center at Westchester Community College. We look forward to a positive and nurturing experience for both your child and your family.**

The Virginia Marx Children's Center was established in 1986 to provide child care services to children of students attending Westchester Community College. In 1996, the Children's Center expanded, and a new Center was built to accommodate the growing need for child care both on campus and in the surrounding community. The Children's Center is licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, and is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The Virginia Marx Children's Center is under the direction of the Vice President and Dean of Student Development and Support Services for Westchester Community College. The Administrators of the Virginia Marx Children's Center are Susan Zucker, Director and Sara Frontera, Assistant Director/ Educational Coordinator.

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### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Virginia Marx Children's Center provides a safe, nurturing, learning environment. Staff members foster a positive sense of self in the children, while children learn to respect differences, feel secure in asking questions, and working in an environment which invites experimentation and exploration. Supportive staff-to-child relationships are the foundation of our program. Classroom groupings are planned to support the ever changing developmental needs of the children.

The Virginia Marx Children's Center builds a partnership between parents and teachers, with the understanding and recognition that parents are their child's first teachers. Ongoing open dialogue, mutual support and respect are cornerstones of the relationship between parents and staff members.

We recognize the diversity in our families and respect that each family has its own traditions, expectations and philosophy on childrearing. Individual classrooms are a reflection of the families currently enrolled in that particular classroom.

The Virginia Marx Children's Center is receptive to the needs of parents by offering valuable information, resources, referrals, and workshops. We are responsive to issues that communities face as a whole, such as public health, child nutrition, teacher training, and mainstreaming.

### **PROGRAM GOALS that SUPPORT MISSION**

The Virginia Marx Children's Center's primary goal is to provide high quality child care in a safe, healthy, and stimulating learning environment. The program is designed to facilitate each child's emotional, social, cognitive, and physical growth. Through play, which is the universal language of childhood, the Center fosters each child's individual needs. It emphasizes gender equity and the

development of a positive self-concept. These goals require that all staff members respect and maintain open, positive communication with children, parents, and one another.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Play is seen as the child's work. It is the means by which the child re-examines and re-creates again and again, everything which they have experienced and observed. Play is purposeful, exceedingly important and serious. Activities chosen by the child are treated as important explorations. The developmental-interaction approach emphasizes the inseparability of the child's emotional life from his/her intellectual and physical development.

Social interactions are of major importance. We consider it vital that children learn to be aware of their emotions, to identify and talk about them, to express their needs and problems and to become able to negotiate their resolution with other children and caregivers. The teacher's role is to facilitate the formation of friendships by encouraging and helping to negotiate interactions between children.

**Our Infant program** utilizes a primary care system, allowing children and families the opportunity to bond with a particular caregiver within a classroom. Infants and toddlers need to feel secure in their environment; establishing a trusting bond with caregivers, while coming to the gradual realization that parents come back at the end of the day. Particular attention is given to the separation process and the ebbing and waning of stranger anxiety that occurs throughout the infant and toddler years.

**Toddlerhood** is recognized as a unique and individual timeframe from that of infancy or preschool. The developmental tasks of toddlerhood are treated with respect and nurturing. Coming from the mindset that we "expect" toddlers to behave in certain ways, alleviates many of the issues commonly associated with this period of development.

**Our Preschool program** includes children from ages three to five years. We offer mixed age grouping as a means for children to learn from one another, and to further recognize that children grow and develop at varying rates. Our Preschool program incorporates the Developmental-Interaction Approach to learning. This philosophy stresses the inseparability of the child's emotional life from his or her intellectual and physical development. Children's understanding of information is carefully documented and represented in many forms. Portfolios are maintained by staff as a means of assessing children's areas of strength and need.

In both the Preschool and Infant/Toddler programs, social experiences are viewed as the key to later academic success. We consider it vital that children learn to be aware of their emotions, to identify and discuss them, become aware of their needs and be able to negotiate resolutions with other children and caregivers.

## **CURRICULUM**

Our curriculum is based upon developmentally appropriate activities. The curriculum we follow is the Creative Curriculum®. It helps children develop a sense of trust and belonging. They can feel safe and encouraged to explore with materials, and build relationships with peers and adults. It is geared towards children's success and to minimize frustration; children are encouraged to learn from their mistakes, to explore and to take risks. The main goals of this curriculum is centered on these main areas of development:

Language

Social – Emotional

Gross Motor

Fine Motor

Cognitive

Physical Development

Curriculum goes hand in hand with assessment. Teachers plan the curriculum based on the child's strengths, progress, and needs. Activities are planned to be challenging, developmentally appropriate, comprehensive, culturally and linguistically responsive, always keeping in mind the child's self-esteem. Children learn through hands-on experiences and they can opt for the materials and activities of their choosing. Play is used to foster the growth of concepts such as color, number, space and time.

The Virginia Marx Children's Center provides each child with;

- Developmentally appropriate activities
  - Games, painting, block construction, modeling, dance, outdoor play, and music are used to sharpen cognitive and perceptual processes, as well as to allow children to interact constructively with others. The purpose of these exercises is to create an atmosphere of self-respect and self-discipline, and to provide numerous opportunities for teachers to guide the children as they learn to make their own choices and decisions
  - Enhancement of small and large motor coordination
- Growth in the following areas: math, science, social studies, dramatic play, music, art and literacy
  - Specialized programs reinforce these concepts
- Skills to enhance their socialization and conflict resolution strategies
- Ongoing developmental assessment and anti-bias curriculum emphasizing inclusion

## **ENVIRONMENT**

The Virginia Marx Children's Center provides an open environment setting with developmentally appropriate activities, on-going assessment of the child's development, and an anti-bias curriculum emphasizing inclusion. Our environment is designed to reflect the importance of play in children's life and development. Both the physical arrangement of the classroom as well as the schedule of the day are carefully considered in the learning environment. The classrooms are separated into different learning areas with distinct spaces for different toys or materials. Children's physical development is encouraged by outdoor play, large scale blocks for large motor skills and by small scale manipulatives for fine motor skills. In the dramatic play area props such as dress-up clothes,

dolls, pots and pans are offered for role-playing. Art materials are provided for children to create open-ended art work. All of the areas in the classrooms provide ample opportunities for the children to gain knowledge to develop skills through the use of materials and interactions with their peers and teachers.

A quality environment is well planned and invites children to learn and grow. As per NYS licensing regulations, we provide a minimum of 35 square feet of room per child indoors (55 sq. ft. for infants), while 75 square feet per child is provided outdoors. Materials and equipment available that are developmentally appropriate for children of different age levels. Activities planned by the caregivers must also be developmentally appropriate and allow for imaginative play.

## **SAFETY**

A key aspect of providing a good environment for children is the safety of the setting. Adults must be vigilant in their supervision of the children at all times. The child care provider need to know what to do in the case of an emergency and knows how to reach the parents when necessary. Sanitary procedures such as hand washing and local licensing standards must be followed. Adequate lighting, temperature, and noise control are also factors that contribute to a safe environment.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Families are encouraged to share as much information about their child's development and learning with the teaching staff. It is important to maintain communication to discuss your child's progress and accomplishments or any difficulties, either at home or in the classroom. This information is vital to the teaching staff when planning learning activities. The program provides Parent-Teacher Conferences twice a year. We strongly recommend and encourage all families to meet with your child's teacher for these conferences. Important developmental information is shared at these Conferences, and goals are set between the teacher and family for each individual child to support the child's success. Parent-teacher partnerships considerably improve each child's overall growth and development.

We utilize assessment methods such as observation, developmental checklists, work samplings, and anecdotal records. In addition, we utilize an Assessment Form adapted from the Creative Curriculum® that is used for the Parent- Teacher Conferences. The assessment areas in development and learning include: Cognitive skills, Language, Social-Emotional development, Approaches to Learning, Health and Physical development (Self-help skills).

## **IDENTIFYING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Children with special health care needs are defined as "...those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally.

If parents have any concerns regarding their child's development, they can contact their child's Head Teacher for a meeting to discuss their concerns.

The teachers' will communicate their concerns and if needed will make recommendations that will support the child's success. A listing has been developed at the Center to be shared with parents who are, either through Early Intervention (birth - 3 years old), or CPSE, (3-5 years old).

## **CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR**

Discipline means to "teach"; gain self-control and problem solve, not as punishment. Our staff looks for the underlying reasons of the behavior before intervening. When a child presents a challenging behavior, the child may be expressing a need the child cannot express in words or the behavior may be appropriate to the child's age and level of development (e.g. excessive crying on separation from parents).

The staff use positive approaches to help children behave constructively. Some guidance methods include:

- Redirection
- Planning ahead to prevent problems
- Encouragement of appropriate behavior
- Consistent clear rules developed in conjunction with children and discussed with them to make sure they understand
- Staff describing the situation to encourage children's evaluation of the problem rather than imposing the solution

The staff will not use physical punishment or other negative discipline methods that hurt, frighten or humiliate children. For example:

- Staff do not force children to apologize or explain their behavior but help children recognize one another child's feelings
- Food or beverage is never withheld as a discipline device

## **TRANSITION**

We recognize the importance of the process of transition in the development of a young child. Prior to your child's first day in the classroom, we request that you visit the Center with your child in order to get to know your child's caregivers and the classroom environment. Parents of children in the Infant and Toddler program are asked to spend the first THREE (3) days of enrollment in the classroom with your child. A gradual phasing in will occur over the three - day period. This time period is beneficial to both children and parents. It will be at the caregiver's discretion to decide when a parent can leave his or her child for the first time. In addition, we support the separation process by asking you say good-bye to your child before you leave. By doing so, the child has the opportunity to say good-bye to his or her parent which builds a sense of trust in the parent/child relationship. A child needs to internalize that his or her parent *WILL* come back at the end of the day.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Virginia Marx Children's Center places a high priority on the well-being and the safety of each child while he/she is in our care. In compliance with regulatory guidelines, all information pertinent to a child's enrollment is kept confidential. No information will be released from the child's record

without written consent of a parent or guardian. This includes, but is not limited to; physicians, social workers, or teachers.

All information about the children and families enrolled is regarded as confidential and the property of the Virginia Marx Children's Center. In practice this means:

- All written information regarding the children will be kept confidential in a secured place
- Notes to individual parents regarding their child or Center business will be sealed
- Personal family information will not be accessible to other parents
- Information regarding children and families will not be removed from the Virginia Marx Children's Center without the Director's permission
- Discussions about children will be conducted in a professional manner, in a private place where unrelated staff and parents cannot overhear. Only those staff members who are involved with the child and his/her family will be present for such discussions
- Requests for specific information from any agency or individual about a child of family must be made in writing to the Director. Written permission will be obtained from parents before any information is released, wither in writing or verbally
- Gossip regarding children and families in and outside of the Virginia Marx Children's Center will not be tolerated
- Parents may ask teachers about the behavior of children in their classroom. It is the policy of the Center to only discuss the parent's own child, and not any other unrelated parent.

## **VIRGINIA MARX CHILDREN'S CENTER ENROLLMENT**

The Virginia Marx Children's Center at Westchester Community College provides services to children and families regardless of race, sex, handicap or national origin. For a child to be admitted to the Center parents must complete an enrollment packet. This packet includes; 1) Enrollment Application 2) General Agreement Form, 3) Policy Statement, 4) Medical Form, (completed by child's healthcare provider), 5) Medical Agreement, 6) Photo Release Form 7) Medical Emergency Form, 8) Child and Adult Food Care Program Form 9) Intake Form. Enrollment forms are updated on an annual basis and personal information will be updated as needed.

### **FEE POLICY**

Upon enrollment, a security deposit equal to one half month's tuition is required from all Westchester Community College faculty/staff, county employees and community families. This amount will be applied towards your last month's tuition. We require THIRTY days written notification should you wish to withdraw your child from the program. You will forfeit your deposit should written notification not be submitted within thirty (30) days. A two-week prepay is required from all Westchester Community College student parents. This amount will be applied to the last two weeks of the semester.

***Please Note: THERE IS NO REDUCTION IN TUITION FOR LEGAL HOLIDAYS, SNOW DAYS, UNEXPECTED COLLEGE CLOSINGS, OR ABSENCES.***

### **MANDATED REPORTING**

As a child care facility, under the mandated reporting law, we are mandated to report any abuse and maltreatment as set forth in the New York State Code, Rules and Regulations, specifically Section 418 – 1.10 (C) of the child day care center regulations.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **Medication Administration Authorization**

Your child will be required to have an annual Medical Form signed by the healthcare provider on file at the Children's Center, along with a current record of immunizations.

Should your child require a special diet for medical, dietary or religious reasons, written instructions must be provided by the child's healthcare provider, indicating all restrictions and special requirements.

The Virginia Marx Children's Center **WILL ADMINISTER** over the counter or prescription medication of any kind with written permission and specific dosage instructions from the healthcare provider. In addition, the parent will also be asked to complete their section of the Medication Administration Authorization Form, giving authorized staff members permission to administer medication to the child. All medication must be in the original container. Medication may not be placed in baby bottles, Sippy cups or other containers.

To ensure the health and well being of all children and staff members, please keep your child home while they are ill. The process to safeguard the Center is the following:

- If your child has been ill the previous night, i.e., vomiting, fever, persistent cough, diarrhea, etc., he or she will be required to stay home from the Center the following day
- You will be contacted should your child become ill at the Center.
  - If your child is sent home with symptoms of illness, she or he MAY NOT return to the Center the following day
- A child may return to the Center provided they show no symptoms nor require any fever-reducing medication to maintain wellness

### **NOTE: WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO FIND BACK-UP CARE FOR ANY UNEXPECTED ILLNESSES!**

Please notify the Center when your child will be absent. It is necessary to inform the Center if your child has a communicable disease, so we may alert parents to the signs and symptoms of the illness.

***Please Note: THE CENTER'S MEDICAL POLICIES OVER-RIDE DECISIONS MADE BY YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER. It is at the Center's discretion as to when a child may return to the program after an illness, NOT THE HEALTHCARE PROVIDER'S discretion. This is to reduce and minimize the transmittal of illness in the Center.***

## **Daily Health Checks**

We are aware of our responsibility to do physical appraisals of the children in our care on a daily basis. Upon arrivals the teachers observe the child for general appearance. Children are checked for visible bruises on arrival. Anything that is out of the norm is reported to the Director or Assistant Director. The findings are documented on the Incident Form. Teachers and staff have In- service Training in, Basic First Aid, CPR, and Infectious Disease Overview and Child Abuse and Maltreatment.

## **Breast Feeding**

The program supports breastfeeding by accepting, storing, and serving expressed human milk for feedings and accepting human milk in ready-to-feed sanitary containers.

The following procedure is recommended:

- The breast milk will be labeled with the infant's name and date
- The breast milk will be stored in a refrigerator for no longer than 48 hours
- no more than 24 hours if the breast milk was previously frozen
- in a freezer at 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below for no longer than three months

The staff will ensure that:

- the breast milk is gently mixed, not shaken, before feeding to preserve special infection-fighting and nutritional components in human milk
- a comfortable place is provided for breastfeeding
- feedings are timed to coordinate with the infant's mother

## **Toilet Training**

A child will usually indicate a readiness to toilet train in the latter part of his/her second year, although the timing is unique and individual for each child. Signs of readiness are being willing to sit in the toilet, showing signs of interest in the toilet and staying dry for longer periods of time. Some training tips are:

- Follow the child's lead and begin when readiness is observed
- Dress your child in clothing that is easy to maneuver
- Stay positive; do not indicate your frustrations
- Encourage your child's self-help skills, such as removing his/her clothing – it gives your child control over the situation
- Talk with your child's caregivers to maintain consistency
- Schedule a toileting routine at consistent times during the day
- Only disposable diapers are allowed for your child in the Center – no cloth diapers are allowed
- The Center does not allow the use of pull-ups as part of the training process. Using pull-ups in place of a diaper can confuse the child and does not allow the child to feel "wet"

## **NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Procedures for home and food allergies**

A breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack are provided based on US Department of Agriculture guidelines for balanced meals. Each week's menu is posted at the front of the Center.

### **Procedures for Infants being bottle fed from home**

Bottle feedings do not contain solid foods unless the child's health care provider supplies written instructions and a medical reason for this practice. Staff will discard after one hour any formula or human milk that is served but not completely consumed or is not refrigerated. If the staff warm formula or human milk, the milk is warmed in water at no more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit for no more than five minutes. And no milk, including human milk, and no other infant foods will be warmed in a microwave oven.

### **Procedure staff take to ensure the safety of food brought from home**

The staff works with families to ensure that foods brought from home meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) food guidelines.

The following procedures are in place to provide the proper nutritional guidelines:

- All foods and beverages brought from home are labeled with the child's name and the date
- Staff make sure that food requiring refrigeration stays cold until served
- Food is provided to supplement food brought from home if necessary
- Food that comes from home for sharing among the children must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers

For each child with special health care needs or food allergies or special nutrition needs, the child's health provider gives the program an individualized care plan that is prepared in consultation with family members and specialists involved in the child's care.

The program also protects children with food allergies from contact with the problem food. The program asks families of a child with food allergies to give consent for posting information about that child's food allergy and, if consent is given, then posts that information in the food preparation area and in the areas of the facility the child uses so it is a visual reminder to all those who interact with the child during the program day.

## **NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Daily Schedule~**

#### **Morning**

**7:00-8:30** Children arrive. Free play periods in classrooms; teachers greet children and parents. Children eat as they arrive.

**8:30-10:00 Free Play:** Children select from one of the interest areas: Art, Blocks, Library Corner, Table Toys, Dramatic Play, and Sensory Table.

**10:00-10:15** Clean-up: Children put away toys and materials: as they finish they prepare for group time.

**10:00-10:15** \*Group Time: Conversations and sharing time; music, movement, rhymes, finger plays, stories.

**10:45-11:45** Outdoor Play Children select from climbing activities, wheel toys, balls, hoops, sand and water play, gardening and child-initiated activities.

**11:45-12:00** Clean-Up Children wash their hands and prepare for lunch

\* The length of group time and story time varies with the ages of the children. A group of three and four year olds with limited experiences may have difficulty participating in a 15 minute group time. A shorter activity will be planned and lengthened during the year as children abilities to interact with the group expand.

**12:00-12:45** Eat Lunch and Clean-Up - As children finish lunch, they go to the bathroom in small groups and then read books on their cots in preparation for nap time.

**12:45-1:00** Quiet Activity Prior to Nap, story, or quiet music.

**1:00-3:00** Naptime As children awake, they read books or play quiet games such as puzzles on their cots; children who do not sleep or who awaken early are encouraged to do quiet activities.

#### **Afternoon**

**3:00-3:30** Snack

**3:30-4:30** Free Play: Children select activities requiring minimum clean-up time

**4:30-5:30** Outdoor Play Outdoor Play Children select from climbing activities, wheel toys, balls, hoops, sand and water play, gardening and child-initiated activities.

**5:30-6:00** Pick up Time Remaining children are brought to the main entrance to await the arrival of their pick up person. We have found late pick-ups to be disruptive to the child's routine and sense of security.

***Please Note: Infants' schedules are based on their individual needs, not a set schedule.***

## MISCELLANEOUS

### **Birthday Celebrations**

Birthdays are very important days in the lives of young children. If you wish to have your child celebrate here at the Children's Center, we ask that you keep it simple. Birthdays will be celebrated at morning snack-time, with a special snack. Please do not send in goody bags or party favors. Please discuss your plans with your child's caregiver ahead of time.

### **Clothing**

Please have a complete change of seasonal and appropriate clothing in your child's cubby. Children should wear comfortable, easy-fitting PLAY clothes. WARNING!! Your child WILL get dirty! Please label all clothing. Your child will spend a great deal of time out doors each day. Please be sure to send appropriate outerwear.

### **Contact Information**

It is your responsibility to keep the Children's Center Staff up to date with telephone numbers, addresses, and emergency contact numbers. These contacts are on file in the office and in your child's classroom.

### **Emergency Closings**

In the event of inclement weather or other emergencies, a decision will be made by WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE, regarding closings or early dismissals. WHEN WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE IS CLOSED, THE CHILDREN'S CENTER IS ALSO CLOSED. WHEN THE COLLEGE DELAYS IT'S OPENING, THE CHILDREN'S CENTER WILL HAVE THE SAME DELAY. WHEN THE COLLEGE HAS AN EARLY CLOSING, THE CENTER WILL HAVE THE SAME EARLY CLOSING.

These situations are out of the control of the Children's Center. These decisions ARE NOT MADE BY THE CHILDREN'S CENTER DIRECTOR. They are decided upon by the administration and security personnel of WCC, to insure the safety and well being of the entire college community.

### **Escort and Pick-Up**

Please allow enough time in your morning schedule to bring your child into his or her classroom and get him or her settled. Children MAY NOT be sent alone into the building, or go unescorted into a classroom.

The Children's Center CLOSES at 6 PM. . We have found that late pick-ups to be disruptive to the child's routine and sense of security. The cleaning of the building commences at 6pm; this means that children, parents and staff must leave the building at this time. Please arrive early enough at the end of the day for your child to have time to clean up and prepare to go home.

Note: A late fee will be assessed after 6:00 PM.

### **Important!**

**YOUR CHILD WILL NOT BE RELEASED FROM THE CENTER TO ANYONE OTHER THAN THE PRIMARY PARENT OR GUARDIAN. DAILY WRITTEN RELEASE MUST BE GIVEN FOR ANY INDIVIDUAL(S) WHO IS TO PICK UP YOUR CHILD IN THE EVENT THE PRIMARY PARENT OR GUARDIAN CANNOT**

### **Laboratory School**

The Children's Center plays a unique role at the college. We operate as a lab setting for students in the Early Childhood and the Dietetic Technology Curricula who are completing their internships in conjunction with their coursework at Westchester Community College.

Field students take part in their internship under the supervision of designated lead teachers. We view the field students as an integral part of our program. As teachers we are constantly learning and reviewing practices and ideas in the education field. Having the student as part of the team enhances the work we do.

### **Open Door Policy**

The observation room is designed to provide a laboratory school environment within the Children's Center. The room is used by the Early Childhood Education students and parents. The one-way windows allow students to do observations and collect data for projects. We encourage parents to use these rooms to observe their child, especially during the child's early adjustment to the Center. At all times access to this space is considered a privilege, and the rights to privacy of staff, parents, and children must be respected.

Procedure for Use of the Observation Room:

1. Inform the Director or Assistant Director that you will be observing in the room
2. Staff must be notified that the room is being utilized
3. Information gained from observations is confidential

### **Virginia Marx Children's Center Parent Participation**

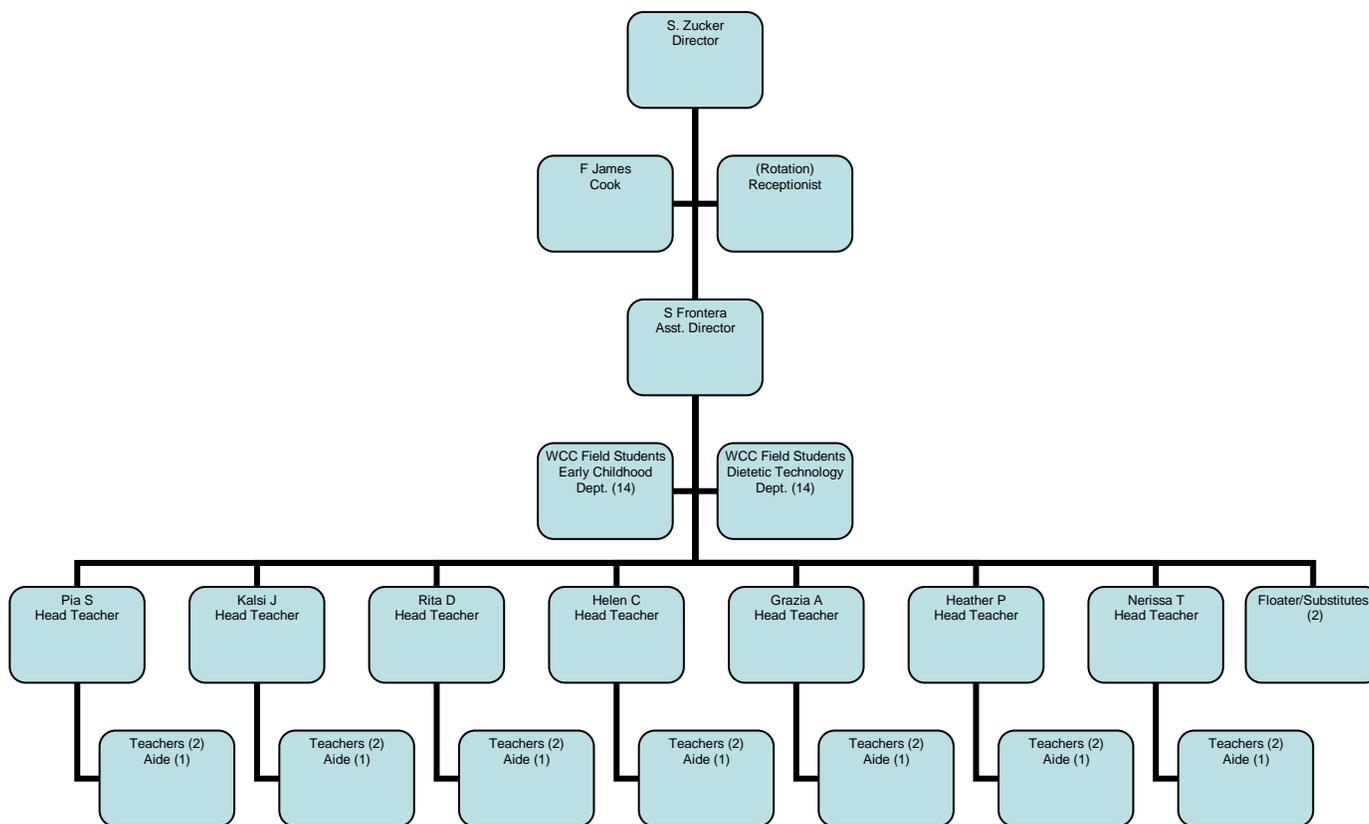
Parent participation and involvement is considered a vital part of life at the Center. The Virginia Marx Children's Center tries to address the different needs of its children, but we cannot achieve this without parent participation. Program staff ensure that all families, regardless of family structure, socio-economic, racial, religious and cultural backgrounds, abilities or preferred language in all aspects program, including volunteer opportunities.

Parents are encouraged to get involved in organizing and running fundraising events, contribute to the program by sharing their expertise and talking to the children about their work, cultural practices, etc. A Parent Forum and our Mentoring Program for New Parents are all volunteer opportunities for families to get involved.

The Parent Forum is a diverse group consisting of student-parents, faculty staff and community Members. The Parent Forum is designed to make recommendations to the leadership of the college, and meets through an e-Parent Forum on an as needed basis.

The Mentoring program for New Parents is a volunteer opportunity for seasoned parents to connect one-on-one with a new parent to the Center to share their experience and provide any support during the enrollment period.

**Virginia Marx Children's Center**  
**ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



**More information regarding the Virginia Marx Children's Center may be accessed at:**  
**[www.sunywcc.edu/childrens\\_center](http://www.sunywcc.edu/childrens_center)**