

**Profile of
Children's Center
University of Wisconsin–Whitewater
2024 Regents Academic Staff Excellence Program Award Recipient**

Highlights from nomination materials:

- The Children's Center mission is to transform lives by providing a learner centered, collaborative early care and educational environment that embodies best practice for young children, their families, educators, and pre-service teachers through a Reggio-Emilia inspired practice. The program has had the opportunity to build and strengthen partnerships across campus since its opening in 1974.
- The Children's Center is deeply integrated into the academic fabric of UW-Whitewater. Faculty members incorporate center observations into their coursework, and teachers from the center actively participate in various educational programs and conferences, enriching the academic experience for both students and educators.
- The Children's Center serves as a cornerstone for experiential learning and community engagement, providing over 6,000 placement hours annually for students completing fieldwork and student teaching in the Early Childhood Program.
- The Children's Center has a longstanding collaborative, symbiotic partnership with the Communication Sciences and Disorders program, where graduate students provide services, including screening, prevention, assessment, and treatment for speech, literacy, and language needs. This collaboration not only benefits the children at the center but also offers vital clinical experiences for speech-language pathology graduate students. Services are provided during the fall and spring semesters on a 1:1 or group basis and have included literacy groups for early readers, articulation and phonology groups targeting intelligibility, and focused language services for late talkers.
- The Children's Center collaborates with the Special Education Department, offering support for the Young Athletes Special Olympics program, and partners with the Kinesiology Department, contributing to the hands-on practice of university students in physical education.
- The center's impact extends beyond campus, as high school students from Whitewater High School fulfill their Child Development class requirements at the Children's Center. It also serves as a placement site for graduate students seeking to add an early childhood license.
- The Children's Center partners with a variety of organizations, camps, and clubs on campus to enhance the student experience. Each summer, incoming and prospective students attend the "I want to be a teacher" summer camp and spend time creating and implementing activities focusing on art and nature with the children who attend the Center.
- Each year, one intern from the UW-Whitewater Sustainability Office heads the Children's Center gardens. The intern is invited to showcase their work at an open house for families at the end of August. The center also extends its partnership with dining services throughout the academic year for activities including opportunities for student employees to develop cooking projects and fitness activities to help the children develop healthy habits early.
- The Children's Center assists faculty and staff with 64% of enrolled students being the children of university employees. In a community where licensed childcare facilities are scarce, the center not only fills a critical gap but also provides high-quality care with a strong connection to academic programs.

In the words of colleagues:

- "The Children's Center's commitment to academic partnerships goes beyond traditional disciplines, with collaborations in sustainability, nutrition education, music, art, and library services. This multifaceted approach enhances the educational experience for university students while addressing the diverse needs of the community." —*Corey A. King, Chancellor, UW-Whitewater*