

How many hummingbirds visited our garden? What can we do with rain water? What does an earthworm do all day? Through investigation that is naturally fun, children at Berea College's new Boyd and Gaynell Fowler Child Development Laboratory (CDL) begin to appreciate the harmony between human beings and the natural world.

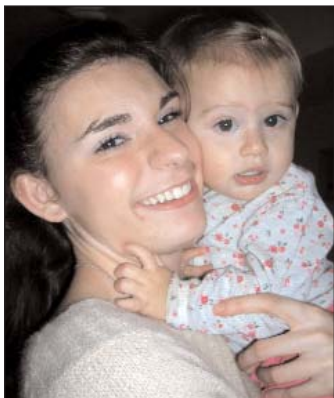
By gardening, recycling, and composting, they develop habits that leave a smaller ecological footprint on the world. They also learn to care about other people and the environment and to see themselves as part of a community of interdependent members.

Located in the Ecovillage, the new CDL was built to bring the College's preschool and childcare programs under one roof and to provide additional support for student families. As one component of a College-wide sustainability effort, it was constructed using "green" materials and designed to be more energy efficient than most other modern buildings.

When fully staffed, the CDL can accommodate 118 children of College students, faculty, and staff in a spacious and brightly colored environment. The program is designed to meet national accreditation standards, receive a top rating in Kentucky's Star Rating System, and serve as a model for other child care providers in Appalachia.

It also serves as a learning laboratory for students. Education majors observe real-world teaching, while nursing majors perform health assessments on the children and nutrition students visit the dining room and provide feedback about meal plans.

In addition to the full-time staff, approximately 20 Berea students work in the CDL for their labor assignments. Some are education or child and family studies majors, but others choose to work there because they enjoy it and feel it will complement their majors, which include psychology, music education, and art education.



For Alicia Moore, a freshman from Somerset, Kentucky, Berea was the best educational option because it welcomed both her and her daughter. Living in the Ecovillage, with the CDL on-site, is a plus for Alicia, who does not own a car and walks Cyanna, now 13 months, to the CDL every morning.

"I don't think there's a typical day for me," says Alicia, a single mother who must ready herself and Cyanna in time for her first class at 8 a.m. After a day of juggling classes, homework, and her labor assignment in the Ecovillage, she collects Cyanna from the CDL and begins their evening, which includes a meal, bath, and bedtime for Cyanna and more studying for Alicia.

She plans to major in elementary education and minor in child development with the hope of becoming a kindergarten teacher. "It's something that I've always wanted to do," she says.

Alicia also serves as president of the Ecovillage Association, a group of residents who work for neighborhood improvements. One goal is to secure playground equipment for the village so parents can study on their back porches while watching their children play.

Before living in the Ecovillage, Alicia did not recycle regularly, but now she recycles along with all other residents and collects the village recyclables each day for her labor assignment. By watching her mother and attending the CDL, where sustainable practices are built into the curriculum, Cyanna is already learning to care for the earth.

Program features

- I-Care curriculum that promotes responsibility to others & the environment
- Child-to-teacher ratio of 4:1 for infants & toddlers, 20:2 for preschoolers
- Full-day care for children ages six weeks to pre-kindergarten
- After-school care for children in kindergarten

Building features

- Kid-level windows, fountains, sinks, commodes, tables, & chairs
- Observation deck with listening stations for parents & students
- "Green" building materials such as a Structurally Insulated Panel System in the roof, linoleum that does not emit fumes, & cabinets & carpet made of recycled materials
- Nurse's Station with negative air circulation to send "sick germs" outside
- Plumbing connected to the Ecomachine, a natural wastewater treatment system in the Ecovillage

Funding needs

Books, puzzles, blocks, etc.:
Any amount

4-6 toddler-size riding toys:
\$80-125 each

6 storage cabinets for classroom materials: \$300 each

Area rugs made of low-emission fibers for 11 rooms:
\$300/room

Playground enhancements:
\$900-1,200

6-seater buggy for taking infants for walks: \$1,000

Dining table and chairs to seat 8 children: \$1,000

Planting a tree: \$2,500

Equipment and materials for a second infant room and toddler room: \$10,000 each

Nurse's Station furnishings:
\$10,000