



## **Executive Summary**

**University of Houston Children's Learning Centers**

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## **Introduction**

Every school has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school stays faithful to the school's vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school, and the kinds of programs and services that a school implements to support student learning. <br><br>The purpose of the Executive Summary is to provide a school with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the school community will have a more complete picture of how the school perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

## **Description of the School**

**Describe the school's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?**

### **School's Size-**

The University of Houston Children's Learning Centers (CLC), located on the University of Houston (UH) main campus, opened in February 1975 in response to the increasing demands of the UH community for child care services. The Center expanded in 1989 and in 2010, five additional classrooms were opened at the Isabel C. Cameron building, across the street from the original location. Today, the University of Houston Children's Learning Centers, formally UH Child Care Center, has two convenient locations on campus with a combined enrollment capacity of 221 children for children ages 3 months to 5 years old. Our nationally accredited exemplary early childhood program supports UH students, staff, faculty and alumni while at the same time, encourages UH student success by offering opportunities for learning, discovery and engagement.

### **Location/Community-**

Founded in 1927, the University of Houston (UH) is the leading public research university in the vibrant international city of Houston. It is located a few miles from downtown Houston, the nation's fourth largest city and the energy capital of the world. Each year, over 40,740 students are educated in more than 300 undergraduate and graduate academic programs- on campus and online. UH awards more than 8,000 degrees annually and has over 200,000 alumni, the majority of whom stay in Houston.

CLC, located organizationally within the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services, is proud to contribute to the development of professional educators by providing on campus field experiences for UH students through collaboration with the University of Houston's College of Education and the early childhood education curriculum. The quality services provided by CLC help to support UH student retention and graduation rates as well as faculty and staff recruitment/retention.

### **Unique Features-**

At CLC, we utilize multiage classrooms to serve children ages one to three years old in the Toddler Program and children ages three to five years old in the Preschool Program, allowing new and/or younger children join a class as enrollment openings occur. Multiage education is the purposeful placing of children of different ages (and abilities) in the same classroom assisting the overall development of the child within a familylike community of learners.

Additionally, CLC provides a Spanish Language Immersion (SLI) program for Toddler and Preschool children in which the children spend all or a large portion of their day learning, in a natural way, the foreign language. Children in a language immersion program work toward fluency in the foreign language; the method of teaching revolves around conversations. Our Program is designed to help the child easily transition into the language of the classroom by participating naturally in the language. They can use, practice and rehearse the foreign language in an emotionally supportive environment that stimulates all their senses.

### **Challenges-**

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CLC's current facilities were both constructed as temporary structures and are in need of constant maintenance repair. Operating out of two different locations is not the most optimal use of fiscal resources and affects staff morale as well as impacts emergency preparedness. We are now in the process of securing funding for a new facility (more reflective of the state of the art services provided) that will bring both of our Centers together at one location.

## **School's Purpose**

**Provide the school's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for young children.**

The mission of the Children's Learning Centers (CLC) is to provide a nationally accredited exemplary early childhood program that supports the student, staff, and faculty of the University of Houston (UH) while at the same time, encourages UH student success by offering opportunities for learning, discovery and engagement.

Standards of ethical behavior in early childhood care and education are based on commitment to core values that are deeply rooted in the history of our field. At CLC we have committed ourselves professionally to:

- Appreciating childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle.
- Basing our work with children on current knowledge of child development.
- Acknowledging and supporting the close ties between the child and family.
- Recognizing that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community and society.
- Respecting the dignity, worth and uniqueness of each individual child, family member and colleague.
- Helping children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust, respect and positive regard.
- Fostering an appreciation for and building a natural connection between the arts and learning.

In addition, CLC is committed to the mission of the University of Houston, the UH Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services, and Student Life. We value and support the Division's Strategic Initiatives to:

- Create new opportunities for student success through learning, engagement and discovery.
- Actualize and leverage the fiscal, human, technological, and facility resources that enhance the student experience.
- Foster the creation of a global learning community that actualizes and embraces inclusion while preparing students to become active citizens.
- Develop a culture of innovation and accountability in the redesign of Division policies, processes and procedures.
- Cultivate a collective identity that demonstrates a united vision.
- Create and engage in strategic partnerships.

At CLC a primary goal is for children to feel safe and secure. Additionally, we believe that a learning environment which fosters respect for cultural diversity and utilizes an eclectic approach to education allows for optimal growth and development of young children. Young children's developmental tasks are to build trust, learn social skills, begin mastery of academic skills and develop positive self-esteem. In order to best support these tasks, our program strives to provide developmentally appropriate activities, well-trained and consistent staff, a safe and healthy learning environment, and continuity of care. Also, throughout the whole learning process we believe parents are their child's first teacher; thus, we work to support parents in their efforts to guide their child's development as well.

## **Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement**

**Describe the school's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school is striving to achieve in the next three years.**

### Notable Achievements--

On January 1, 2011 our Center experienced a name change from the University of Houston Child Care Center (CCC), established in 1975, to the University of Houston Children's Learning Centers (CLC). The name child care center historically implied that a facility only cares for children and employs caregivers not educators. This limited vision overlooked the principles of early childhood education, current research and our purpose to promote school readiness and improved learning outcomes for young children. Today, the goal of early childhood education is to facilitate a variety of learning experiences to meet the needs of children in the various domains of development.

The plural for the word Centers in our new name indicates the expansion project at the Isabel C. Cameron building. Prior to 2010, CLC could not meet the University's growing need for infant care on campus (with only one infant classroom and a capacity of 153 children). Families registered on the waitlist typically spent three semesters waiting for an infant room opening. To further impact the overall capacity for campus-based child care, the UH Human Development Lab School, serving young children ages 2-5, closed in 2009. To address these concerns, a UH Child Care Task Force was appointed from four major shared governance organizations within the UH community to make recommendations to the UH President regarding the expansion of campus child care. In response to the Task Force recommendations, CLC opened five additional classrooms in the renovated UH Human Development Lab School facility.

In 2011, CLC's expansion continued. The fall semester of 2011, the Center enrolled children in its first Spanish Language Immersion (SLI) converted toddler and preschool classrooms. The interest in the program grew and the preschool classroom developed a waitlist. To meet the increasing demands, we converted another preschool classroom into SLI and, in the fall of 2013, opened a second toddler SLI classroom. Today, two of our six toddler classrooms and two of our five preschool classrooms are Spanish Language Immersion.

### Area of Improvement (3 years)-

CLC is working towards securing a location on UH campus, as well as working with a Development Officer to raise funds, in support of a new building for the Center. CLC would like for both sites to be combined at one location in a facility that is reflective of the quality services being provided.

## **Additional Information**

**Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.**

Additional information about our program that provides insight into our operations at the Children's Learning Centers include our enrollment procedures and funding resources.

CLC is a year round program that enrolls eligible children as openings occur throughout the year. Families renew contract agreements annually and have the option to terminate their children's enrollment anytime with a two week written notice. Children transition to the next Program level based on developmental readiness and space availability.

In addition, CLC is an auxiliary service and is primarily funded through child care tuition fees. CLC relies on external grants and funding opportunities to support quality programming. The Center currently receives funding from the UH Student Fees Advisory Committee, the Department of Education, and the Texas Department of Emergency Management.