

A VOICE FOR QUALITY

Marilyn Harrison

Nike

Executive Director of Child Development Programs



ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

Names of centers

Joe Paterno Child Development Center

C. Vivian Stringer Child Development Center

Nike also provides hourly and backup child care through Nike Tykes.

Name of host organization

Nike

Year opened

The Paterno Center opened 1992 and expanded in 1997. Tykes also opened in 1992, and the Stringer Center opened 2008

Populations served

Children of Nike employees, 6-weeks to 5-years-old

Number of children enrolled at last count

192 at Paterno (capacity is 226)

263 at Stringer (capacity is 306)

Total of 455 regularly attending children

Around 200 of these children occasionally use Tykes (capacity of 28 at one time)

Number of children on waiting list at last count

About 150, but most are not yet ready to start attending (i.e., infants just born or family relocating).

Operating philosophy

Nike is dedicated to helping employees lead better, fuller lives both at work and away from work. Making it possible for employees to have their children in close proximity allows both child and parent to enjoy the beautiful grounds and facilities at Nike World Headquarters.

Favorite design feature

Sorry, I can't list just one.

- The sculpture, Strobe 2 by Anthony Howe, at the front entrance of the Stringer center. It's a kinetic pinwheel that captivates and delights.
- The natural light in classrooms at both Stringer and Paterno centers.
- The windows into each classroom and office from the hallways.
- The hands-free sinks for children and adults.

- The playgrounds at Stringer and Paterno, accessible directly from each of the 42 classrooms and with sand and water play for every age group.

Capital funding sources

Nike, Inc. funded the construction.

1. Why does Nike provide early care and education services and who is eligible for these services?

Nike provides early care and education services as a way of providing a premium work experience, therefore improving employee productivity. By offering these services, we are able to attract and retain top talent. Eligibility is restricted only to children of regular Nike employees. Our services are not available to the general public or to contractors.

2. In what ways were stakeholders involved in the design and development processes for your centers?

Nike facilities staff represented the owner. The classrooms were designed through the collaboration of an architect, Nike Facilities, and the child development program staff. The child development director met with Nike facilities staff on a regular basis over a two-year time frame. The child development director engaged staff for input on room design, features, and furnishings. The Paterno Center was used as a template, its strengths and weaknesses were analyzed, and informed decisions were implemented at the Stringer Center.

3. The working title of this piece – “What Money Can Buy” – suggests that money is necessary for a high-quality early education? How do you respond?

This is my personal opinion and it is not reflective of Nike. Money is necessary for high-quality early education. Facilities should be built or renovated to meet the needs of the early childhood program. *Operating* an early childhood program is costly as well. The costs of early childhood programs are more visible than in any other educational program because of a lack of government funding to support the infrastructure. The cost of service is related to the vulnerability of the family and child because additional services are required to ensure at-risk children benefit from the program.

4. What evidence is available to back up claims that learning environments matter for infants, toddlers and preschoolers?

There is abundant research that uses the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale and similar tools to show the connection between the environment and the quality of the program. This research shows that a quality environment does not require a fancy building — though it helps!

High-quality working conditions are rare in early childhood programs. When quality conditions are present, staff longevity is often greater, and research shows that continuity of staff contributes to program quality.

Difficult environments — those not well designed or adapted for the specific age group and purpose — cause teachers to spend a vast amount of time and energy working around problems the environment presents.

5. Explain the importance of facility design in your program. Please give examples of how your facilities *facilitate* learning.

Our facilities have an abundance of space, readily accessible storage for learning materials, and we never have a shortage of supplies. Teachers spend little time keeping children in holding patterns because they don't have to wait for access to diapering stations, restrooms or playgrounds. With fewer distractions and less workarounds, teachers are able to focus their attention on the children and their families.

6. What is your understanding of the situation in Oregon when it comes to access to high-quality early education programs?

My personal opinion is that you can buy high-quality education if you are wealthy by enrolling in exclusive private schools. Not all expensive programs are high-quality programs, but there are no high-quality programs that are not expensive. The only difference is who is paying for the program. For the most at-risk among us, government pays for the quality program (e.g., Head Start). Programs with sponsors, such as Nike, combine parent fees with other funds to cover the cost of high-quality programs.

7. Make your best case for why Oregon should do more to increase access to high-quality early care and education programs. How can this be achieved?

This is my personal opinion, again not speaking for Nike. Here is my case: Most parents need to work. Their children need to be cared for. All children have a right to high-quality early education; however, a high-quality early education costs more than most people can afford.

Children are learning whenever they are awake, whether by being nurtured, educated or inspired inside or outside of the home. A child's early years establish the foundation for future success in education and in life.

It is not an option to simply postpone quality education until a child enters the school system because the deficits created in the early years are extremely difficult to make up for later. Children from disadvantaged environments receive less positive feedback and are given more negative feedback. These children have fewer opportunities to learn than children from more advantaged environments.

Providing access to high-quality programs should be easy. All programs, including Head Start, should set tuition rates. The role of government should be two fold. First, government should establish a financial aid system for early childhood programs similar to what is done for public and private colleges. A mix of private and public funding could be used to ensure that every family has sufficient resources to access a high-quality program of their choosing. Second, government should provide additional supports to children and families who have additional needs, and these services should be provided in the program where the child is already enrolled.

What else? Improve the articulation of the philosophy, goals and approach of all early childhood programs, and allow parents to choose from among the array of early childhood options that are available and affordable using their personal resources and financial aid.

8. Many individuals and organizations look to your program as a model of what is possible, perhaps even as a model of what should be available to every child. Where do you look for inspiration?

I'm amazed at the diversity of sources of inspiration I encounter every day. My inspiration comes from direct contact with children, parents and teachers.

I am inspired by the theorists in child development — Erikson, Piaget and Vygotsky.

I am inspired by the thinkers — Lilian Katz, Louise Derman-Sparks, Betty Jones, Margie Carter and Deb Curtis, Valerie Polakow and many others.

I am inspired by my local colleagues and thinkers who have always been willing to get together and mull over a problem or pitch in to bring people together – Will Parnell, Gillian Brune, Laura Linda Negri-Pool, Steffen Saifer, Hilda Welch, Merrily Haas and the late Bob Dematteis.

I am inspired by the hard-working leaders of Head Start, including all the directors, education coordinators and trainers I worked with for more than 25 years: Alan Berlin, Jody Burnham, Cathy Wamsley, Maya Close, Anita McLanahan, Michael Eichman, Carlyne Westlake, Rayko Hashimoto, Monica Barrett, Juanita Santana and Cathie DeWeese-Parkinson of the Oregon Child Development Coalition, and many more.

I am inspired by the people who work in nonprofits and public service to make our community a better place for all children and their families. Jerralynn Ness and Renee Bruce of Community Action, Diana Stotz and Bill Thomas of the Washington County Commission on Children and Families, Kevin Aguirre of Washington County Department of Human Services and Carlos Perez of Hillsboro School District.

And lately, I am inspired by the leaders and contributors at Nike — Phil Knight, himself, the 11 Nike Maxims, the many people and departments throughout the company that extend their resources in support of the child development program, and the effort this company makes to focus on the customer and to deliver premium products and experiences. This

commitment doesn't stop with footwear or sportswear. It has been extended to the child development program without hesitation.

I rarely have to look for inspiration. It is all around me now and deep in my memory as well.