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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### ***Río Hondo College Reopens, Revamps Child Development Center***

**WHITTIER** – Children are smiling and playing while learning about horticulture, math, art and conflict resolution at Río Hondo College’s Child Development Center, which has revamped and reopened following a year of virtual learning.

The Child Development Center, which reopened its doors in July, has updated its classrooms, safety procedures and its personnel to provide a stronger foundation for children.

The Child Development Center has updated its safety procedures to include temperature checks for all visitors, spaced out learning areas and deep cleaning of classrooms three times a day. Students also adhere to mask requirements and are taught cleanliness during their lessons.

Cindy O’Neill, who has 16 years of experience in the early childhood field, was appointed director of the Center in July after serving as its administrative coordinator since 2019.

“People often don’t realize that we’re teaching these children the foundations of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) – they learn about engineering by playing with construction blocks or horticulture by helping grow corn or plants,” O’Neill said. “Children learn socio-emotional skills that supports children’s behavior as well.”

O’Neill has a Bachelor of Arts in child development and a master’s degree in early childhood development from California State University, Long Beach. She is currently enrolled in an Ed.D. program for educational leadership at the University of Southern California.

The improvements have led to an outpouring of praise from community members and students who use the Child Development Center resources.

“The Child Development Center provides a warm, rich and diverse environment that has allowed my child to grow exponentially socially and academically,” said Sarah Ramirez, a Río Hondo College student and mother. “Enrolling my daughter is one of the best things I’ve done for her.”

## MORE

*Río Hondo College is an educational and community partner committed to advancing social justice and equity as an antiracist institution that collectively invests in all students’ academic and career pathways that lead to attainment of degree, certificate, transfer, and lifelong-learning goals. For information on the College or its programs, please call 562-692-0921 or visit [www.riohondo.edu](http://www.riohondo.edu).*

Space for more students is available at the Child Development Center, which offers full-time childcare from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

“The Child Development Center is a shining example of how Río Hondo College offers nurturing and caring educational development to even the youngest people in our community,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “We are so proud of all the recent upgrades and improvements and we know that our staff are truly making a difference in the lives of the children that attend the Center.”

#### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**CHILDEVELOPMENT1:** Assistant Teacher Marialuisa Lopez helps Paul Kniha water plants at the Child Development Center during a horticulture lesson, teaching him about how to take care of plants to benefit the environment. Río Hondo College’s Child Development Center has reopened for the fall 2021 semester to provide child care and an educational foundation for attendees.

**CHILDEVELOPMENT2:** Sophia Mendoza showcases her creative skills during an art lesson at the Child Development Center. Río Hondo College’s Child Development Center has reopened and is providing care for children from ages 2 to 5, teaching them the foundations of math, art, social emotional growth and more.

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