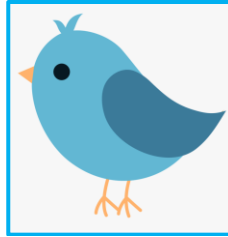




STARFISH  
FAMILY SERVICES



Marygrove Early Education Center (EEC): Byrd Tweetz



*Principal Celina Byrd*

*Greetings and welcome to Byrd Tweetz!*

**What is Byrd Tweetz?** A bimonthly chat about the goings on at the Marygrove EEC and keeping connections going strong across the Marygrove neighborhood.

**December feature:** The three-month anniversary milestone + a meet-and-greet with Marygrove EEC Assistant Principal Sydney Varner.

**Watch Byrd Tweetz:**

<https://youtu.be/CBB3goYx4JM>

Below is an excerpt from the recorded live Byrd Tweetz.

**The next Byrd Tweetz:** Tuesday, February 8, 2022

Reach out to us at (313) 651-8500 or [MarygroveCenter@sfish.org](mailto:MarygroveCenter@sfish.org)

Visit our website at <https://www.starfishfamilyservices.org/marygrove-eeec/>

**Principal Byrd (safety-first message)**

- Even though Byrd Tweetz is virtual, we're still wearing our masks. Why?
- According to Starfish COVID protocols, we wear masks indoors and outdoors at all times and we maintain a 6-foot-apart distance.
- We are stewards and good citizens of this global pandemic that we're in.
- We are devoted to practicing and providing health and safety to the children and families in our space.

### **Principal Byrd:**

Today is a very special Byrd Tweetz because it's the 3-month anniversary of the first day of school at The Grove, which took place on September 7, 2001!

- To help celebrate, I'm so happy to introduce you to my dynamic, vibrant, colorful Assistant Principal Sydney Varner.
- Sydney has been with Starfish at Marygrove EEC for about a year. Can you tell us about your journey and what brought you to The Grove? And what is your role as Assistant Principal?

### **Assistant Principal Varner (background):**

I have been working in early childhood for many years, starting when I was 14. I've been a teacher for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. I've been a school director for the past 3 or 4 years. I found that I needed to work in something besides private childcare centers. And once I heard about the Marygrove project I knew I absolutely had to be here.

- [Click to read](#) Assistant Principal Varner's bio

### **Assistant Principal Varner (my role):**



My job is to make sure that day-to-day everything works. The teachers all have what they need, there's coverage in the classrooms, curriculum training, making sure our families are getting in touch with who they need, etc.

- I make sure we open and close without a hitch. But, there is no such thing as a typical day with children. I think all of us as parents would agree.
- I start the day by walking the building---go see all my favorite little friends (they're all my favorite little friends) and establish what the teachers and families need for the day.

**Example of atypical, but typical:** On Tuesdays we have onsite COVID testing.

- Signs have to be in place, we send reminders to parents, and we gear up.
- We do outdoor testing when necessary, which is an example of how quickly we pivot and rise to the occasion.

### **Principal Byrd (magic moments during our first 3 months):**

Of course, the first day of school when we saw children and families. It was such a celebration! The families were just SO happy.

### **Assistant Principal Varner (more magic moments):**

- **Transition to kindergarten.** Is coming soon. We'll be working with families over the next month to prepare the little ones to continue along the P-20 educational continuum.

- **Nurse navigator.** We are thrilled to have a nurse navigator onsite to answer questions for families and we include an “Ask Nurse Laura” feature in our weekly e-newsletters.
  - For example, it’s cold season. A common question is “what does this lingering cough mean?”
  - Nurse Laura is also there for our staff---filling their cubbies with notes and snacks even when she’s not there.
  - Starfish has a dynamic health team, but having an onsite nurse is a new model that hopefully we can replicate and sustain across the agency.

**Principal Byrd:** What have we heard from families during our first 90 days?

**Assistant Principal Varner (building relationships):**

One of the things we hear a lot is about the relationship families have formed with their teachers. They got to meet them right before school started, but now they’re coming up to me saying, “I love Miss Tam” or “I love Mr. Troy.”

- A few months ago, the children were hesitant about starting school---now they lunge at their favorite teachers!
- Partnerships at The Grove are essential---with families, staff, and with each other!

**Principal Byrd (hiccups and learning):**

As with any new venture there are oops moments that serve as learning moments.

***Drop-offs and pick-ups***

- We thought we had conceived a great plan that combined safety in the midst of COVID with how to also intentionally focus on using this beautiful space.
- It lasted one week!
- Then we had to switch up and now I’m happy to say that it’s been a success since week #2.
- We can’t wait until adult family members can walk through the doors, but in the meantime parents have a way to talk with teachers every day at exterior classroom doors.

***Communication***

- It was a challenge to figure out how to get information out quickly to so many people, how we should communicate, and how much to communicate.
- What we learned? The need to communicate early on, clearly, honestly, transparently, and to provide an abundance of information---but ensuring that it’s intentional.

***How to activate the parent lounge during COVID?***

We want our families to come and use the lounge as soon as possible. We’re running scenarios on how to do that during a pandemic. We don’t know how yet, but we’re talking about it!!