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UNH Child Study and Development Center Teacher Helps Head Start Deal with Three- year-olds

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Thanks to the outreach efforts of the University of New Hampshire's Child Study and Development Center, teachers with Strafford County Head Start are better prepared to work with three-year-olds in the classroom.

"Three is kind of a lost year, when children are transitioning between toddlerhood and preschool, but so much happens socially and emotionally during that time," says Sandy Cormier, a preschool teacher at the center for the last 11 years, who works with three and four-year-olds.

The Child Study and Development Center is a laboratory school affiliated with the Department of Family Studies at the University of New Hampshire. A laboratory school is one with both an early care and education mission and an academic mission. Children attending the center, and the UNH students working at the center, benefit from the highly trained teaching staff and from the family studies faculty. Lora James, interim director of the UNH center, says teachers at the CSDC do a lot of outreach into the community, as well as with visitors on-site.

"I've learned so much," says Cormier, who received her degree in family studies with a nursery school-kindergarten concentration from UNH in 1990. "I always felt deep down that I wanted to share my experiences. It can be frustrating as an educator because it's hard to find information specific to three-year-olds. I like being a resource. A lot of it is trial and error, just like what a three-year-old is going through.

"For parents, their child is moving out of babyhood, and the child is searching for independence and how they fit into the family. It's like a roller coaster ride. Children are supposed to go through these developmental changes, but all the adults in a child's life need to work together."

Wendie Adam, child development and education manager for Strafford County Head Start, says when her teachers consistently requested additional training on how to work with three-year-olds, she knew to contact the CSDC.

"We like to use community resources whenever we can," says Adam, "and UNH's CSDC is always willing to share its expertise. The training was very worthwhile and really benefited our teachers."

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