

Child Study and Development Center Receives National Accreditation

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UNH News Bureau

DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire's Child Study and Development Center (CSDC) has been granted accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This prestigious recognition has been achieved by only 7 percent of early childhood programs nationwide.

"The staff are proud of the high-quality care and education we provide for the 138 children here at the center," says Kathleen McCartney, director and professor of psychology and family studies. "It is gratifying to be recognized by the NAEYC. Moreover, we are thrilled by their report, which commended the staff for teacher-child interactions, curriculum and home-school relations."

According to McCartney, research supports the value of accreditation for children. "Children's language and social skills especially benefit from the better quality found in NAEYC-accredited programs," she says. "These are critical areas for children's success in school, as well as life."

McCartney encourages other early child care centers, preschools, kindergartens and before-and-after school programs to seek NAEYC accreditation, and says that UNH center staff are "happy to assist other professionals who wish to undergo the process."

UNH's Child Study and Development Center is a laboratory school affiliated with the Department of Family Studies. Nationally recognized for its excellence, the center has four programs: infant/toddler, preschool, kindergarten and nursery school. Its three missions include early education for children, pre-service teaching for UNH students, and research.

"This is important acknowledgment of the expertise and commitment of the directors and staff, as well as of the excellence of the center itself," says Kristine Baber, chairperson of UNH's Department of Family Studies. "What impresses me the most is the staff continues to strive to further improve the center. Word of accreditation has just been received, and fund-raising efforts are already under way so that a state-of-the-art playground can be built at CSDC. This will provide an outdoor learning environment that will expand the potential of the center to provide outstanding care and education for children, and superior training for teachers."

NAEYC accreditation is a rigorous, voluntary process by which early childhood programs demonstrate they meet national standards of excellence. The process considers all aspects of a program, including health and safety, staffing, staff qualifications and physical environment. The greatest emphasis, says Beth Hogan, program coordinator at UNH's center, "is on the children's relationships with staff, and how the program helps each child grow and learn intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally."

Center Associate Director Mary Jane Moran, UNH assistant professor of family studies, adds "The goal of the center's innovative curriculum is to help children develop critical thinking, as well as skills associated with collaborative inquiry. We adapt our teaching practice to children's diverse needs, abilities and interests."

Those seeking accreditation undergo an intensive self-study, collecting information from parents, teachers, administrators and classroom observation. They receive an on-site visit by early childhood professionals trained by NAEYC to validate their self-study results, and this information is independently reviewed by a team of national experts. When awarded, accreditation is valid for three years.

January 25, 2000

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