8-11-2009

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Recommended Citation
Wright, Lori, "UNH Faculty Recognized For Work In Early Childhood Education" (2009). UNH Today. 168.
https://scholars.unh.edu/news/168

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UNH Faculty Recognized For Work In Early Childhood Education

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August 11, 2009

DURHAM, N.H. - Two University of New Hampshire faculty members have been recognized for their leadership in technology in early childhood education.

Leslie Couse, associate professor of education and coordinator of the graduate Early Childhood Program, and Dora Chen, assistant professor of family studies and associate director of the UNH Child Study and Development Center, were awarded the 2008 Technology Leadership Award by the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE). They also received the National Technology Leadership Initiative Fellowship at the Society for Information Technology in Teacher Education (SITE) Conference.

The national award recognizes the effective integration of technology into early childhood teacher education. The award was given based on a study they conducted at the UNH Child Study and Development Center that looked at how young children respond to using Tablet computers for writing and drawing.

The researchers provided young children ages 3 to 6 years old with Tablet computers, which use a stylus and handwriting recognition software. Couse and Chen found that the children quickly became at ease with the stylus and inking features on the Tablet computer.

Although children encountered glitches associated with learning a new technology, they persisted without becoming frustrated and were generally very motivated to participate. The researchers also found the children were highly motivated and their drawings were typical to above expectation when created on the Tablet.

“The Tablet computers offer promise for teachers in the classroom. It won’t replace traditional media, such as markers and crayons, but it offers another option for motivating children in the learning process,” Couse said.

“Unlike a keyboard or mouse, the stylus is similar to markers and pencils that the students are used to using. The Tablet computer puts the child in more control and allows them to make choices. Young learners need to be actively engaged, and we should promote technology that gives them options to use their imagination,” she said.

The Child Study and Development Center celebrated 80 years of early childhood education at UNH in January 2009. The center is known nationally for its inquiry-based approach to early education and its award-winning Growing a Green Generation Project on gardening with children. As a laboratory school, the CSDC provides a setting for research, educates 100 pre-
service teachers, and hosts hundreds of educator tours each year. Learn more at www.csdc.unh.edu.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 11,800 undergraduate and 2,400 graduate students.

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Photos available for download:

http://www.unh.edu/news/img/tablet4yo.JPG
A four-year-old shows her friend how to draw on the tablet computer, while preschool teacher Sara West looks on, at the UNH Child Study Development Center.

http://www.unh.edu/news/img/tablet3yo.JPG
Three-year-olds learn to use tablet technology in their preschool class at the UNH Child Study Development Center.