

Les Colibris- unique school

by Mary MacDonald

They asked themselves "Why not?" and then went out and did it. Thus Mme. Stephanie Piaumier and her husband gave birth to what now (11 years later) has become known as Ecole Francaise Les Colibris School. The school, located at 10711 Saskatchewan Drive, caters mainly to pre-school children between the ages of 3 and 6 and utilizes innovative teaching methods.

The Colibris approach, Mme. Piaumier says, is a combination of the traditional teaching method theories. Through intermingling of these ideas and adapting them to the individual child, the kids seem to co-operate more willingly and eagerly. With a pupil to teacher ratio of 10 - 1 personal attention and treatment of the child as a small individual human being is made possible.

The school does not concern itself with one special program, instead director Mme. Piaumier, knows what is expected of the kids at various levels. They are not segregated in age or any type of grade but are allowed to learn at their own rate. Various things such as reading, writing, creative work and music appreciation are learned. "In this program," says Mme. Piaumier, "they are taught in French. We do not teach French." With this added dimension the director feels that the pupils are fascinated with the language and develop an open mindedness as well as respect for others as individuals.

"You cannot teach a crowd. An individual must share things with an individual." The director believes so firmly in this that she asks prospective teachers what they can give and in return what they can take from the school. They participate in a unique experience, putting their ideas into use.

One of the main things Mme. Piaumier believes the young child lacks is emotional security. In many cases material things are substituted by busy parents for their own attention to the child as a tiny human. Les Colibris emphasizes the human element, decentralizes school from a "factory with large quantities and tries to substitute quality.

Unfortunately private schools are not favored very well by the province as Mme. Piaumier admits with regret. The school begun by her in 1964 because of a lack of educational alternatives is in the red and may be forced to face financial realities. With only minimal support from

outside sources Mme. Piaumier has had to sink her personal savings into the school and give up her salary.

However she does not look on it as a failure, "I don't value things in quantity or material."

The success is that in an area where French is not a major language, a French school has survived for 11 years. French, however, is just a bonus of the school with its main aim seeing an alternate type of education for children. Mme. Piaumier hopes to carry on with her school which she likens to a house with many kids.

"Time will tell whether I am an optimist or a fool."



Photo by Mary MacDonald

"Children are not taught French, they are taught in French."

Validity of foreign student test questioned by book

WINNIPEG (CUP) - The validity of the test as an admissions requirement of foreign students attending Canadian Universities has been questioned.

According to two articles in the second annual Medical Measurements Yearbook, the TOESL test which is currently used is not a reliable indicator of the students ability to study English.

"If predictions of academic achievement is the major goal", says one article, "then the effort is doomed from the beginning."

The TOESL test is administered to all students whose native language is not English. It is composed of five sections: listening comprehension, English structure, vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing ability.

According to Clinton Chase, head of the Department of Educational Psychology at

Indiana University, each section of the test has no bearing on what the foreign student might hope to study in English speaking countries.

As well, he said, the grading is questionable because of the reliability of the test.

Chase concluded, "TOESL is not a useful predictor of great achievements. The manual suggests that TOESL is best used for admission only in conjunction with corroborating data on the candidates. This appears to be excellent advice for the test user."

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no more than "throw a crumb" to the students.

Powell said the committee which has only met once, reviews appeal applications but has no policy making authority.

In terms of financial aid policy, he said the committee was "a token organization", and that the other members of the committee "become hostile when I try to introduce policy matters."

Powell also said the committee will not allow him to have the confidential appeal policies

manual which is used to judge appeal cases.

"It is difficult for me to understand the technical points without a manual" he said, expressing fear that, "The bosses may use their confidentiality to protect themselves, instead of protecting the individual."

Without a manual, he says he will be unable to judge whether the committee of which he is now a member is being fair in its decisions.

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