

UCC - A Transition for the Child

The University Children's Centre was established by the Halifax Student Housing Society for the purpose of providing children who will be spending some of their formative years outside the traditional home environment with a proper alternate environment in which to grow and develop.

The nursery is divided into three sections, namely the Infants (age 6 months to 18 months), Toddlers (age approx. 18 months to 3 years), Juniors (3-4) and Seniors (3 years to 6 years). Although the nursery is divided into three sections, it is the policy of the Nursery Director, Miss Millicent Lawrence, to advance children as they acquire the social skills, which will allow them to be readily integrated into the next section.

The general structure of the nursery includes thirteen staff members and one cook. There is a hot meal served each noon, and cookies and snacks are provided each morning and afternoon. Every child has his own crib or cot for an afternoon nap. The playground, which is equipped with climbing equipment, sand box, swings, etc. is used twice daily. The hours of the nursery are from 8:00 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. The observation booths at the centre are used by many of the departments and students at Dalhousie. These booths allow the observer and interested parent to watch the children at play.

Language development is of prime importance in all sections and the success here has been substantiated by the fact that a few of the Centre's "graduates" have been able to go

directly into grade one. The sensual experiences of feeling, tasting, seeing, and hearing are also stressed. Advancing to the toddler section, the child begins to enjoy the company of others and accepts responsibility in looking after himself. The junior and senior sections (3-6), are characterized by personal interests and hobbies, longer friendships and responsibilities.

The University Children's Centre, acts as a buffer in the delicate transition from the home environment to the community at large. Presently, there are vacancies for the children of students, faculty, and staff of the academic community. As each child contributes to the social environment, an initial interview is necessary to orientate the child and parents to the programme. A mutual understanding of the basis for cooperation between parents and staff is of direct benefit to the child. For further information or appointment with Miss Lawrence phone 429-6902.

In general, the nursery's role as a contributor to child development is two-fold: 1) It serves as a focal point for the early stages of the socialization process and 2) It functions to expand and foster the creative interests and abilities of the child. The 2-3 year old child is developing a sense of relationships with other children which is fostered under the guidance of a staff well trained in the needs (both physical and emotional) of the pre-school child. These relationships are achieved through small amounts of introductory organized play, and, above all, sheer

free association with the child's own peers during the process of everyday living.

The creative aspect of the nursery's function is fulfilled by activities such as painting, pasting, play-doh, and just plain splashing with plastic boats in large buckets of water. Yes, mother, your child

can be freely creative without the restrictions imposed upon him by your carpet or newly-waxed floor. (Facilities for all these activities are provided and music is part of the program for all ages.)

Generally, a parent may be assured that his child is attending a nursery

where his creative, social, and physical needs are attended to in an enjoyable and undemanding way. Individual development is the keynote in the flexible structure of everyday activity at the Centre, allowing the child's own personality and capacity to guide him at his own speed and degree of interest.



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