

a program showcase

UNH Child Study and Development Center

by Michael Kalinowski

The current Child Study and Development Center (CSDC) facility opened in 1988, but was originally established as a demonstration teaching site in 1929. It serves as a child development laboratory for the University of New Hampshire: a place to educate students, support research, and serve the university and local communities. There are seven classrooms with observation booths, 122 children aged 6 weeks to 6 years in eight full- and part-time programs,

and a staff of 20. The program is nationally accredited and known for its inquiry approach to early education.

During the 2007-2008 year, CSDC hosted 450 student observations, 85 Family Studies internships, 100 educator tours, 250 Special Education consultant visits, and collaborations with seven other campus departments. According to Executive Director John Nimmo, "The



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uniqueness of our program comes partly from where we are located, in a rural state, with a relatively homogenous although quickly changing population.”

One focus has been on nature, and on engaging children in the natural environment in a way that recognizes how humans are part of nature. That interest led to a collaborative project with horticulturalists on a process of inquiry about the world of plants, called Growing a Green Generation. This project has resulted in a vibrant curriculum of activities (<http://horticulture.unh.edu/ggg.html>) and an annual conference to entice early educators into the joys of gardening with children.

A second focus has been on diversity, and CSDC staff adopted a mission statement that includes the following:

We strive to respect and value the differences in each child and family in our community through all that we do. We value the development of strong relationships with families and colleagues in order to better understand how we can respond to cultural and

historical differences in experiences, values, and practices. We offer an environment that welcomes and celebrates the sharing of family history and culture in the classroom in meaningful ways. In our curriculum we are intentional in providing children with opportunities to explore similarities and variation, and we are responsive to questions that emerge.

Recently Richard Haynes, a professional artist, created a diversity mural involving CSDC children in a month-long apprenticeship, funded by a Teaching Tolerance grant from the Southern Poverty Law Center. The mural emphasizes the focus at the center on fostering meaningful connections between young children and adults in the community.



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The Program Showcases were developed by Michael Kalinowski as a component of the World Forum on Early Care and Education.

They are intended to highlight the work of particularly interesting, unique, and/or exceptional early childhood programs around the world.

Selected programs will appear in future issues of *Exchange*, and are also available on www.ChildCareExchange.com.