**Students Find Caring For Youngsters Is A Real Education**

**Child-development Class Includes Running Preschool**

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Andrea Manno thought she might like to become an elementary school teacher but hadn't spent much time with young children. So she decided to get some hands-on experience in the child development course at Riverside-Brookfield High School, where she is a senior.

"I'm into kids and I thought the class would help me make sure I wanted to teach when I grow up," she said.

As part of the semester-long course, the students operate a preschool on school premises. They plan learning and recreational activities for the dozen or so children who participate, and they provide snacks and nurturing.

"They take care of whatever (the children's') needs are, whether wiping noses or running down the hall to the toilet," said Marilyn Brumund, who teaches the course.

Manno, 18, took the course in the fall. During the first part of the semester, the students studied such topics as pregnancy, genetics, birth defects and the development characteristics of infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Later in the semester the preschool began. The students were divided into teaching teams of five or six. One team was in charge of the preschool activities each day while the others observed.

One of Manno's favorite sessions was taking the children into the gymnasium, where an obstacle course was set up. The course included cones, which the children were told to ride tricycles around without knocking over; a balance beam set a few inches above the floor; and tubes to crawl through.

"At first they were all scared," Manno said. "We helped them. We pushed them to do things and we held their hands. It was interesting to see who could ride a bike or jump over things."

As the children progressed through the course, their confidence grew, she said. "You could tell they were happy because they were smiling or wanted to do it again."

On another occasion Manno's team asked the children to reach into a sealed box to see whether they could identify the objects inside. The box contained such items as an orange, a small teddy bear, some macaroni and some cereal.

"We wanted to make them try new things and learn different shapes and how things feel," Manno said. "It went well, but some of them were peeking into the box to see what they were touching."

Manno, who is an only child, said she greatly enjoyed the course.

"I liked learning the different ages and their emotions and what they do," she said. "I'm interested in helping them learn more."

The course also held some surprises for her, she said.

"I was surprised by the big difference between 3- and 4-year-olds," she said. "Four-year-olds can talk more. They know their colors. Three-year-olds are not as sure of themselves. Four-year-olds are more open and active. I was surprised by what they learn in one year.

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"I also learned you need a lot of patience. You have to make sure you don't get upset--just take it easy. If kids aren't sure how to play, learn to take the time to show them instead."

Manno was born in North Riverside and lived there until she moved to Brookfield with her mother, Maria Duben, four years ago. She has attended Riverside-Brookfield High School all four years. She is president of the school's vocational club and has participated in a drug-prevention organization for four years. She played softball during her sophomore and junior years and has worked at the Brookfield Zoo for three years. Since September she has been a supervisor in the gift shop.

"Andrea is very enthusiastic," Brumund said. "She likes school and she participates in activities. She's a well-rounded student, and the (preschool) children loved her."

The course is offered by the family and consumer science department at the school, 160 Ridgewood Drive, Riverside. Other programs include consumer economics, health occupations, parenting and food-preparation courses.

The preschool runs four days a week for five weeks. The length of each session depends on the number of sections of the course being taught--usually two. Each class period lasts 50 minutes, so a typical session lasts about two hours. A small fee is charged to cover snacks and supplies.

The parenting course, which Brumund teaches, also offers a preschool, but for only 1 1/2 weeks.

The preschool is open to children who are at least 2 years old and toilet-trained. Most tend to be 3 or 4 and live nearby. A few are children of students who took the course when they were in high school.

"It's a nice way to introduce children to a preschool program if they haven't been to preschool before," Brumund said. "It is a short duration, and they get a tremendous amount of attention."

Students take the course for a variety of reasons, she said. Some, like Manno, are considering careers with children, and others want to get a head start on building their own parenting skills.