

Douglass Psychology Child Study Center: A Bit of Early History

Marjorie W. Munson

Assistant Dean, Douglass College

The earliest known record of the establishment of an on-campus facility enrolling children as a part of the curriculum at the New Jersey College for Women appears in the December 2, 1927 minutes of the Board of Managers, where reference is made to Dean Douglass having visited three nursery schools (two in Chicago and one in Detroit). Based on her report, the Board empowered Dean Douglass to "...proceed with plans for a Nursery School to be established next year or whenever funds are available from the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Foundation or other source outside the general college budget to care for part of the expense." The minutes note "(In her statement regarding the work of Nursery Schools as laboratories, Dean Douglass gave as their primary object, 'To give young people the feel of the normal'.)"

By February 3, 1928 Dean Douglass informed the Board that she might be able to secure the services of a Miss Bogan from Teachers College (probably a reference to Columbia Teachers College) as a director and would present her credentials to Mrs. Lewis Thompson, with whom Dean Douglass was working to secure funding from the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Foundation.

The Board minutes make no further note of the "Nursery School" at this juncture; however, the New Jersey College for Women Faculty Minutes of October 20, 1930 note that "Dean Douglass announced the opening of the new Child Study School this fall in Douglass DD [a building that would later be renamed Corwin DD] under the supervision of psychology department. Twelve children are now enrolled in the school."

The "School for Child Study" makes its first catalog appearance in the 1931-1932 NJC Announcement with notations that Home Economics students enrolled in "*Child Care and Raising*" are required to "...observe and assist in the School for Child Study", and students enrolled in *Child Psychology* are expected to observe in the School for Child Study.

In the Board of Managers Minutes of January 15, 1932, there is a clear indication of a budgetary attack on the part of the Regents who, apparently, felt the School for Child Study was not a necessary part of the college program. This almost certainly reflected the extreme budgetary difficulties of the Depression; however, the NJC Board of Managers stoutly defended the School's service as a laboratory experience for students in Home Economics, Psychology and Education.

In 1963, the child study facility was moved into the new "Home Economics-Psychology Building" (subsequently named Davison Hall), where it remains today.