

Thursday, March 11, 1982

Tenny Maria's ambition is to be a ballerina. The kindergarten wore her dancing skirt to class for "What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up" day at ArtStart.



Meg Glaser shows a few cheerleading techniques to fellow kindergartners during "What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up" goings-on. One of the next big goings-on is scheduled for April 6, when ArtStart hosts an open house.



Jessica Villar's baby doll was part of the costume she put together for her ambition to become a wife and mother. ArtStart parents are kept apprised of items kindergartners are to bring to class through a newsletter.



ArtStart

A curriculum wrapped around music, drama and art

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

ArtStart Kindergarten, a private school room where the focus is on the arts, was born through a request from parents whose children had attended ArtStart preschool.

Now that the kindergarten is winding up its first term, the directors say they

already have gotten requests from parents who want them to open up a first grade so their youngsters can continue learning with the curriculum, which is wrapped around music, drama and art.

"Our philosophy is to build up a positive self image, and everything else will fall into place," said art teacher Sue Ingram of ArtStart's preschool, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and

day-care operations, which are carried on in five spacious rooms in Mercy Center.

"Our thrust is not necessarily academic. When the self-confidence is there, learning will come. Learning will be easier because it is easier to accept a challenge without self-doubts."

Ms. Ingram is owner and operator of ArtStart with Kathy Benton, who

teaches drama and art, and Barbara Burgess, who heads up the music and science sessions. The three work with two other teachers overseeing youngsters involved in the four separate programs from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

THE PRIVATE kindergarten is an extension of the preschool and pre-kindergarten programs that are designed to meet the individual's needs with experiences that will build a strong self-image while developing an awareness of the world through the creative process.

"We carry out the same philosophy in our day-care program," Ms. Benton said, emphasizing that ArtStart day care offers develop-at-one's-own-pace activities, as opposed to being a baby-sitting center.

"Even the drop-in will be learning something," she said, pointing to an office arrangement set up with desk, typewriter and mailbox in one corner of the room, and a kitchen setting in another.

"We see each child as an individual. Disciplining is done by redirecting that energy instead of putting the child on a guilt trip. And each is handled very specially to assist his or her very special growth," Ms. Benton said.

Ms. Burgess emphasized, "There is no structured way to do anything, whether it is sessions in dance, music or art."

She told about one class which had made George Washington hats as a craft project in February. "Not all of them were really three-cornered and you couldn't find two of the 30 that really resembled one another," she said.

Music sessions may find the youth making up their own dance movements

'Our thrust is not necessarily academic. When the self-confidence is there, learning will come. Learning will be easier, because it is easier to accept a challenge without self-doubts.'

— Sue Ingram
ArtStart

or their own words to a song. In a fairy-tale drama, there might be as many as 20 Hansels or Gretels.

"And all lesson plans might get out the window if someone has a new baby at their house. It's a lot more important to talk about the new baby that day than follow anything that might have been planned," she said.

ARTSTART, which carries the subtitle Creative Enrichment Program, is a member of Farmington Area Preschool Council, whose membership is open to all groups which have to do with the care and education of preschoolers.

"We believe in the council's concept of shopping around and comparing what the area has to offer," said Ms. Ingram said, is on the council's steering committee.

"We want our parents to know what we're doing here and encourage visitors to sit in on our classes. We hope they will bring their children so the child can be part of that decision-making process," she said.

"At any other time of the year we have an open-door policy for visitors," Ms. Burgess said. "During spring, which is generally shopping for preschool time, we have to ask for an appointment. We want the child to take part in the class, and during this time of the year that must be prearranged."

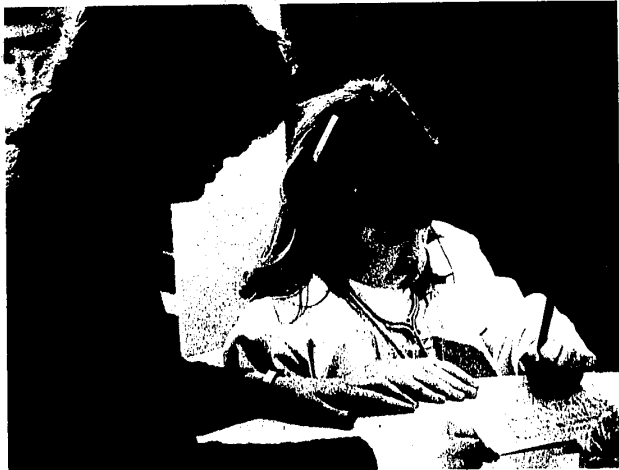
As for starting an ArtStart first grade, the directors say that's down the road a bit.

"We've grown every year, and we're quite anxious not to grow too fast," Ms. Burgess said.

"Next fall we'll be taking on another afternoon class of preschool, and we'll be able to take more children in our day-care center. We'll think about first grade when we can think about getting into our own building."

ArtStart facilities, in Mercy Center, are in the far northeast end of the complex on 11 Mile Road, east of Middlebelt Road. Guests are asked to enter through Gate 4 and enter the building from under the blue canopy.

ArtStart directors will take calls at 474-7175.



Teacher Cindy Storer works with "Dr." Jaime Brown during kindergarten classes that interperse the academic curriculum with self-expression, art, music, painting, rhythm band, drama and creative movement.

Staff photos
by
Randy Borst



Jaime Brown, Sarah Ingram and Meghan Dawley settle down for story time with teacher Cindy Storer. The art print seen in the photograph was loaned to ArtStart as part of the Picture Lady Program, an

art enrichment class brought to the school by the Farmington Art Foundation.



Story-time chores are taken over by Nichole Robidoux, a 5-year-old who reads at about a second- or third-grade level. ArtStart teachers estimate. Individualized programs are designed to meet the need and enhance growth on physical, social, emotional and intellectual levels.