

Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College Preschool: ASU in Miniature

December 20, 2016

Background

Currently, there are three child care facilities affiliated with ASU that are on the Tempe campus: T. Denny Sanford School of Family and Social Dynamics; Child Study Lab; and the Campus Children's Center (a.k.a. Bright Horizons). A fourth facility, Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College Preschool, is on Mill Avenue north of the Tempe Town Lake. All four preschools/centers have varying capacity, purpose and range of service to the community. (See Attachment 1) Each facility has different challenges related to space limitations, proximity to campus and marketing outreach. The three preschools that are located on the Tempe Campus have lengthy wait lists. Currently, the Child Development Lab has a wait list of 125 children.

Two years ago there were only 18 kids enrolled in Teachers College Preschool and no wait list. Last summer, the Teachers College Preschool was at capacity with 30 on the waitlist. Currently, the preschool has a waitlist of 20. Ten of the 20 are waiting for children to age in and ten are asking for a schedule that cannot be accommodated at this time or have special needs that can't be accommodated with the existing case load.

The Teachers College Preschool does not have the same access to staff/faculty children due to the off campus location and as a result operates at about 90% capacity overall. Also, the Teachers College Preschool facility is in an aging building, with low visibility, only 3 classrooms with a maximum capacity of 45 children. Its location, facility and programming are in need of overhaul.

ASU faculty, staff, students and the local community would benefit from the expanded capacity provided by the proposed Teachers College Preschool facility adjacent to Mirabella at ASU Lifelong Learning Center at the southwest corner of University Drive and Mill Avenue. The families on wait lists for all of the ASU affiliated centers could enroll at the expanded facility since all will be on the Tempe Campus. Capacity limitations will be significantly reduced for ASU staff and faculty and the community. Ideally, all ASU affiliated preschool/child care centers could then collaborate in relation to shared marketing, determining each site's brand and scope of services to give families clear options to better informed decisions. The new space for Teachers College Preschool will also allow for expansion of ages and

services to include more infant/toddler care and special education evaluation and inclusion services.

Concept

The Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College Preschool is an inclusive preschool with a 20-year history of providing high quality early childhood education and professional training to the community.

In the last two years, the Teachers College Preschool has increased enrollment, special education services and established a focus on inclusive education to implement and research innovative inclusion strategies. In 2015-2016, we provided internships and classroom experiences to over 100 university students in multiple fields, gaining important academic and professional experience for their careers.

With new leadership in the preschool and MLFTC, we are also ready for a major shift in our approach. We have always valued interdisciplinary partnerships across the university and these projects have provided our young students with a variety of experiences that are uncommon in many pre-schools. We are currently piloting two classroom spaces with Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts and the Ira Fulton Schools of Engineering. These classroom models are bringing young children closer to the university, providing them with new learning contexts, and increasing the expectations for how young children learn.

- The Herberger faculty will partner with the preschool to create a Black Box Theater which can be used for dance, theater, music, and children can create community performances in collaboration with Herberger students and Mirabella residents. In addition, the Theater for Youth course will be a 'class in residence' at the preschool this spring.
- The Engineering program will be integrating problem based engineering lessons at the preschool designed and implemented in teams consisting of 1-2 engineering students and a preschool teacher. Also, the engineering outreach team will work with the preschool to create evening and summer enrichment programs for young children and families.

The opportunity to develop a new facility on the campus and adjacent to Mirabella at ASU will allow us to continue to build on those pilot efforts to create a new

model for the Teachers College Preschool that will improve our collective delivery of child care services to our faculty and the Tempe community. (See Attachment 2)

The proposed building and programming for Teachers College Preschool will mirror ASU. Spaces would be created that will directly reflect schools and colleges at ASU and emulate the learning and work being done in those units. We believe that this innovative model would bring the campus closer to the pre-school and the preschool closer to campus. Connections with schools, faculty and students particularly in art, engineering and teaching will literally be within walking distance from Mirabella at ASU. That proximity will enable close and regular connections among Mirabella at ASU residents and the ASU community that will yield new opportunities for intergenerational education and research that do not exist today.

Staffing would change and teachers, instead of following age specific groups of children, would work in mixed aged settings and be responsible for the depth of learning in a classroom in partnership with their designated university unit partner. Children would move through the space based on interests and each space would provide children with projects and activities germane to their specific unit. Imagine the engineering space with many different design materials, building materials, and tools used by engineers; a health solutions space with fitness and health related equipment, models, and technology; or a sustainability space with projects that teach young children about issues related to conservation and ecosystems.

We can also see future potential to create traveling “exhibits” or classroom spaces “loaned” to other pre-schools, branded as ASU, and demonstrating best practice. Curriculum and professional learning could be built to support these innovative spaces. Research opportunities would abound for those interested in the structures, relationships, and benefits of intergenerational programs and new types learning spaces for early childhood. Also, the opportunity for internships in age appropriate spaces that raise the level of expectations for children is critical to the field of early childhood education.

The expanded facility being proposed adjacent to Mirabella at ASU would more than triple the capacity for university students to engage and learn about integrating their respective fields in early childhood education and it heightens opportunity for social embeddedness in the community. The geographic proximity will allow increased opportunities for intergenerational programming and increased student interactions.

The opportunities for innovative, large scale research and grant funding would support the programs and advance the design imperatives of the university by

creating a space for use-inspired, interdisciplinary, socially embedded work with the Teachers College and many other ASU colleges and departments.

We also envision that residents of Mirabella at ASU will interact with students in more meaningful ways related to careers and related activities. Many of the Mirabella residents will be retired engineers, teachers, artists, doctors, and nurses. They could be valuable players in the new preschool programming concept by participating in the programming free of charge. In doing so, Mirabella at ASU residents will integrate real life experiences in many of the ASU driven disciplines we intend to emulate. These experiences for young children and older folks alike will be central to our plan so that even our youngest students begin to get exposure to the breadth and depth of learning ASU has to offer in real world terms.

Space Requirements

Currently, Teachers College Preschool operates in approximately 5,400 sq. ft. The breakeven point for that size facility is 125 students, more than twice the operational capacity of the program. The ideal space needed to operate the proposed preschool program and special services is approximately 10-15,000 sq ft with storage, office, and bathroom and therapy space.

The capacity for the proposed preschool will be enough to accommodate children currently served at one or more of the other ASU affiliated centers, including parents currently on waiting lists at those facilities. Any merger of programs in that regard would expand the scope of services offered by the university twofold or more and provide additional space for university purposes at any merged location. For example, moving the Campus Children's Center to the proposed location will immediately offer greater child care services to the ASU community and allow for repurposing of the current site operated by Bright Horizons.

If the concept for a new and improved Teachers College Preschool as proposed here is acceptable, specific designs for programming the space will be prepared to accommodate our current and projected needs together with the capacity represented by any other center that is to be moved to the new facility. In addition, projections of capacity, tuition, grant revenue and operating costs will be developed to provide the plan for development and long term financial sustainability of the new site.

Impact

The vision of the Teachers College Preschool is to create, research and share new practices in early childhood teaching and learning. The past two decade's advances in understanding the brain and the huge impact of the early years, has pushed the importance of quality early childhood experiences to the top of educational agendas.

A facility focused on collaboration and inclusion which embeds the college partners with interdisciplinary learning will leverage ASU's place as a leader in early childhood education.

The new center will focus research on creating a high quality, scalable model for early learning. Thinking outside of conventional classrooms, ratios and curricular frameworks to create flexible learning settings which will be efficient, effective and increase young children's problem solving, questioning and thinking skills.

The targeted outcomes are to make ASU the leader in early childhood education through an innovative approaches to teaching preschoolers in the mold of the New American University...and to pave the way for early enrollment in our students of the next generation.

Attachment 1	Teachers College Preschool	Child Development Lab	Child Study Lab	Campus Children's Center
Managed by	Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College	T. Denny Sanford School of Family and Social Dynamics	Department of Psychology	Bright Horizons
Purpose	Play-based, inclusion with a focus on use-inspired research and creation of best practices. Training site for over 100 university students each year and research site for faculty.	Supervised training site for child development majors and research site	Supervised training site for majors in fields related to early childhood and research site	Child care facility for children of ASU employees
Ages Served	2.5-5 years	2-5 years	15 months-5 years	1-5 years
Capacity	45	52	50	75
Enrollment options	Full time and part time	Full time and part time	Variety of part time options	Full time with limited partial week
Hours of Operation	7:30-5:30	7:00-5:30	9:00-3:30	7:00-6:00 p.m.
Calendar	10 month academic year with optional 2 month summer sessions	10 month academic year with optional 2 month summer sessions	9 months	Year Round
Tuition	\$950/month full time \$650/month part time	\$860/month for 2 year olds \$885/month for 3-5 year olds	Varies from \$250-560/month depending on the option (part time only)	\$800 for toddlers \$900 for preschoolers
Registration Fee	\$150	\$200	\$150	\$80
Ratio	1:6	1:5	1:4	1:8