

Handout 9-2-09 M. Z

September 2, 2009

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To: Madison Urban Design Commission

This letter is in support of the expansion of the School of Human Ecology building at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Since 1999, I have been a professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Human Ecology. My research focus is on infants and young children, including examining environmental and biological risk factors — for example, infants born preterm with low birth weight, children affected by parental incarceration, and children raised by their grandparents. I received my Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Syracuse University and am a licensed psychologist in both New York and Wisconsin.

As a scholar examining risk factors impacting infants and young children, I support an expanded School of Human Ecology facility, particularly its research preschool. In addition to providing a child development and early learning program, the preschool lab offers a setting in which UW-Madison faculty and students conduct research on issues related to child development, early learning, and family studies. The preschool also provides professors an opportunity to include a class observation in their curricula. The knowledge gained from these naturalistic observations is a meaningful way to learn about children and their development.

Twice a year, I teach a course, "Developmental and Family Assessment," which is designed for students who intend to work with families in a variety of settings, such as home visiting, nursing, or childcare, or for students who plan on going to graduate school. This course has a required service learning component at the preschool or a campus child care center.

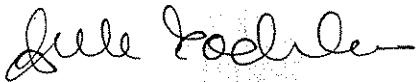
University student internships also provide experiential learning in such areas as early literacy, musical and artistic expressions, cognitive development, and parent education, as well as childcare licensing, budgeting and administration.

The importance of expanding our preschool lab to add services for infants at this central campus facility cannot be overstated. Currently, the preschool lab serves infants only at its Mineral Point location on the city's west side. With the completion of the new addition, faculty and students will finally gain easier access to infant development and observation opportunities.

The preschool lab is an environment where graduate and undergraduate students can actively engage in research and begin to develop their own scholarship and professional interests. It is also a highly interdisciplinary facility that involves students from many majors across campus, not only those within Human Ecology.

I welcome the completion of this enhanced research and teaching facility on our central campus. I also look forward to having a state-of-the-art development facility for our infants and toddlers, as well as for their parents.

Sincerely,



Julie Poehlmann, Associate Professor  
Department of Human Development and Family Studies