



Meet the Windy Hill School Challenge

On a typical day at the Windy Hill School, the children in its toddler, nursery, kindergarten and after-school programs are learning about their world and each other. While some are operating sewing machines, writing plays, inventing games on computers, photographing baby chicks or hiking in their "Hundred Acre Woods," others play dress up, bake bread with their teacher, construct forts and hideouts, and investigate natural phenomena.

Still other groups of children are embarking on big adventures such as scaling the climbing wall, learning how to produce sound effects at the radio station or critiquing a new exhibition at the campus art gallery. The school offers a rich teaching and learning environment on the Colby-Sawyer College campus, where young children are encouraged by their teachers to explore, imagine and create. These complex and authentic activities show Windy Hill's commitment to play, the arts, technology and joyful learning.

The Windy Hill School has been a magical part of childhood for area families since 1976, when it was licensed by the state of New Hampshire to serve as a laboratory school for Colby-Sawyer's Social Sciences and Education Program. Under the direction of Associate Professor Janet Bliss since its inception, the school has become an exemplary model of best

practices in early childhood education, widely recognized for its innovation, research and high-quality educational programs. The programs are based on the constructivist approach to education, in which classrooms are communities and learning occurs in the context of social activities.

Today the Windy Hill School serves 85 area children, employs 13 teachers, and provides after-school programs for grades one to three and summer programs for children up to age six. Each year 30 to 40 college students, mainly Child Development and Psychology majors, become involved in the school to learn about young children and the institutions that support them, as well as to observe and engage in the children's learning, alongside their teachers and mentors.

A College-Community Partnership

For some time, the Windy Hill School's physical space on campus has been less than ideal and has hampered its growth. Colby-Sawyer College is ready to move forward with its plans to create a new space especially designed for Windy Hill that will house all of its programs under one roof. The college hopes to construct a free-standing building to meet its current and projected space needs. The new location will be on the periphery of campus near Colby Farm amid expansive grassy areas and magnificent views of Kearsarge Mountain.



Windy Hill's new location will benefit children and their families, as well as the Colby-Sawyer community. It will feature classrooms with built-in kitchens and computer work areas, along with unobtrusive observation rooms for faculty, students and parents. Additionally, a seminar room, two technology-enabled or "smart" classrooms for child development classes, an early childhood curriculum laboratory and resource library, and faculty offices will both strengthen the college's Social Sciences and Education programs and enhance the learning experiences of Windy Hill children.

The site will also provide safer and more convenient access from Main Street in New London, and by moving the school away from the college's central quad, vehicular traffic at the heart of campus will be reduced. Additionally, the building will be handicapped-accessible and exceed the National Association for the Education of Young Children's requirements for 50 square feet of usable indoor space per child. And as Windy Hill vacates its current classrooms in the lower levels of the Abbey and Burpee residence halls, much-needed space will become available for on-campus housing for Colby-Sawyer's growing population of college students.

Up to the Challenge

The cost of building and furnishing the new school is projected to be \$2 million. Fortunately, in May 2008, the college received an extraordinary \$1 million challenge grant from an anonymous donor family. For the Windy Hill Challenge, this generous family has offered to match, dollar for dollar, all gifts up to \$1 million toward the new building's construction. In selecting Windy Hill for their philanthropy, the



A Colby-Sawyer student admires a Windy Hill School child's face paint during a Teddy Bear Picnic on the quad lawn on campus.

family cited the teachers' talent and dedication to children, an exceptional Child Development Program, and their belief that the school and all those who teach and learn there deserve a beautiful and optimal educational environment.

In the last year, momentum has been building toward meeting the Windy Hill Challenge. Already \$620,000 has been committed toward the \$1 million challenge grant, leaving another \$380,000 to raise for the project.

"Colby-Sawyer is thrilled at the prospect of a new home for Windy Hill, and the advantages for families, college students, teachers and faculty will be tremendous," says Vice President for Advancement Beth Cahill. "We invite everyone who has been touched by the school, as well as those who simply wish to support this wonderful educational partnership between the college and the community, to consider joining us in this challenge."

Gifts of every level will make a difference and will be recognized in the new building. To contribute or to learn more about the Windy Hill Challenge, please contact Beth Cahill at 526-3426 or ecahill@colby-sawyer.edu.

