

THE HISTORY OF THE CHILD STUDY CENTER



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Professor Beatty

History of American Education

The First Free Kindergarten in Wellesley, Massachusetts:

Why Wealthy Children Need Good Schools Too

“Professors Katharine Lee Bates and Katharine Coman lent their efforts and their abilities to developing the objective thought of Mrs. Helen M. Craig, of Boston and through the cooperation of Professor Arthur O. Norton of the Education Department of Wellesley College, the Anne L. Page School was opened in 1913 on the campus of Wellesley College – a progressive school for the education of the young child, - a school which today ranks among the foremost of its kind.”ⁱ

During the late 1800’s the free kindergarten movement began in the United States. As stated in Barbara Beatty’s book *Preschool Education in America*, “free kindergartens envisioned forging new bonds among women based on their shared commitment to improved child rearing and education and in so doing further popularized the kindergarten and expanded public responsibility for young children.”ⁱⁱ It is no surprise that Wellesley wanted to keep pace with the rest of America and establish a kindergarten for their children as well. However, the “extension of kindergartning to the children of the poor began in earnest in the late 1870’s, with New York and Boston in the lead”ⁱⁱⁱ and the children of Wellesley did not fall under this category. They did not need these free, “charity” kindergartens. So the question may be asked, why Wellesley? Why would two female professors from Wellesley College want to begin a kindergarten in this prestigious and financially secure town?

There were four major contributors to the founding of the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten. Katharine Coman and Katherine Lee Bates were the first two people to push for a kindergarten in Wellesley. In 1913 the Kindergarten was founded on the College campus with the support of Mrs. Helen Craig, the Wellesley Village Improvement Association and Wellesley College. Each contributor had their own reasons for supporting and pushing for a kindergarten in this wealthy village where the children did not necessarily *need* it. However, as Mary Ucci – the current director at the school – stated “people saw that attention to young children and their particular needs at these stages of development had real benefits. So, the wealthy and middle class wanted it for their children.”^{iv} This was a prominent view of the townspeople and the

Wellesley Village Improvement Association. Mrs. Helen Craig and Wellesley College had separate and distinct reasons for their support. What could one high-status woman and one prestigious college gain from a free kindergarten?

The founding of the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten:

In September of 1912, following the start of the free kindergarten movement in America, Wellesley established the first kindergarten in the town. Two Wellesley College professors, Katharine Coman and Katherine Lee Bates were concerned about the welfare of the children in Wellesley. Coman “had been much impressed by the fact that many little children under school age in her neighborhood had no playground and no opportunity for play under adult supervision. Many of these children, whose mothers were too busy to look after them closely, were spending their time on the streets as best they could.”^v In turn, when Ms. Coman observed children without proper adult supervision “on the hill near her home” she “became interested in their welfare” and from this awareness stemmed her desire to provide a kindergarten where children who were too young for school would have a structured and supervised playing environment.^{vi} However, Coman and Bates encountered some difficulty when they began their search for funding.^{vii} Although this led to much discouragement, the women persevered. Shortly thereafter, they encountered Mrs. Helen Craig – a friend of Ms. Coman – who willingly agreed to help fund this kindergarten. Thus, a kindergarten at the Nenoiden Club in Wellesley was born.^{viii}

As many people began to recognize the worth of the kindergarten, the enrollment figures steadily increased. Due to this recognition not too long after the establishment of the Kindergarten the quarters became much too small. A new location was needed in order to maintain the rapidly growing kindergarten.^{ix} It was then that Professor Arthur O. Norton – the chairman of the Department of Education – saw opportunity for the connection between his department at Wellesley College and the kindergarten. With ideas from Professor Norton, with Mrs. Craig’s vision and with the push from the Wellesley Village Improvement Association came the Anne Page Memorial Kindergarten which was established in 1913. As stated in the Trustee’s records, the “building named in memory of Miss Anne L. Page, a pioneer in kindergarten work, was the gift of Mrs. Helen Craig, of Wellesley, and supported in part by the

income of a trust fund which she established in memory of Miss Anna White Devereaux, the first director of the school.”^x

A few words are needed to describe the significance of this dedication. In the 1913-1930 brochure for the Page Memorial Kindergarten, Anne L. Page was described as “one of the pioneers of the kindergarten movement in the United States.”^{xi} Her philosophies about children became some of the same philosophies which were implemented in the kindergarten, through the vision of her student, Mrs. Helen Craig. Ms. Page believed that the “most important thing is the atmosphere about the child. If spiritual things are real to the mother or teacher they will be real to the child. If not, no correct way of teaching or speaking will make them so.”^{xii} This emphasis on the child in relation to their environment was one of the key ideals of the kindergarten and has remained an integral part of the kindergarten.

Both Mrs. Craig and Miss Devereaux – who was the lecturer for the Department of Education – were students of Ms. Page. As stated in the 1913-1930 brochure, “Mrs. Craig was one of Miss Page’s pupils, and in grateful recognition of her rare qualities gave her name to this building.”^{xiii} It is relatively clear that the ideals expressed by Ms. Page were passed down to her students who then implemented those beliefs into the kindergarten. Mrs. Craig’s act of dedicating the school to her teacher demonstrates the influence that Ms. Page had on her students. There is some discrepancy as to whether Ms. Page knew that the Anne Page Memorial Kindergarten would bear her name. A local Wellesley newspaper claimed that she did^{xiv}, whereas the 1936-37 brochure about the school claimed she did not.^{xv} However, it is clear that Ms. Page knew that the kindergarten was being constructed before her death, which occurred on February 26, 1941.^{xvi}

Miss Devereaux accepted the position of the first director of the Anne Page Memorial Kindergarten, a position which she held until her death in 1919. Because she was the lecturer for the Department of Education, Miss Devereaux was able to draw bridges between the department and the Kindergarten. When the Page Kindergarten was first opened, it was under the Education Department. As determined by the Anne L. Page School annual reports, the Psychology Department gradually began to take interest in the Kindergarten and believed that they could also benefit from the kindergarten. For many years, the Page Kindergarten was used heavily by students in the Psychology Department until eventually the school fell under their direction.

Why in Wellesley?

The Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten was established with a strong sense of purpose, which came out of the desires of the Wellesley Village Improvement Association, Mrs. Helen Craig and Wellesley College. In fact, in the 1913-1930 Anne Page Memorial Kindergarten brochure the school was said to have a double purpose: “It became an experimental school for advanced methods for teaching, and, through its connection with the Department of Education, it became a training center for kindergarteners.”^{xvii} All three contributors wanted to be sure that “no young woman’s education should be without the study of child development.”^{xviii} Because the school had a conception of education which placed primary value on the child, the school was also beneficial to the parents and children in the town of Wellesley who were able to make use of such an astonishing school.

While each of the facets involved with the founding of the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten played an integral, they each had very different motivations behind their support of the school. Mary Ucci stated that her understanding “is that the Association saw their motivation as twofold, to have a fine, free kindergarten for the community and to have this opportunity for Wellesley undergraduates.”^{xix} The Wellesley Village Improvement Association, which was comprised of members from the community, most likely had a strong interest in their own children and desired to reap the benefits from the Kindergarten. However, Mrs. Helen Craig and Wellesley College both had very different reasons for their support of the Kindergarten.

When the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten was founded, it was built on the principle that it should be free to all children due to the private support of Mrs. Helen Craig. From 1912 to 1933, Mrs. Craig remained the sole benefactor for the Kindergarten. Due to the fact that Mrs. Craig only ensured her trust for five years after her death, the school began to experience financial pressures after the withdrawal of her funds in 1946.^{xx} Mrs. Craig had hoped that by the time her trust was terminated, Wellesley College would be able to support the Kindergarten.^{xxi} However, the College did not pick up the costs of the Kindergarten as one may have assumed. Because the costs of the school were increasing and the availability of funds was decreasing, the Page Kindergarten began to charge a fee in 1933. The sole contributions provided by Mrs. Helen Craig were no longer sufficient. At this time, during the Depression, the initial amount charged to parents was one hundred and twenty-five dollars.^{xxii} Although it does

not sound like a substantial amount of money, this was a lot to ask from parents sending their young children to school in 1933. Two questions stem from this information: 1) Why were parents willing to spend this kind of money to send their young children to this school? and 2) Why wasn't the College picking up more of the costs?

Although Helen Craig did not want to support the school indefinitely, she certainly had some personal motives for becoming the sole financial supporter of the Page Kindergarten for such a substantial amount of time. Could Helen Craig be a part of the "new generation of wealthy, socially conscious, socially active women who in the Gilded Age expanded their sphere of influence from the private home to the public arena by sponsoring projects related to children and education?"^{xxiii} It was probably true that Mrs. Craig had her ideas regarding education and saw her endowment as a way to express those conceptions. After all, she had been a student of Anne Page and it was clear that she looked upon her teacher with high regard. Her endowment was a way she could implement some of her ideals and aims, which was evident in some of her letters. As stated in a document from the President's Office, "in founding the school, Mrs. Craig expressed the hope that the school would serve the college by 'opening students' eyes to the fact that all life is interrelated and that adults must study the children rather than assume that they know the child."^{xxiv} In a letter from Helen Craig to the President of Wellesley College, Craig stated her vision for the kindergarten as being "an experiment station from Nursery through College."^{xxv}

It is clear that Mrs. Craig had specific ideas about the future of the Page School and even began to consider withdrawing her funds when the school did not appear to be moving in her envisioned direction.^{xxvi} In a document from the President's Office, there was discussion about the ideas of the founders and how those ideas were affecting (or not affecting) the direction of the school. It stated that "under its present direction, the school's purpose is very close to that defined by its founders. It recognizes the harm that can be done by authoritarian and regimented handling of children...it recognizes that children can only grow in freedom and responsibility by being given freedom and responsibility."^{xxvii} Even today, the principles established by Mrs. Craig and the others involved are integral parts of the school. Because she initially wished to remain anonymous, one must wonder how she thought her endowment would affect her ability to provide input regarding the school.^{xxviii} However, as *The Townsman* states, a secret such as that could not be kept long and her name quickly became revealed to the community.^{xxix}

Because they were assured to be free of any responsibilities for at least the first five, the College was probably somewhat supportive of the Kindergarten being built on their grounds years. One must wonder whether another one of their underlying reasons for establishing the kindergarten was an attempt to bring more recognition to Wellesley College. After the establishment of the kindergarten, Wellesley gained much acknowledgment from the public and “became known as a pioneer among colleges in this field. Few colleges – if any – even today, can point to a better equipment for this work.”^{xxx} The College, the students and the children all clearly benefited from the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten and as stated by *The Townsman* “the building, the equipment and the teaching staff are among the best of their kind in the country.” The College gained much prestige from the school due to its outstanding performance and accelerated knowledge about children. Did Katharine Coman, Katherine Lee Bates and later Arthur Norton know that Wellesley would gain prestige and national recognition from this school? Did Arthur Norton see the possibilities for Wellesley College and specifically his Department of Education? Is this the reason that a nursery school was also opened years later?

Twelve years after the establishment of the Page Kindergarten, at the request of Professor Arthur Norton further actions were taken and a Nursery School was opened in Wellesley in 1927. The Wellesley Nursery School was founded at the onset of the nursery school movement and was intended for children aged two to four. Like the Page Kindergarten, the Nursery School had a purpose to “give little children the best possible conditions for their growth through activities specific to their age.”^{xxxii} In 1935 serious talk began to emerge regarding the fusion of the Nursery School and the Kindergarten. In a letter to the President of Wellesley College, Arthur Norton makes the suggestion of incorporating the Nursery School with the Page School. However, the decision reached in 1935 was that the situation would not change.^{xxxiii} Four years later, the Nursery School was combined with the Kindergarten.^{xxxiii} The Wellesley Townsman stated that in 1939 “the Anne L. Page School absorbed the Wellesley Nursery School so that now it is a school for children from the ages of two to eight.”^{xxxiv}

What Was Special About the Page Kindergarten?

What made the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten different from other free kindergartens is that it was established in order to benefit the children of Wellesley and Wellesley College and its students, rather than just the children. Although the Page Kindergarten followed the kindergarten movement, in 1913 “this field was hardly considered worthy of the attention of college and university students.”^{xxxv} So while the focus on children and their needs was becoming more popular, it was not yet seen as being worthy of the attention of college students. In fact, as stated by a local newspaper, “Wellesley was among the first of American colleges – if not the first to recognize the importance as kindergarten as a subject for study by college graduates”^{xxxvi} and as previously discussed there were many reasons for Wellesley’s interest in the school.

Although many of the free kindergartens established in this movement made the transition into the public school system, the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten did not. Instead, the Nursery School became a part of the Kindergarten in 1939. In 1964 the older grades were removed from the school and it became a preschool for children ages three to five. In a letter to the parents of children at the school, the President of Wellesley College discussed the rationale for discontinuing the school for the older children. Miss Margaret Clapp discussed some of the reasons for decreased enrollment in these older grades. She stated that because they live “in a community with a good public school system, some parents wish their children to have the public school experience.” Other reasons for this decreased enrollment was that sending one’s child to private school for so many years was very costly and many parents were hesitant to have their children make the transition into the public school system at a time when other children were already well-adjusted.^{xxxvii}

If the Page Kindergarten were to make the transition into the public school system it would go against the major ideals and aims set forth by the school. The 1913-1930 brochure stated that the “school represents a type of progressive education based on the growth of the child and respect for his personality.”^{xxxviii} A statement made in the 1937 brochure gives light to what made the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten unique: “One of the highest aims of the school is to put each child in possession of his own ability and to lead him to the best expression of that ability.”^{xxxix} The uniqueness would be sacrificed in an attempt to follow current trends.

The kindergarten and the College received much acknowledgement and recognition because of the uniqueness which it possessed. What were some of the larger philosophies of the Kindergarten? What was it about the program that was beneficial to children and how was it unique from other kindergartens? What is it about the program and the curriculum that caused such widespread support? Why have the philosophies and curriculum remained virtually the same? What was it about the curriculum of the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten that inspired parents to keep their young children enrolled when tuition was administered, especially during the time of the Depression?

The Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten (Child Study Center):

What makes it unique?

“What, then, is Progressive Education? In a word, it is education which has as its aim the development of the whole personality. The child is developed as an individual who can fit into existing society. He learns because learning adds to his power of accomplishing his goal. The teachers in such a school are constantly trying to guide through an understanding of the situation and of the child. Very definite planning is underneath all their work; very definite record keeping; very definite testing; very definite leading toward the choice of worth-while occupations.”^{xl}

In 1933, the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten began to charge a fee because the costs of the school were increasing and the availability of funds was decreasing. The sole contributions provided by Mrs. Helen Craig were no longer sufficient. At this time, during the Depression, the initial amount charged to parents was one hundred and twenty-five dollars.^{xli} Although it does not sound like a substantial amount of money now, this was a lot to ask from parents sending their young children to school in 1933. A major question stems from this information: Why were parents willing to spend this kind of money to send their young children to this school? When one has the opportunity to review the ideals, aims and curriculum of the Anne L. Page Memorial School, it becomes clear that the Page School offered the Wellesley community something different than other preschools at the time and continues to do so. While the world was changing outside of the Page School, inside the small yellow building at the edge of town, the philosophies of the traditional nursery school were upheld there. Children were respected, cherished, challenged and provided with a safe atmosphere.

During the early 1900's, there were many changes taking place in the field of child development. Views regarding children were revolutionizing and people began to believe that children had different needs during their early childhood. The early childhood years were now considered to be very formative years in a child's development. The radical idea of free play was introduced into the preschool curriculum and teachers were now expected to guide, not

direct. Children were placed at the center of the curriculum and their development guided this curriculum.

Although the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten possessed characteristics which were representative of the kindergarten movement as a whole, there was something special about the school. What was it about the curriculum of the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten that inspired parents to keep their young children enrolled when tuition was administered, especially during the time of the Depression? What uniqueness did the Page School possess and maintain that separated it from the other high quality preschools? What was so different?

New Ideas About What Was Best for Children:

As ideas about children were changing, people began to think that children had different needs in their early childhood years. The idea of free play was one of the most radical and important beliefs that began to surface during the kindergarten movement. As stated in *Preschool Education in America*, “the most radically open-ended approach to kindergartening was the free play curriculum that provided for time periods during which children were allowed to participate in activities of their own choice.”^{xlii} Educators began to realize that what was best for children was not rigid structure and direction. Rather, people realized that children would benefit more if they were allowed to play freely in a safe space with adult supervision and guidance. For example, Patty Smith Hill “realized that young children should be allowed to draw freely rather than being taught to repeat successions of horizontal and diagonal lines as had been the practice until then.”^{xliii} Instead of forcing children to stay in the lines and color in a mechanical way, it was believed that children should be allowed the opportunity to pick up a marker or crayon, be given a piece of paper and allowed to simply draw. Children should have a wide array of activities from which they would be able to choose, and the idea of an open classroom emerged. The idea was that if children were able to choose the activities which were relevant to them, they would learn best. When they choose to go to different activity areas, they are choosing what is relevant to them and therefore the things they learn in the process are more likely to remain with them.^{xliv}

With the idea of free play also came a changing role for kindergarten teachers. Instead of being rigid disciplinarians, teachers became supporting adults in the preschool/kindergarten

classroom. Teachers were now expected to guide children, rather than telling them what to do. Children did a lot of their learning through example and experience. By setting appropriate examples, the teacher would be imparting more than they did previously through direction.

No longer did the teacher impose what they thought the children wanted or what they thought the children should have. Rather, the child began to be in control of their own environment and teachers were expected to support their actions. The children could move freely from activity to activity, they could paint whatever picture they wanted, they were now in a school made for them. As stated by Beatty, “Though seemingly a small shift, the introduction of child-initiated topics to teacher-controlled curricula and of imperfect reality to artificial naturalism was an enormous change that was to have a lasting effect on preschool pedagogy.”^{xlv} The school now became the child’s school and through free play children were able to initiate their own world. Instead of the children following a rigid, teacher-directed curriculum, teachers were expected to follow the child’s lead. Rather than telling the children what they should do, the “teacher’s job was to suggest activities that would ‘fit in with the dominant mode of growth in the child,’ to serve as a ‘stimulus to bring forth more adequately what the child is already blindly struggling to do.’”^{xlvi} Although children had the freedom to choose their own activities, when they began to struggle it was the teacher’s responsibility to assist them. It was not, however, the teacher’s duty to instruct the children as to what they should do or in what activity they should participate. Rather, they were expected to tune into the child and help them fulfill their desires and wishes.

The idea of forming the curriculum of the school to fit what was happening in the lives of the children developed from this concept. Children began to directly affect their own curriculum, something radically different from the teacher drawn curriculum which preceded. This idea was developed in Beatty’s book, where in she states that the “concentric program, which tied activities to daily and weekly themes such as the home, community helpers, transportation, and food production, became popular, as did other approaches such as John Dewey’s industrial curriculum, in which children made useful objects rather than symbolic designs; William Heard Kilpatrick’s project method; nature study; and literature, music, art, and seasonal programs.”^{xlvii} One example would be putting out books about having a new baby when a child in the classroom had a mother who was pregnant or recently had a baby. This lets a child know that people are paying attention to what is happening in their lives. Another example

would be providing opportunities to play with dinosaurs if the teacher knew that the children in the classroom were interested in dinosaurs. This attempt to support the child's interests in the classroom helps to assure the child that they are important and reinforces learning which is important to them.

Another major philosophy that came into play was the necessity of children being exposed to nature at a young age. G. Stanley Hall performed many experiments on children and found that "children who grew up in cities were being cheated because city life was "unnatural" and "inferior in pedagogic value to the country experience." For Hall, "the solution was to send children to the country and to kindergarten."^{xlvi} Many kindergartens began to assimilate such philosophies into their curriculum and began to emphasize nature in their curriculum, oftentimes bringing nature into the classroom.

This emphasis on nature was and still is evident at the Page Kindergarten. When one looks at their brochures and looks in the classroom, nature abounds. The 1913-1930 brochure for the school discusses the different aspects of curriculum with a large focus on nature. Three aspects are emphasized: 1) "Gardening: Children participate in planting seeds and they can see and oftentimes manipulate the results," 2) Birds: "Many birds are present at the site and the children learn about them," and 3) Walks: "Taken frequently to enjoy nature."^{xlix} Even now, children go outside in all of the elements, with the exception of rain. They take walks, collect pinecones and play in the snow. Nature is also present in the classroom, as every classroom has a nature table where the children can observe, handle and explore nature.

Incorporating Ideas from the Movement, yet Following a Different Path:

The current director of the Child Study Center (formerly the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten), Mary Ucci, has four ideas about what a good preschool is. She believes that 1) it must be a safe nurturing environment, 2) it must nurture social, emotional, physical and cognitive development in all four areas, 3) the school must articulate their philosophy and 4) the school must be developmentally appropriate. When the materials and activities at the school are developmentally appropriate, children feel safe, according to Ms. Ucci.¹ She described instances when the materials set out in the classroom may have been a little too difficult for the children and stated that in those types of instances, the children are less grounded in the classroom and

tend to be a little more uneasy. The children need to be challenged enough, yet not be over stimulated. It is only when the staff is well educated in child development that this balance can be struck. She also believes that a good preschool must be responsive to the community and have activities that are developmentally appropriate for parents.^{li} As Abigail Eliot realized in the 1920's, parental involvement is necessary in order for the mission of the school to be obtained. Part of understanding the entire child comes from what happens at home, where the child spends more time than at any other place. Therefore, establishing a good relationship between the parent and teachers is beneficial in establishing the best environment for each individual child and in providing the concentric atmosphere which was discussed earlier.^{lii}

Ms. Ucci describes the Child Study Center as a modified open classroom in which the children have the opportunity to choose the areas where they would like to play, incorporating the new ideas about free play.^{liii} New ideas have demonstrated that it is extremely important for children to have some freedom in the activities which they choose. As stated in the 1936-37 brochure for the Page School, "Freedom to move about and act develops also an understanding of the social qualities such as co-operation and consideration. Discipline then becomes self-discipline as the child learns to control himself both in accordance with the standards of the group and with the ideals of right conduct which he is daily experiencing. This all leads to a knowledge of the way of behaving not simply in a school room or in a home but in life itself." If children are not given any freedom, they do not know what to do with it once they acquire it. Children are informed about what is appropriate and what is not appropriate, and they begin to learn how to regulate behavior on their own. Also, when children acquire this understanding through actions of their own, it becomes something which is engrained in them. They will then have the ability to apply it to other aspects of their lives.

Ms. Ucci emphasizes that it is important for teachers to understand that children come with different levels of expertise and to incorporate a curriculum which addresses those differences. This is the reason that the Child Study Center (and the Page School) have (and did have) a wide variety of activities which can all be used on many different levels. Some of the fundamental materials, such as blocks, play dough, water and sand can be used on many different levels. Therefore, each child can manipulate the material at an appropriate level for them.^{liv}

Although some people believe that the Child Study Center is not structured, Ms. Ucci believes that the structure at the school is different from what people might expect. Therefore,

they see it as being unstructured. The different areas in the classroom are a way for the children to structure their world. The children know that there are certain areas for building with blocks, certain areas for painting and certain areas for looking at books. The routine at the school also provides structure for the children. They know that after they have snack it will be time for them to play outside. However, only half of the job is complete – according to Mary Ucci – when the different areas of the room are set up. The other half is catering the curriculum to each individual child. This idea is, once again, an example of concentric education and requires the active participation of parents. Ms. Ucci believes that many schools do not look at each individual child and base the curriculum around them, rather many other schools only put out generic items for a child of a certain age. This method provides a part of what children need and does not demonstrate that the teacher is in tune with each child’s interests and what is happening in their lives.^{lv}

The Child Study Center places an emphasis on providing an atmosphere which truly supports each child in both direct and indirect ways, something which not many schools are able to accomplish. In an article regarding the fiftieth anniversary of the Page School, *The Townsman* reported that President Margaret Clapp “stated that the record of the past fifty years shows that the welfare and growth of the individual child is what matters most at Page and that the faculty use wisely the latest developments in the education of young children.”^{lvi} Many ideals and aims were vital to the function of the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten. They continue to be necessary aspects of the Child Study Center. It is interesting to hear how the perspectives from years ago compare to the perspectives that people have today about the Child Study Center and not surprisingly, things have not changed much. According to the 1913-1930 brochure, the Page School “represents a type of progressive education based on the growth of the child and respect for his personality.”^{lvii} The Page school was, and continues to be, both child-centered and developmentally appropriate, something which distinguishes the school from many others.

The Page School was, and is, truly a school where children could be themselves, a school made for the generic preschool aged child as well as for each individual child. A comment made in a newspaper article by the director of the Page School at that time clearly demonstrates this idea, “No one frowns if water is spilled on the floor,” but continues by saying that “anyone spilling generally helps to clean it up.”^{lviii} This is a general philosophy of the school, of which even a casual observer would probably be aware. Teachers at the school are fully aware that

children are going to be children and that they are going to make mistakes. Punishing and reprimanding them because they spill water or sand on the floor is not a philosophy which the school embraces. Rather, when children do spill something, or throw something, or drop something, they are expected to help clean it up.

The role that the teacher plays at the Child Study Center reemphasizes how children are viewed at the school. The 1913-1930 Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten brochure brings to light the role of a teacher at the Page School, which is supported by new ideas which were surfacing at the time of the kindergarten movement. They insisted that “children are given the opportunity to think and plan” and that the “adult guides but does not interfere.”^{lix} Adults were expected to respect children and give them the “freedom which enables the individual to obey willingly universal laws.”^{lx} Children are the center of the school, after all, it is *their* school. This idea is made clear in the 1913-1930 brochure, which states that the “equipment and curriculum are centered around the child’s needs.”^{lxi} The tables and chairs are just the right size for a preschool child and everything is within their reach.

This emphasis on the child and the expectation that the school is going to respect them, cater to their needs and really make the school theirs has not changed. When one observes the way in which the Child Study Center functions now, there is an immense amount of respect given to the child and they are still the center of their school. The Child Study Center is not a school which sets out to fulfill the needs of parents, but is rather a school which insists on satisfying the cognitive, social, physical and emotional needs of the child. The benefit of this approach is that the needs of both the parents and the child are fulfilled when the needs of the child are placed first. One can see how the fundamental philosophy of the school has not changed much when one looks at comments made by people many years ago and contrasts those comments with the ideas held by the people most deeply involved with the school in the present.

The current director, Mary Ucci, presents some ideas about the Child Study Center. On the outside, some of the major differences between the Page School and other high-quality preschools are that the Page School is a laboratory preschool and it is a part of Wellesley College, according to Ms. Ucci. Because of the resources, both financial and intellectual, that are available on this campus, the Page School has had an advantage. The current director states that because the school is both a center for research and a training institution they are part of a bigger purpose and a wider mission. Besides solely providing excellent care for young children,

the Page School is connected to the outside world.^{lxii} They also have a mission to “further our knowledge about children” and to “take what we have learned out (side)” of Wellesley.^{lxiii}

However, philosophically the Page School has always been different from other schools. Mary Ucci sees three ways in which the Child Study Center is different from other schools (including laboratory schools). The first difference is the way in which they teach children to share. She explained that sometimes people who observe the classrooms feel as though the Child Study Center does not teach children how to share. However, she went on to explain that in order for children to learn how to share, they have to feel like they own something first. This philosophy about sharing is a fundamental principle at the school. It is only after they feel like they possess something that they can learn to share that something with others. They have to learn that they can play somewhere and nobody is going to take that away from them until they are ready. Once this sense of ownership is instilled in a child, they are more apt to be willing to give to others. It is also through this process that children begin to acknowledge other children and begin to offer others a turn.^{lxiv} Eventually, children begin to express their desire to play at a particular place. When another child who is already there is finished, they will let the waiting child know that they are finished. It is through sharing that many important social skills develop and carry on into middle and late childhood and even into adulthood.

The second way in which Ms. Ucci sees the Child Study Center as being different from other high-quality lab schools is that they tend to have less material out at one time. One of the criticisms from people who observe the school is that the classrooms are very sparse. However, Mary Ucci believes that they have enough for children, yet not too much.^{lxv} This is, once again, one of the ideas which emerged from the kindergarten movement. People began to think that “Simplicity was best for children.”^{lxvi} It was no longer about *how* many materials children had. Rather, the emphasis switched to *what* materials the children had. Knowing what is enough, but not too much, material is difficult without education about child development.

Another way in which the center is fundamentally different from other schools is that the teachers are paid for a full day when they only teach half day. This provides them with opportunities to plan, evaluate, and reflect on themselves as teachers. They have the ability to pull all of the different aspects together and relate the experiences they have in the classroom to specific theories. They also have the ability to get to know each other as people. All of these aspects help them to strengthen the program.^{lxvii}

Although the Anne L. Page Memorial Kindergarten incorporated the ideas and curriculum of the kindergarten movement as a whole and demonstrated all of the aspects of a good preschool (as defined by Mary Ucci), there was something about the Page School that was different from other high-quality preschools. For many people, it is hard to put into words. When people have the opportunity to observe the classrooms, there is often a feeling that overcomes them and these feelings can be hard to describe. Sometimes the only thing that can be said is that there is something different, something special about, what is now called, the Child Study Center. Incredibly, unlike many other schools, the philosophy of the Page School has withstood many changes – both inside and out. Fundamentally, the Page School has been a school which has been “committed to fostering each individual child’s cognitive, social, physical and emotional development within the context of the group and to providing a laboratory preschool for the Psychology Department of Wellesley College.”^{lxviii} Children still need the safe and developmentally appropriate environment that they needed ninety years ago and school staff has consistently refused to give up those ideals.

The Changing World Outside:

Within the yellow building, the Page School had to go through many administrative changes and has had to endure much criticism. Thankfully, the philosophy of the school has not reflected those changes. Outside that building, and outside the community of Wellesley, the world has changed a lot since 1913. Martha McGandy has been intimately involved with the school since the 1970’s, although she was also somewhat involved when she was attending Wheelock College in the early 1950’s. Ms. McGandy feels that not a whole lot has changed at the Page School since her involvement. However, she does admit that both the vocabulary which the children use and the way in which families have been changing are two areas in which she has seen a change. However, developmentally she believes that children are doing the same things.^{lxix} And because the Page School supports and reflects appropriate development for children, their fundamental philosophy has not changed.

A major change in the country, which profoundly affected the Page School, was the feminist movement. At a time when women wanted to express themselves and receive equal opportunity, some began thinking that it was not good enough to teach children or to stay at

home and raise children. Because of this philosophy the demographics in the United States began to change. Fewer women were staying at home with their children and more were entering the workforce. Because there were fewer women staying in the home, children needed a place to be while both of their parents were at work. It was at this time that daycares began to surface across the country.

This movement seriously impinged on the school because they were put under great pressure to become a daycare center to satisfy the needs of working parents. At this time, many of the preschools, and even laboratory preschools, were making the change to daycare centers. Because those involved with the Page School believed that the school would be forced to give up some of their fundamental philosophies if they were to make the change to a daycare center, they put up a fight. The director of the school at the time, Marion Blum, firmly resisted that change and was able to keep the school as a preschool, and thus maintaining the philosophies that had been so important for so long.^{lxx} What would have been different if the Page School would have adapted to the changing world and would have become an all-day institution? Clearly, some of the fundamental philosophies of the school – such as teachers getting paid for a full day, when they only worked half – would no longer exist. Another question may be raised: Would children and parents have received the same things from a daycare as they had from the preschool? Another way of phrasing that question is: Do children coming from a daycare setting leave daycare with the same acquired skills and attitudes as those leaving from the Child Study Center?

When one compares a daycare center with a preschool, specifically the Child Study Center, there is little doubt that there are immense differences between the two. There are major sacrifices that a school must make in order to accommodate all day care. In order to occupy children for a full day, there are more activities which need to be implemented. This also means that the setting must be different and more time to plan is necessary. However, this idea is ironic because in a full day program there is actually less time for the teachers to plan and to discuss what is happening in their rooms. Besides the structural and time discrepancies, some of what happens in the classroom is different.

One of the major dissimilarities between a preschool (namely the Child Study Center) and a daycare is the way in which the teachers interact with the children. As discussed previously, the role of a teacher at the Child Study Center is to support children and set up an

environment which nurtures development. However, the teachers at the Child Study Center are not taking the role of a primary caregiver. Rather, they are taking the role of a child's first teacher before they enter into the school system. In the daycare setting the teachers oftentimes play a different role. Because the children are in their care for the majority of the day, those teachers are accepting the role and responsibilities of the primary caregiver. Given the fact that children are immersed in different atmospheres, where the teachers play dissimilar roles in the classroom, it would be expected that the children would emerge from these two settings differently. Each setting offers children something unique and neither one is necessarily better or worse, just different.

However, there are some people who question the fact that the Page School did not become a daycare. Did the Page School have a responsibility to account for the continually changing demographics? Would this have compromised their philosophy? For families where both parents work full time, some may have the option to choose whether or not they would rather send their child to all day institutional care or send them part of the day to preschool and have a babysitter or a nanny for the remaining portion of the day. Other families may not have the resources to make such a decision, either financially or educationally. Does this mean that those who have more resources have an advantage?

What People Don't Understand About Children?

Two of the major reoccurring philosophies emphasized by those affiliated with the Child Study Center were that it was 1) child-centered and 2) developmentally appropriate. Although we now know a lot about children and what is developmentally appropriate, it is not evident in the kinds of schools present in the United States. Although at the preschool age, social development should be the focus of a school, the majority of schools focus on mechanical learning. As evident in government run programs, such as Head Start, the effectiveness of the preschool is demonstrated by children's increased knowledge of numbers, letters, etc. The rest of the country seems to be going in a direction similar to that of Head Start and juxtaposed to the philosophies of the Child Study Center. It is also very evident that many parents are not aware of what is developmentally appropriate for children. Part of the philosophy of the Child Study Center is to educate parents. Summarizing an idea stated by Marian Blum, the Child Study

Center has not been able to sell the ideas about what is developmentally appropriate for children in a preschool setting to the greater population.^{lxxi} Because the public is more accepting of mechanical learning, there is less possibility of public and government support for a school like the Child Study Center.

Can A Similar Sort of School Be Replicated in Other Less Elite Settings?

Not everybody is optimistic that a preschool such as the Child Study Center can be replicated in less elite settings. Although it does not necessarily take a lot of financial resources to implement a similar program because of the materials, it is necessary for teachers to be fully educated about child development and to be willing to spend the kind of additional time in meetings and other activities that the teachers at the Page School do.

Besides the monetary concerns, one must wonder if the public would be supportive of a program which does not emphasize mechanical learning as is prevalent in other preschools. Because the idea that one can test the effectiveness of a school based on academic performance has become so engrained in the mentality of society, it is oftentimes difficult for people to adopt a different viewpoint. However, those who are well educated in child development know that children do not need to memorize flashcards at the age of four. Also, preschools who are aware of the developmental needs of children teach learning in a different way. There are many opportunities laid out for children in which they can begin to learn letters – such as labeling different areas of the classroom and listening to stories.

My hope is that one day the general public will be educated about the developmental needs of children and would fully support a program similar to that at the Child Study Center. When there are enough teachers who are well educated in child development and enough public support, dialogue can then begin regarding implementation of a program such as that at the Child Study Center in less elite settings. From my viewpoint, children in less elite settings oftentimes depend on early preparation in order to succeed in the public school system

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^{lxvi} Beatty 89.

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^{lxix} Interview with Martha McGandy on December 5, 2003.

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^{lxxi} Phone interview with Marion Blum on November 30, 2003.