

Kindergarten: Where 5 Year Olds Gather

Story & Photos by Sylvia Holmes

If the success of North School's first kindergarten class can be measured by the absentee list, then it can be firmly stated that the five year olds have adapted well to the classroom for it is rare for anyone to miss school.

This is the first academic year that public kindergarten has been available in North Carolina and even so, not all children are able to participate due to lack of space and funds but eventually the program will be statewide for all five year olds.

It's a long, exciting and stimulating day for Chris and Karen and Brian. Early morning activities include crayoning, counting and writing their names for all of them including Tammy and Scott and Melissa.

Play period in the classroom includes many exciting things to do. Games to play, dressing up, challenging equipment or just listening to the class assistant, Mrs. Dot Dixon read to them. All this is great fun for Jessie and Teresa and David.

Mrs. Willie Marable, kindergarten teacher, might lead the class in singing or in the recitation of some of the many poems they have learned. Everyone joins in enthusiastically singing loud like Wendy, Nathaniel and Kelli.

Lunchtime approaches, toys and games are put away and a long line forms for washing up headed by Frankie, Donald and Jeffrey. Adjacent rest rooms are convenient for this class of youngsters. Soon the lunch line forms at the classroom door and heads are bowed for the blessing. Everyone joins in the recitation with hands together and eyes closed including Donnie, Angela and Stacey.

The line proceeds down the corridor to the lunchroom and

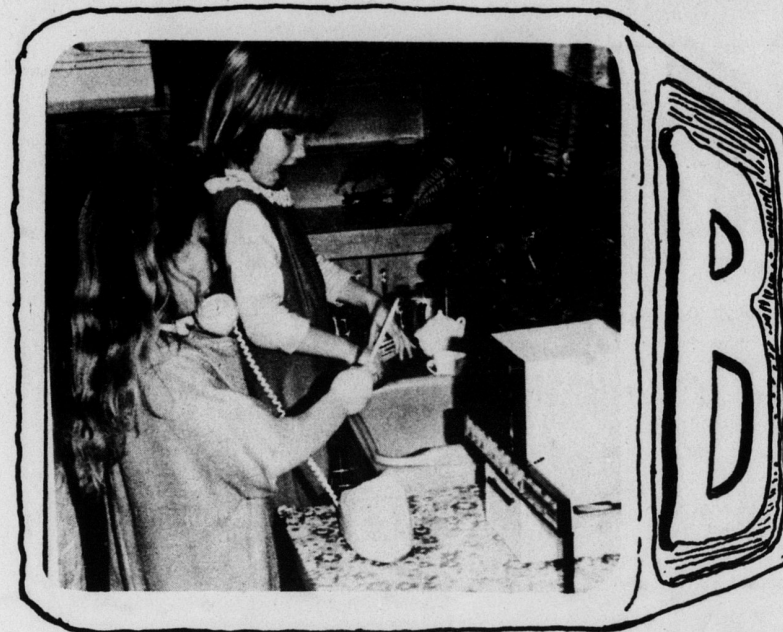
soon Millicent and Tony and Susan are carrying trays of lasagna, tossed salad, roll, milk and orange halves to their places at the lunch tables. A few bring lunches in boxes from home.

Because these youngsters stay a full day in the classroom rest period after lunch is one of the most important parts of the day. Resting mats and towels are spread around the room, blinds are closed and soon many small bodies are relaxing comfortably. Some of them fall asleep while others such as Ashley and Joel and Angela just rest for an hour.

Then it's outdoors with Mrs. Marable and Mrs. Dixon for half an hour of play if the weather is suitable. Milk break is next on the schedule followed by films, stories and other creative activities until it is time for Tony and Penny to put on their coats and get ready to go home.

Other public kindergarten classes are in Grover School and at the Early Childhood Education Center which has two. About 60 percent of the area five year olds are thus served while others attend private kindergartens at five different churches in the Kings Mountain School District.

North School principal, Richard Greene, is highly in favor of the new kindergarten class and despite the long school day, the youngsters have responded well to the classroom situation. As he enters their room, the children flock around to tell him about their activities or maybe show him where they lost a baby tooth. The room is bright and gay with pictures and drawings on the walls. Play equipment is evident everywhere and it's obvious that any child will feel very happy and at home there.



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