

## Nursery Stimulates Toddlers

By Helene Nathanson

Temple Israel Nursery School offers pre-schoolers many stimulating and innovative programs. Particularly exciting this year is the music program led by Marlene Fuerstman, who believes that children should be offered a rich variety of musical experiences.

Marlene holds a Bachelors degree in Creative Arts, with an emphasis on Music, from UNCC and is currently working on her Masters of Music at Winthrop College. "My goal for three and four year olds is that they have fun," she declared. "If they are enjoying themselves, they will inevitably learn something along the way." She believes that it is her job "to open the door to each child's individual creativity." She accomplishes this through a variety of techniques, giving children the freedom to express themselves through an instrument, movement, or singing.

The three year olds, in addition to learning simple rhythms, are encouraged to participate in music encounters. They sing their names, trying to match Marlene's tones. They sing about what kind of day it is, and they welcome each other — musically, of course!

"Children naturally can sing," says Marlene. "They are born with that ability. I have never met a tone-deaf child."

In teaching the children rhythm, Marlene starts with a basic steady beat similar to a heartbeat, "a rhythm that is inborn in all of us." The children learn nursery rhymes and keep time by slapping their thighs. They progress to clapping hands and then walk to a steady beat. She uses marching songs to coordinate walking with a beat rhythm. In December, the children were all brave Maccabees, marching around the room, prepared to fight the Syrian army.

After they have enjoyed marching, the children are introduced to instruments: Glockenspiel, hand drum, jingle bells, tambourine, cymbals, wood sticks and wood blocks. Instruments are arranged in a circle on the floor and the children play on each one in turn, going around the circle.

Marlene also feels that creative movement should play a large part in any music education program. The children respond to variations of the same song, like "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," by becoming angry lions or soft raindrops. "By the end of the first few months," states Marlene, "even the three-year-olds know the difference between high and low sounds. They jump like frogs and imitate low sounds; they fly like birds and imitate high sounds."

The four year olds are working on note values. They are

given cards with a series of quarter notes, eighth notes and half notes. Many of the children can clap out the correct rhythm of the cards given to them.

The parents of the pre-schoolers who attend Temple Israel Nursery School are delighted with its music program and its teacher. Although Marlene does not meet with the two year olds, they are offered a warm and stimulating program, emphasizing supervised free play in addition to an introduction to painting, building, singing and other creative forms of expression.

The parents have formed a Parents' Committee, which, in addition to providing general input on school policy, is helping to raise funds. According to Lila Josephson, director of the nursery school, the money will be used for more musical instruments, improved outdoor equipment and supplies. Wendy Rosen is chairwoman of the Parents' Committee and welcomes any and all suggestions for fund-raising ideas. Anyone with ideas or interested in helping in the effort should call her at 847-3841.

There is general agreement among the parents that Temple Israel Nursery School provides just the right combination of warmth, creativity and stimulation, in a Jewish environment, that makes for a well-rounded school experience.



These two-year-olds are making a winter tree to decorate their classroom door. (L. to R.) Jennifer Silberman, Lila Josephson with Stuart Shapiro and Julie Malickson.



Marlene Fuerstman teaches the children to distinguish between high and low notes by using their hands. Mitchell Frohman looks on.

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