

New day care to serve SIAST needs ^[1]

lack of childcare seen as educational barrier to some

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EXCERPTS

On Aug. 16, a brand-new day care will officially open its doors, ending the 11 years SIAST Kelsey campus students have waited to have a day care of their own.

Prior to the construction of the day care, Kelsey hadn't had a day care since the Idylwyld Child Care Centre closed in 1999.

The day care is part of a provincial and federal funded \$20-million project to renovate and retrofit Mount Royal Collegiate. In addition to the day care, the Saskatoon Skills and Trade Centre (STSC) will relocate into the school and five SIAST programs will be held at Mount Royal.

The south end of Mount Royal Collegiate will continue to be dedicated to the school's students, with the north end of the school being dedicated for post-secondary use.

The new day care will provide 62 spaces for SIAST students, STSC students, SIAST staff and faculty and other community members.

SIAST has also contributed \$198,000 to help the day care serve a secondary purpose as a demonstration centre for the early childhood education program.

The demonstration centre will have larger-than-standard child-care rooms to accommodate the extra bodies, as well as observation stations.

Kelsey has made it a priority to have children from six weeks to five years of age at the day care to give SIAST students the opportunity to observe children of all ages.

"When we made the decisions around the centre, we kept in mind what opportunities students needed to develop their skills so they have the opportunity to experience and work with children in all age groups," said Nancy Dill, SIAST Kelsey campus project manager of early childhood education.

With 5,521 students at Kelsey -- including 2,061 females -- Dill believes the new day care is long overdue.

"We are certainly seeing a lack of child care as a barrier in post-secondary programs," she said.

Dill, who was previously involved with programming for the school's community services division, has seen many women struggle with the competing demands of child care and post-secondary education.

"Every year we have students that have the ability and potential

but because of lack of child-care arrangements, they have to withdraw due to stress or simply because they have nobody to take care of the children," she said.

She thinks it's time for post-secondary institutions to recognize the changing role of women.

"It's a huge issue. We have not yet acknowledged the changing role of women and we haven't found a way to help families to look after both their family and education obligations."

She said the lack of day care is increasingly affecting both male and female students, with the current trend of mature students returning for post-secondary education.

"I've been working at SIAST for 30 years and we have a different student demographic than when I first started. At the beginning, most of the students were direct entry from high school. Now we have a higher percentage of older students with family obligations," she said.

She sees day care as a barrier for student success, with a recent SIAST study revealing this is particularly true for First Nations and Metis students.

With SIAST recruiting more First Nations and Metis students than any other post-secondary institution in Saskatoon, she believes it's important this barrier be removed.

She said it's time post-secondary organizations better recognize and support the needs of students.

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