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PRELIMINARY REPORT

DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF A DAY CARE CENTER FOR CHILDREN  
OF MIGRANT PARENTS IN HOLCOMB, KANSAS

JUNE 11 TO JULY 11, 1962

SCHOOL OF HOME ECONOMICS  
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY, MANHATTAN

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The Day Care Center, held at the Holcomb Community School, sponsored by the Kansas State Board of Health, Protestant Churches of Garden City and Holcomb in cooperation with the National Council of Churches, and the School of Home Economics of the Kansas State University at Manhattan, can be considered a successful venture. A challenge full of unknowns, the Center proved to be of value to the children, parents and community, as well as a means of learning for everyone concerned.

#### ENROLLMENT

Forty children aged two through six from 21 families were enrolled. The average daily attendance was 24. Attendance was quite regular with the exception of three children who moved away at the end of the third week, five children who came for four days, and three who came for one day only.

#### DAILY PROGRAM

The daily schedule of activities for the children was planned by the teacher in charge, Marilyn Hansen, a graduate student working for her M. S. degree in the Department of Family and Child Development at Kansas State University. Assisting her were a junior with a joint major in child development and elementary education, and a graduate who had just completed her B. S. degree.

Two school buses brought the children into Holcomb at 8:30. The morning began with free play in the kindergarten room. Available to the children were blocks, a family living center with dolls, paints, wooden puzzles, books, a record player (used under supervision), rhythm instruments, water play, trucks, a gliding swing which held six children, and other materials.

A mid-morning snack of juice and crackers was served at 9:30 in another room, after which there was a period of outdoor play on the well-equipped school playground. Adapted to the use of both small and large children, the equipment included slides, swings, merry-go-rounds, sand, wagons, tricycles, balls, inner-tubes, tires, climbing bars, wooden blocks and trains and easels. Before lunch, served at 11:30, the children came indoors for a group time. During this time there were stories, games, music, and conversation. The children sang, listened, examined pictures, and at times acted out what they were hearing and seeing.

The morning program was planned according to the attention span and energy level of the children. Even though there was no specific rest time, the change from quiet activities to more strenuous ones and back again, gave variety to sustain interest and utilized energy in the best way.

Lunch was served in the snack room, so that tables and chairs of the proper size could be used. This also freed the school cafeteria to be used for serving the Bible School children and their teachers who came for lunch at 12:00. Immediately after lunch, the day care children settled down on cots in two rooms farther down the hall to sleep or rest quietly. About 12 of the older children in this group took showers and had their clothing washed and dried. About 2:00 another snack of milk and cookies was served. Those who were still sleeping were not disturbed but were allowed to get up when they wished.

After rest, children were ready to go outdoors where they stayed until about 3:30. Then, during a period of self-selected activities inside the kindergarten room, children found a variety of art materials. They could use potter's clay, flour clay, finger paint, paste, paper and scissors, crayons, easel paints, chalk, or, if they preferred, they could repeat the activities of the morning using other equipment in the room. Just before the children went home there was another group time with more music, stories and conversation.

Even though there was a rather regular schedule it was flexible enough to meet the needs of each child and of the group and an atmosphere of freedom prevailed. From day to day, adjustments in the schedule were made so that children were disturbed as little as possible by the arrival of visitors and photographers, by examinations and health procedures carried on by the State Board of Health, and by changes necessitated by weather conditions. On rainy days the children, after leaving their shoes at the door, were free to play in the large gymnasium. Here they ran, bounced big balls, tumbled on mats, and danced freely to music. All the activities of the day were entered into with great enthusiasm except nap time. The prevailing attitudes during nap varied from genuine acceptance to reluctant toleration.

#### HEALTH AND NUTRITION

The State and County Boards of Health contributed greatly to the welfare of the children through physical examinations, tuberculosis skin tests, dental examinations, hemoglobin tests and inoculations. As revealed by the examinations only one referral to a physician was necessary.

Two nutritionists, Dr. Beth Alsup and an assistant, from Kansas State University spent ten days in Holcomb studying the nutrition of the children. General observations on the acceptance of lunches and snacks by the

2- to 6-year old children were made. Individual food intakes at the noon meal of each of the 7- to 12-year-old youngsters were determined by estimating the amounts of the various foods served and subtracting the plate waste. In addition, about 10 of the older children were asked each day to recall and write down the food they had eaten at home for breakfast and the evening meal. Another phase of the study included interviews with the mothers in their homes.

It was apparent from the interviews that the mothers understood very little about good nutrition. They were more concerned with the price of a food than with its nutritive value. In general, the variety of foods which they served was very limited.

The food recalls obtained from the older children indicated that the diets of many of them consisted mainly of beans, eggs, potatoes and tortillas. The diets were low in milk, fruits, vegetables and meat. A number of the children came to school in the morning without breakfast.

Meals served to the children at the school were well-balanced and contributed a great deal toward the daily requirements for the various nutrients. Each day's meals included milk, a meat or meat substitute, a cooked vegetable, a raw fruit or vegetable, bread, butter and a dessert. In general, most of the foods served at lunch were eaten well by the children in both groups. The exception was cooked vegetables such as lima beans, broccoli and beets. On the first day, Francisco, four, after having enjoyed morning snack, lunch with second servings, and afternoon snack, sat at a small table just before the bus was due and said with anticipation, "I think we're going to eat now!" On the fourth day the lunch menu was tamale pie, wax beans, carrot strips, celery sticks, toast strips and lemon pudding--seven-year-old Tony, after three servings of most of the food, remarked, "Who's the cook? Sure tastes good."

## FAMILIES

Mrs. Leone Kell, professor in the Department of Family and Child Development, gathered research data on background information about these Mexican-American families, their attitudes, their years of schooling and their homes, as well as keeping diary records of each day and observations on each child in the day care unit. Mothers were interviewed in their homes, also the oldest child in each family represented in the Bible School group, aged from 11 to 13. Much of this material has yet to be summarized. Background information was obtained on 17 families. Of these, eight homes were visited with the mother interviewed; two parents, a mother and a father were interviewed at a night meeting; and seven families were interviewed through the oldest child. Records in the principal's office from the school census also were used, but were limited because the school census had been taken in January.

Families lived in houses built about 1905, usually with three rooms, scattered among the sugar-beet fields at intervals of one to three miles. In all families the father was working; in seven the mother worked also in the fields. In eleven cases older children were working. Six families were spending their first summer in Holcomb, four their second summer, two their fourth summer and three had come from six to 13 summers. Six of the families came from near Lubbock, Texas; three from Menard near San Angelo; three from Stamford near Abilene; others from varying places in Texas. The parents in only one family had been born in Mexico; the others were born in Texas. During the winter in Texas the mothers did not work outside the home; the fathers picked cotton or did other farm labor. Several families were to stay in Holcomb until August to work in the potato fields; most of the others were returning to their homes in July. The average number of children in the 17 families was 6.2, the range 2 to 14.

## SCHOOLING

Of the 105 children, 31 were not of school age and for 17 no records were available. As reported by mothers and by oldest children, the remaining 56 had some schooling, the average years per child being 3.8 (one attended one month). A number of children had been retained in various grades; it was not possible to get accurate data on this point but the average of 3.8 years is high. No data were available for nine mothers and seven fathers, but the remaining eight mothers averaged 4.2 years of schooling. The ten fathers had attended an average of 4.1 years.

## ATTITUDES; BEHAVIOR

All parents questioned stated that they were pleased with the "school" except one mother who said it was hard work to get six children ready each morning. One mother said, "I would like to see all eight of them dressed at the same time." In general the parents liked Kansas and enjoyed Garden City. One said, "I like to buy groceries at \_\_\_\_\_ (a chain store) because it is big and so pretty." Nearly all stated they wanted their children to "finish school"; this usually meant eighth grade but sometimes high school and even college.

Enjoyment of children by parents was evidenced at the Friday night recreation meetings; children in school were affectionate to their brothers and sisters, to other children, and to the teachers. Quarrelling was almost non-existent; the abundance of play materials may have had its influence, but this group of children seemed more responsive to each other than the usual nursery school group. Family solidarity, loyalty, and affection were marked; these families were both sensitive and proud.

## THE MANY HELPERS

The staff of the Day Care Center was appreciative of the building and facilities of the Holcomb Community School. The Garden City Telegram furnished excellent publicity, and the volunteer workers made a good contribution to the day care program. Without the services of the volunteers a program of this type could not have functioned. Twenty-two helpers assisted with the program. At lunch time (11-12:30) special workers were available. Twelve girls from the Holcomb and Garden City area helped with lunch.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Suggestions for the future include the following: Children who have completed first grade would profit more by being in the Bible School with its classes in reading and arithmetic, rather than in the day care center. Holcomb School records in the principal's office showed that three of those in the day care program had completed the first grade and three had attended kindergarten.

It might be possible to use a television program to acquaint parents with the programs of the Bible School and Day Care Center. Of the eight homes visited by Mrs. Kell and Dr. Alsup, six had television and five families were watching at the time of the visit (2-3 p.m.). This fact is suggestive of the future use of television as a method of reaching parents. Short and attractive presentation of lessons in nutrition and health, consumer buying, and the needs of children could be made both in Spanish and English and repeated at various times of day.

Morning snack for the older children would be more valuable if it were served earlier and if fewer sweet cookies were used. A late sweet snack is likely to dull appetite for the noon meal. Milk would be preferable to the sweet drink served, especially since some of the children came without breakfast.



A broad approach on many fronts is needed for the solution of obvious problems such as overcrowding in homes, lack of some modern facilities in homes, difficulty of keeping houses clean, and lack of knowledge of health needs.

It is evident that the Home Economics program and the families involved in such day care centers as this one can be mutually helpful. For our undergraduate and graduate students interested in the area of human development the centers could provide a means of in-service training. Students could help teach in such areas as child care, simple sewing, nutrition, preparation of foods, home sanitation, buying, and home improvement as well as work in the day care program.

Interest in the problems of migrant families is increasing at Federal, state, and local levels. It is hoped that information gained in this project may be helpful in planning similar programs to meet the needs of families and children in many places.

---Staff Members  
KSU School of Home Economics