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THE PRINCIPAL of the Dunedin Kindergarten Teachers' Training College, Miss E. S. Hamilton, shows prospective kindergarten teachers (from left), Helen McDonnell, Angela Saunders (Columba College) and Margaret Boyle (St Philomenas) a selection of work made by students during their two-year course.

KINDERGARTEN TRAINING METHODS EXPLAINED

Earlier this week, a large number of girls visited a stately house in Dunedin, set back among trees and well-kept lawns. These girls, all secondary school pupils, were looking over the Dunedin Kindergarten Teachers' Training College, with a view to taking up kindergarten teaching as a career.

In the foyer, they were met by the principal of the Kindergarten College, Miss E. S. Hamilton, who took them up the stairs to a large display room to hear a talk on kindergarten teaching, and to see displays of work done by students during their two-year training course.

"To be successful as a kindergarten teacher, you need to like people, be really fond of young children and have a keen desire to assist with their development," the first display said in bold lettering.

"You need to understand the way children grow and that growth is influenced by life's experience, especially in the early years.

"You need to have wide cultural interests — the capacity to appreciate art, music, literature and handwork, and to be able to help children from the wealth of your experience," the display stated.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

The girls thoughtfully read over these words, and moved on to the next display, of art and craft work, a section of the training programme, carried out by the students under the direction of one of the staff of the Otago Polytechnic. Large papier mache spiders with dangling legs, a fat owl, and a brightly painted dog, were only a few of the objects on view.

"To awaken an interest in music and to provide the children with an opportunity to respond to rhythmic sounds, the students make drums, tambourines, clackers and bells from a variety of materials." Miss Hamilton said as she conducted the group to the next exhibit.

To help the children learn more of the people in other countries, toy dolls, dressed in national costumes, are made as part of the students' curriculum. In this display were two dolls of special interest—an Eskimo woman with finely embroidered features, and a Russian complete with fur hat and little leather boots.

"Children learn by touching, and another part of the training programme is to compile a collection of materials, so that when the child touches an object he learns about that object," Miss Hamilton said.

Kindergarten students have lessons in science which they must simplify down to answer questions that the small children ask. Some of these questions include, "Where does a rainbow come from? Or How do we get electricity?"

FINGER PAINTING

Finger painting is one of the best-loved activities in a kindergarten, she said.

"The paint is thickened so that the child has more control over his work and it does not run down the painting either," the girls were told as they inspected a painting by a four-year-old.

Miss Hamilton explained

the reason behind the next exhibit, which was an elaborate display on the culture and life of the Maori people. When a student takes up a project such as this, she integrates all fields of her work programme, and sets up a display of books, pictures and musical instruments, to stimulate an interest of learning more in the child.

"Stories are told not only by reading to the children, but through puppet shows and flannel graphs. When two or more teachers put on a puppet show they are helping to stimulate conversation, for even the shy child will participate in a conversation with a puppet," she said.

The prospective kindergarten teachers admired a small puppet theatre and noticed that many of the cloth puppets had been made small enough for the children to wear over their hands.

Girls with school certificate or with higher qualifications are accepted first for kindergarten training, but an applicant must be 17 years of age. After the two-year training course, the student teacher is bonded to serve for two years after receiving the diploma. The Diploma of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union allows the teacher to apply for a position anywhere in New Zealand.

Students receive an allowance during training and those required to live away from home receive a boarding allowance.

BEGUN IN 1889

The free kindergarten movement in New Zealand began in Dunedin in 1889. It had its origin in a

"thought" by the Rev. Dr Waddell, who, passing up and down Walker Street, longed in some way to help the young children playing in the street, in somewhat unsanitary conditions. He mentioned the matter to Mr Mark Cohen, who said: "Why not have a free kindergarten?"

This impulse was taken up by Bishop Suter, who, in an address at the Dunedin Town Hall in March, 1889, set out the advantages of a kindergarten from an educational point of view and told of visits he had paid to free kindergartens in San Francisco. In May of that year, an association was formed, and the first kindergarten opened in the Walker Street Mission Hall in June with 14 children.

In 1906 a kindergarten was opened in Wellington and in 1908 Auckland formed an association to train students and to establish kindergartens in the poorer areas of the city. The work in Auckland and Wellington expanded rapidly and in 1911 under the leadership of the mayoress of the city, Christchurch kindergartens were established.

The need for specially-trained teachers led to the establishment of training centres in the four main cities, and now each training school is housed, as depicted in the brochure, in large two-storeyed homes, set in spacious grounds and surroundings.

The Dunedin student training college has a quota of 40 students each year, and with the standard qualification for entrance becoming higher, there is more competition now to enter into kindergarten teaching.