

## An ODS Testimonial

By Erin Bailey

As most first-time parents I was overwhelmed by the idea of my two-year-old starting pre-school... I was feeling torn about enrolling her and wondered if she was really ready for the separation that is part of this experience. I had some friends who spoke very highly of Open Door School so I decided to check it out.

During that first tour at ODS I was impressed by what our parent tour guide had to say about how her own children were skilled beyond their years at resolving conflicts themselves due to the experiences and guidance they had received at school. I was also struck by the purposeful organization of the classrooms and intentional lack of clutter. The child-centered approach was so carefully displayed. After touring a few other schools I came to realize that ODS was a very unique place; how fortunate we were to have a school option which supported our parenting philosophy so fully. In fact, after that first year I began to feel as I think many parents do, that I was getting even more of an education at ODS than my daughter. I had always respected my child as a whole and complete person, but I still had so much to learn about seeing the world through her eyes and trusting her ability to make decisions and solve problems, and giving her time and space to play and explore at her own pace. I learned how to recognize and foster the teachable moments that come so naturally and frequently in the kind of child-centered environment that ODS cultivates. The education I have unexpectedly received here has proven to be a priceless gift to my children and me.

As it turned out our transition into pre-school was a bit challenging for both of us. My daughter was obviously anxious at the idea of being left in an unfamiliar setting and I was incredibly grateful that the class facilitators were supportive of me staying until she was ready for me to go. I never felt pressure to leave her there afraid and in tears. Our unique needs for transition time were completely respected. During that first year in the 2s class Sue Riley would pop in to visit and observe the class in action. It was delightful to me to be able to watch how she interacted with the children and to experience the presence she had around them.

If you choose to become part of the Open Door family you will find that people here really seem to speak a different language: One that demonstrates a deep respect for children and how they experience the world. It “takes one to know one”, but once you do you can easily pick them out of a crowd and spot them on the playground. I believe the friends made through the experiences of raising children are some of the deepest and most meaningful relationships that exist, and we have found a community here that is completely genuine and supportive. I cannot imagine how different our lives might be had we missed out on this gem of an experience.