

Mt. SAC celebrates grand opening of \$18 million child development center in Walnut

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Mt SAC has opened its new \$18.5 million child development center. The center allows people to return to school, provides quality childcare and serves as a hands-on training facility. leo jarzomb - staff photographer

By [Richard Irwin](#), San Gabriel Valley Tribune

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Mt. SAC's new child development center features four buildings with lowered windows for toddlers to look out and cameras for remote viewing of kids at the Walnut campus. leo jarzomb - staff photographer

The decision of paying for good day care or attending college is a heavy burden for many young families. But with the grand opening this month of Mount San Antonio College's \$18.5 million child development center, the school is helping hundreds of students bridge the gap.

"Childcare is sometimes the biggest barrier for people who want to return to college and continue their education," said Tamika Addison, the center's director.

The four-building complex will serve more than 210 families every semester. That's up from the 160 the old daycare center could handle. Still, there's a waiting list of 150.

"The new and improved CDC allows us to increase the number of CalWORKS, community and faculty families we can serve," Addison said. "It is giving more parents the opportunity to continue their education and be away from their child, knowing that they are safe and learning in a quality environment."

The 33,800-square-foot complex will provide quality childcare for 162 children. It serves children from infants to 5 years old.

The state-of-the-art facility offers unique perspectives, from the windows installed at toddler height to the low snack counters in each class.

To change a diaper, just roll out the built-in steps to allow the child to climb up onto the new changing tables. Then use the special chute that dumps the soiled diapers into an outside closet.

“We wanted to use natural materials and colors in the construction because research shows that primary colors excite children,” said architect Mikaela Klein, who helped design the center. She is now a Mt. SAC facilities planner.

But it’s the little touches that stand out. Like the tack strip that replaces the usual chair rails, giving teachers a chance to hang the kid’s artwork at their eye level. Or the small, private alcoves scattered throughout the center, giving excitable children a quiet place to calm down.

Originally, the college planned a large, two-story building, but the faculty wanted a smaller, one-story complex.

“We all wanted a smaller scale, so we decided to design a village on an intimate scale,” explained Tim Felchlin with Morris Architecture in West L.A.

Felchlin loves the natural flow from one building to the next. Each section features its own play yard with lush landscaping.

“We’ve also gone from about 60 student workers completing the necessary work experience and training to apply for teaching credentials and child development permits to 83 student workers each semester,” Director Addison said.

Mt. SAC students Rebecca DeLira and Amanda Boiko are excited to be working in the new center. They agreed the new buildings offered much more space.

Child Development Specialist Kathy Dorr was also excited about the new garden.

“We’ll have apples, oranges, peaches, blueberries and blackberries,” Dorr said. “We’re also planting a vegetable garden.”

The new complex integrates the child care center with Mt. SAC’s student lab.

“This beautiful facility was built on the premise that children, families, students and educators will learn and grow together,” said Darlene Landeros, center co-chair.

She said California depends on community colleges to prepare teachers for the early childhood workforce. The facility uses modern technology such as remote controlled cameras to observe the children.

“If we tried to put college students in the classroom, it would change the dynamics of the kids’ interaction with each other,” Dorr said.

The grand opening comes four years after the groundbreaking in June of 2010. It was one of the first projects funded under the \$353 million Measure RR bond.