

## ARNOLD: GODDARD SCHOOL HAS WHAT IT TAKES

Staff, administrators work hard to get state accreditation

By: Trish Wallace



Students bang on buckets during class at the Goddard School in Arnold. The school was recently given state accreditation.

It might only come in the form of a framed certificate, but for the Goddard School in Arnold, accreditation symbolizes more than a year of hard work and a desire to go above the required call of duty. “This is about bringing our school to a higher quality,” said Marla Brunk, on-site owner.

Throughout the process, Meghan Deutschmann, assistant director of the school, became the appointed ‘accreditation guru.’ Deutschmann collected all of the required paperwork and performed the school’s self-studies for each age group. The school officially applied for accreditation in February but had to wait for its evaluation from the Missouri Accreditation of Programs Children and Youth review team until July when all of its programs were in full swing, including summer programs involving school-age children.

Christy Colyer of the Child Care and Resource and Referral Department of Human Environmental Studies at Southeast Missouri State University, arrived at Goddard last week to deliver the school’s official accreditation banner.

She also brought flowers and chocolate for Brunk, Deutschmann and Julie Sulze, the school’s director, to celebrate.

Colyer said the average time for a facility to earn its accreditation is one to three years. “So this is really fast,” she said about Goddard.

According to Colyer, a lot of people do not recognize the difference between licensing and accreditation. Licensing is much easier to obtain. “Licensing standards keep children safe,” she said. “Accreditation ensures quality.”

Children at Goddard participate in a variety of lessons every day, including yoga, sign language, manners and etiquette, world cultures, “kids scientific” and a sports mix, which builds confidence, cooperation and team-building skills.

Deutschmann said working toward accreditation took a lot of time, but the process went smoothly. She noticed that most of the goals and requirements the school had to meet were already taking place in the classrooms.

Classrooms needed to be set up in separate centers for play and learning. While Goddard’s classrooms already had divided centers, the staff took action to make the centers more defined. They reorganized the classrooms and added more soft furniture and bookshelves. They added hooks to hang up materials used during dramatic play.

When the day of the on-site evaluation came, Deutschmann admitted she was a little nervous. She knew the school was prepared, but approval was now up to the performance of teachers and staff.

State evaluators looked for relationships and interaction between children and teachers. They checked the school's physical environment, curriculum, health and safety procedures, connection with children's families, employee handbooks, parent handbooks, menus, floor plans and more.

The administration gave credit to Goddard's teachers for receiving the accreditation. Colyer agreed. "They had to have everyone on board," Colyer said. "There's a lot of things you can't fake. Kids are a big tip off if something is not how it normally goes."

After working toward accreditation for so long, finally achieving the honor thrilled the administration. "We have the best child care in the area," Brunk said. "These honors just validate that."

Accreditations do expire, so the school's administration must continuously meet the state's goals, filing annual reports and submitting to another full on-site evaluation in three years.

Goddard will soon be added to the official list of accredited schools at [www.moaccreditation.org](http://www.moaccreditation.org).

The next goal for Goddard administrators is national accreditation, for which they have already applied through the National Association for the Education of Young Children.