

DPNS History

The Davis Parent Nursery School was envisioned in 1948 when four mothers started a small play group for their children in each other's homes on different days of the week. On the basis of their experiences, they decided to start a regular cooperative school, realizing that they would have a more successful project if more parents and children participated. Efforts to begin such a parent nursery school, the first of its kind in Yolo County, were actually initiated a year later. Public meetings were held; opposition to "dumping children" was patiently met; a steering committee was formed; and immense operational groundwork was laid.

In the fall of 1949, 53 parents enthusiastically attended an Adult Education class in Child Development at the Davis Joint Union High School in preparation for the opening of the nursery school which was to serve as a laboratory for the course. The school itself was not opened until the following February, however, because of difficulties in obtaining proper facilities. In the meantime, food and cake sales, bazaars, rummage sales, card parties, every fund-raising device known to us--went on so that equipment could be bought. Finally, on February 13, 1950, the Davis Parent Nursery School began operation with 25 children in six Army surplus tents erected on property surrounding the Davis Boy Scout Cabin.

The log cabin itself was used only for toilet facilities, for storage, and for the program participants in extremely inclement weather. Since the fireplace was used for heat on those days, one participating mother had to be stationed there for the entire session. For the most part, however, activities centered in the housekeeping tent, the craft tent, the book and music tent, the circus tent, the block tent, or the sand tent. The Building and Ground Chairman and a local shoemaker were kept very busy in those days, for often after one of the infamous Davis winds, the chairman would be called upon to restore some collapsed tents before school began and the shoemaker would repair them. In the fall of 1950, the large tent was judged irreparable and the school made do with the remaining facilities.

For two and a half years the nursery school existed in this much-appreciated yet rather pioneer setting while innumerable fund-raising projects went on in order to raise enough money to construct a permanent building on land to be loaned to the Nursery School Association by the school district. Enrollment soared and there was a waiting list even then. Ground was finally broken October 28, 1951, and with \$7,000 raised by direct contributions and fund-raising activities and \$11,000 borrowed from the parents and friends, the present Eighth Street plant was built. It was

designed by Price and Ponsford, Oakland architects specializing in school buildings. Two professional carpenters worked weekdays and their work was supplemented on weekends by work parties of parents. On a weekend in April 1952, the nursery school moved to its new quarters with no interruption of the program. The interior was entirely unfinished with bare studs visible everywhere. That summer the parents held painting parties; the patio and wall boards came in the fall; and gradually during the following years, the landscaping, runway, sandbox, etc., were added.

Each year the parents were able to pay \$1,000 on the mortgage, due primarily to the bi-annual nursery school rummage sales. In November 1962, final payment on the mortgage indebtedness was made, and the building and the Association were clear of debt. In 1970, compulsory fund raising, with each member obligated to bring ten boxes of rummage was abolished, but the Association still holds fund raising activities to fund special projects or purchase special items. As the school grew, so did the waiting list, and during the 1961-62 school year, it was decided to start another five-day session held in the afternoon in order to accommodate the growing need evidenced by the waiting list. The program was expanded still further in January 1967 with a four-day morning session in facilities belonging to the Davis Community Church. Another four-day session was added in September 1969; both were converted to five days in 1970-71, and moved from the Community Church facilities to more permanent quarters at the United Methodist Church on Anderson Road. Enrollment reached 145 children in 1971-72 with 200 on the waiting list for the following year. In January 1972, a study group assessing pre-school needs in Davis was formed. Their findings and recommendations for a fifth session were presented to the Board of Education in March 1972. A third facility was thus initiated at Valley Oak School.

In the ensuing years, changes within the town of Davis and financial considerations indicated a need for a complete reassessment of all three facilities and sessions.

As a result, the 1976-77 DPNS Board contracted with the Davis Joint Unified School District (DJUS) to develop a new facility in the C Street facility to replace the Anderson Road (United Methodist Church) plant. The reassessment also resulted in the discontinuance of the Valley Oak location at the DJUS's request.

The school district and Association shared responsibility for the renovation of the two end rooms of the middle wing of the Danbury Street facility. As a result of great cooperation and super-human effort on the part of school

contractors and parent volunteers, "525 C Street" opened (with minor problems, such as no water the first week) on time in the fall of 1977.

In 1987, DPNS became duly licensed by the State of California Department of Social Services.

In 2000 the Davis Joint Unified School District (DJUSD) chose not to renew the DPNS C Street lease, a lease we had held for about 23 years. DJUSD asked DPNS to move its C Street school to the new Marguerite Montgomery Elementary School on Danbury Street in South Davis in the fall of 2001. The school district will be leasing a module building to DPNS for \$12,500 per year with a 20-year lease.