

Cheryl West has 12 years' experience teaching three- and four-year-olds, most of that time at Topeka's Children's Day Out Preschool. She can't wait to begin year 13. "I'm very excited," she says of meeting her first Jr. Pre-K class at Topeka Collegiate. "I'm really looking forward to the opportunity to teach 'threes' five mornings a week. It's a great age. It is so much fun to watch them grow and develop throughout the year."

Cheryl points out that for many children, Jr. Pre-K is their first school experience. "This is where you want them to learn that school is an exciting place and that learning is fun," she says. "They begin the year shy, unsure, some not even talking to one another. By the end of the year, they've developed so much not only as individuals, but they're also such a community within themselves. They learn to feel safe and secure. They bond as a group. They're not the same children they were." Cultivating and nurturing that development, and overseeing the transformation, is joyful, Cheryl explains, "because they're so excited about everything!"

Cheryl West received her BS in sociology with an emphasis on the child and the family from Emporia State University. She knows sign language, and occasionally uses it in the classroom. She's found it's a fun and effective way for children to learn. She has also developed and taught children's summer camps at the Kansas Children's Discovery Center.