

Children's Studies Program Becomes a Major



This semester, Brooklyn College undergraduates are finally able to call themselves children's studies majors.

The new 30-credit B.A. in children's studies features breadth and depth, offering students the benefit of perspectives from a variety of disciplines as well as research opportunities with authorities in the field, relevant internships, and career counseling.

Eighteen years ago, a committee chaired by Professor of Sociology Gertrud Lenzer established the interdisciplinary field of Children's

Studies and rapidly turned Brooklyn College into a national leader in this emerging area. The Brooklyn College Children's Studies Program, directed by Lenzer, has since been copied by a number of colleges and universities

around the nation. Its enrollment and courses have increased steadily every year:

Since 1994, undergraduates have been able to take a children's studies minor, and there has been a concentration for education majors since 2001.

"The vision for this new interdepartmental field of study was based on the insight that children from birth to age eighteen represent in every society a distinct sociocultural class and generational cohort," says Lenzer. "This recognition set the agenda and mission for

children's studies—to view children as whole human beings and to integrate knowledge from disciplines in the arts, humanities, social and biological sciences, medicine, and law, which focus on specific aspects and propensities of children and childhood."

As a result of Lenzer's efforts, the Brooklyn College Children's Studies Center for Research, Policy, and Public Service was established in 1997. It provides students with the opportunity to shape public policy that has a direct impact on the health and well-being of children and youth. Serving as a think tank and catalyst for change, the center has hosted four well-attended forums on public policy for legislators, teachers, health-care providers, and judicial and law enforcement personnel.

The center's faculty and staff—experts in the field of children's studies—regularly participate in panels, testify in support of legislation, and conduct research to further the rights of children.