

## freeze framed

# Let the Sunshine In

A bulletin board on one wall sports sushi rolls made from cotton and construction paper, U2's "One" plays softly from a radio in an adjacent room, and a dozen or so tiny, diversely hued faces smile as a homemade breakfast is served. So goes a typical morning at the Sunshine School, the preschool/daycare located inside the fire engine-red door at 906 E. Stuart Street in Fort Collins.

The kids at Sunshine School aren't much different from most 2- to 6-year-olds in town, except many of them have names like Simar, Xiaying and Fernando. They also go to a very special place each day: a place where "discrimination because of race, color, national origin, sex or handicap is forbidden." The adults at Sunshine School lay down this law explicitly in promotional material, but they don't stop at mere tolerance of diversity. Instead, the early childhood center's curriculum regularly incorporates multicultural and international programming.

This week's lesson plan includes reading a story about a young slave girl on a cotton plantation, making dove headbands and pasting together Martin Luther King, Jr. collages. When the week's calendar doesn't carry a national holiday honoring civil-rights heroes, the kids sample ethnic cuisine, learn a little Chinese or Spanish and talk about how to make the world a better place—or at least how to be a nicer preschooler. A world map decked with markers showing places from where each child hails illustrates the world's vastness to minds that have just barely grasped the concept of potty training.

Co-director Lori Murdoff says one of her favorite Sunshine School memories is of a little girl who went home from school one day and said, "Mommy, I love that brown-skinned boy."

—Amy Vaereuyck

