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sive members across the country.

Jacobs' and Crowley's first book, "Play, Projects and Preschool Standards: Nurturing Children's Sense of Wonder and Joy in Learning," is the recipient of two national book awards – The Association of Education Publishers Distinguished Achievement Award and the Teachers' Choice Award.

"The major goal of both of these books – one being for preschool and one for kindergarten – is we include the standards that children are expected to meet at that age level, and we give lots of ideas of how teachers can help children meet those standards in developmentally appropriate ways," Jacobs said.

In both books, Jacobs and Crowley back up the ideas they present with proven theories. "There is a section in each chapter that talks about what research and the experts tell us, so we try to give the research base for various things, but still make it very teacher-friendly and doable in the classroom," Jacobs said.

Jacobs and Crowley have served on the statewide committee that wrote the preschool content standards for South Dakota. They subsequently were asked by Corwin Press to write a book focusing on those standards.

"They saw that we were doing a national presentation on the topic of how to help kids meet standards in developmentally appropriate ways, so they asked us to write a book," Jacobs said, "and once we got the first one done, they were very interested in having complete a second book that focuses on kindergarten."

Expect a third book in the near future from the two local educators. "We're actually planning one for the first, second and third grades," she said. "The primary grades will be the focus of our next one."

The books, in garnering prestigious awards and recognition from NAEYC, also serve to confirm that South Dakota is on the right track in its development of standards for early childhood education.

"These are based on the South Dakota early learning guidelines," Crowley said, "so that's pretty exciting."

"And the models we use in the first book are the South Dakota preschool standards," Jacobs said, "so it's kind of a confirmation, too, that our South Dakota preschool standards are high quality and are worthy to for people in other parts of the country to see."

For their second book, which focuses on kindergarten, Crowley and Jacobs relied on national standards to provide the theory that serves as a basis for each chapter.

Vermillion children are the stars in both books. Chapters in both publications feature photos of local children at play and involved in classroom activities.

"We also have pictures from Head Start and child care centers from the area," Crowley said.

Jacobs has been a professor at USD for approximately 15 years, and today serves as coordinator of the university's early childhood program. Crowley has taught at St. Agnes School for 21 years. She's taught kindergarten the last 14 years and 11 years prior she served as the school's preschool teacher for half of each school day, and taught kindergarten the second half of the day.

Crowley and Jacobs were still highly involved in writing the state's preschool standards when they began work on their first book. It was helpful, they noted, "to mesh" the two projects hand-in-hand.

"Writing the first book went along very well with writing the state standards," Jacobs said.

"If we were working on a curriculum area – if we were working on, for example, math at the time – we would focus on that for a bit and look at what the researchers

had to say," Crowley said. "We gathered information, and the put together developmentally appropriate activities that would help children meet the proper standards."

"We also got ideas (for the books) from lots of our friends and colleagues," Jacobs said. "We tried to get lots of great ideas from lots of teachers from across the state, and, for the second book, we relied on help from colleagues from across the country."

Both Crowley and Jacobs emphasize that their two books are not designed to provide curriculums for preschool and kindergarten classrooms.

"They are not a curriculum in themselves," Jacobs said, "but they definitely guide teachers on how to meet standards for children. It covers all of the curriculum areas, and gives lots of activities that

teachers can use.

"When teachers look at a standard and say 'how do I teach algebra to a kindergartener or a preschooler?' our books provides suggestions for doing that," Crowley said.

"We also think that parents could use the information in these books if they wanted to work with their children at home, and I've been using our preschool book in my (USD) curriculum class, and students have really liked it, because they feel it is really easy to understand, and contains ideas that they can put to use right away."

Both Crowley and Jacobs note that education standards are constantly evolving. The advice offered in both books, however, will remain valuable despite changes in those standards that are likely sure to come.

"The activities that we give in the books are general enough to help teachers as those areas change," Jacobs said. "The reading standards may change, for example, but the ideas we include for teaching reading will still be good practices for helping kids no matter what the exact standard is."

"The content of the books may be something that we will have to revise over time to make sure that it is keeping up," she added, "but I think the ideas in the book are general enough that even the standards change a little bit, they still will be very relevant."

Jacobs and Crowley have shared a passion for education and a close personal friendship for several years. One of the activities they enjoy outside of the classroom is to take a daily walk together.

During cold, snowy days like Vermillion has been experiencing lately, the two women walk in the comfort of the DakotaDome. Those strolls proved valuable as they set out to write their first book.

"We walk for exercise, and while we are doing that, we may be jotting down notes on paper as we're talking through different ideas," Crowley said.

"We will designate certain topics for certain walks that we take together," Jacobs said. "Before we set out, we may say, 'today, the topic will be science' and maybe we'll do that for quite a few weeks."

Eventually, as the ideas handwritten on paper accumulate, the two women sit at their computers and compile them into the text for their books.

"We do a lot of brain-

storming as we walk, and then on Friday afternoons we would get together, for the last six years, and as our deadlines get closer, we get together much more frequently."

The walks, at times, provide an extra benefit – a reassurance that the two women are on the right track.

Before joining the staff at USD, Jacobs also taught at St. Agnes School with Crowley.

"One time, when we were walking in the Dome, we met one of our former kindergarten students who now is in med school," Crowley said. "He saw us and said, 'My two favorite kindergarten teachers!' because we were both here at St. Agnes when he was in kindergarten."

"And he turned out just fine," Jacobs said, laughing.



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