
My time with Transportation Children's Center

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My role as a Teacher's Assistant

- x My position was a part-time teacher's assistant in the Junior Preschool Classroom. Junior Pre-school is designed for children aged 2 years, 6 months to 3 years, 3 months
- x I ensured the safety of the young children and staff
- x Lead activities and class discussions teaching students about holidays and events going on around the world
- x Sanitize and organize the classroom during activity changes throughout the day.
- x Junior Preschool serves as a transition room between the toddler and preschool classrooms.
- x This is a paid position, I received \$15/hr



Surprises

I was surprised by how developed their language and conversations skills are at that age. I had come in with preconceptions about the potential for “baby talk,” and there wouldn’t actually be a conversation. I was surprised at how quickly and immensely attached I became attached to the children in such a short period of time and how much satisfaction I got out of the co-op. prior to this early childhood education was not on my radar at all. The experience with this and working in my other co-op has really opened my eyes to the impact of community level programming at even early ages.



Hopes for this experience



Having never had any exposure to early childhood care and programs I hoped to learn more about successful structures and challenges and how this area fits within my current and future academic and career interests.



Important things learned

While one can learn many things working in a classroom of 2-year-olds, the most valuable and multidimensional thing I learned and practiced on a daily basis was conflict resolution. During my time, I had to learn quickly how to redirect children when they were having a hard time working with others or de-escalate arguments about sharing. While most other people I interact with are much older, I find the skill of conflict resolution to be extremely applicable in other aspects of my life as it is a daily part of professional and interpersonal relationships.



Memorable Experiences

Structured group and individual play time were the predominant tasks. One of the most meaningful experiences together was after the first snowstorm of the year, being outside in our playground, with them to share their first real and memorable experience of snow really touched me in a way I didn't expect. Reminded me of the joys of snow and being able to play carelessly. Showing them how to make snow angels and snow men, I got to witness the pure joy of toddlers, it's a memory I will keep with me. While technically this isn't a standard career task, I highlight it because it changed how I view the benefits of a career in early childhood education.



Learning about myself

X I enjoy working with children and particularly love building strong trust-based relationships with them. I have developed a passion for helping young children and watching them learn, achieve, and grow. I love to be super dramatic with the children because we all love to have fun. One of the highlights that nurtures my love of teaching is hearing the hilarious and honest conversations the children have with their friends every day.

X I learned that I thrive in a collaborative and challenging environment. Because of the nature of children this age, the primary classroom teacher there is a true collaboration and symbiosis between the staff at all times to meet new and different challenges every day in order to maintain structure and a positive learning environment.



Challenges

In many jobs and careers the challenges stem from inter-personal communications, team dynamics, company policy or procedures, or individual ability to perform a task. I am happy to report that this was not the biggest challenge to overcome. Mine was, nap time. There is extensive perseverance required to maintain a positive image and attitude while simultaneously coercing my charges to lie down for the rest they never understood they needed. In order to successfully have nap time you need to have a strong ability to multitask, negotiate, show strength without losing temper, strategy, prioritization. The more practice you have the more these lessons will become easier to master. These lessons learned accomplishing this task do carry over into other aspects of life in a general way and will assist as I move forward with my career.



How did your co-op experience affect you?

- X I have changed my attitude towards young children in general
- X My inaccurate preconceptions of childhood development have been shattered
- X I have an appreciation for intellectual and emotional intelligence that is required
- X I have an ever-greater appreciation for individuals who choose this career
- X Conflict resolution skills have grown immensely
- X I was stunned at how naturally this job suited me




We made gingerbread houses for a holiday activity and celebrated birthdays all together!



Future Career

This experience has absolutely opened my eyes and mind to the possibility of working in early childhood education in the future. I have immensely enjoyed my time and experiences with the kids and plan on continuing working with the organization part time this upcoming semester. I have thoroughly enjoyed the experiences of learning and growing alongside the kids and relationships I have built with the teachers. However, it has not changed my overall career goals of working with community engagement organizations.



Personal Perspective

Sense of Self:

I have become more attuned to understanding the needs and development of children. I have become a much better listener and understand how important patience is in all walks of life. I have changed my perception of the advanced developmental stages in younger children. I knew I had a passion for teaching, but I never knew it could be translated into so many different and dynamic ways.

Society

It struck me that despite the fact there is a significant population of people of color in the city of Boston, the students at my childcare facility overwhelming identified as white. There are studies shown that the earlier the exposure to different races and cultures there is less of a chance of the perception of an “other” to develop latter on. It was sad to see how little diversity there is in our childcare setting. The kids showed no signs of noticing any differences amongst themselves, but this may be an additional avenue where agencies and organizations can look into ways to diversify and include more people.

