

During my time employed at The Children's Center on Evergreen's campus, I have become more confident in my aspiration to become an educator. I have had the opportunity to work with wonderful staff who care just as much as I do about the growth and wellbeing of the children, and of course, I've gotten to work with the children themselves. Since I have worked in the position of a "floating staff", that means I have been familiarized with each age group and classroom at the center. This includes a nursery for infants, two different toddler-age rooms, and two preschool classrooms. I have spent the most amount of time in the two preschool classes.

At the preschool level, the children are learning about what it means to be a student, as well as how to interact with their peers. They are as curious as ever, always asking questions about everything! Although sometimes I do not have the answers, I thoroughly enjoy nourishing their young minds. Nearly everything is new to them, and therefore everything is incredible to them. The teachers create lesson plans weekly, which include art and crafts, reading activities, group games, and more. Student staff, such as myself, assist by carrying out these lessons, and providing input whenever we are asked. I have particularly enjoyed table activities, which happens shortly after nap time. We set out various activities for the children to participate in while they adjust to waking up, such as painting, drawing, puzzles and building toys, science-based games, and jewelry-making. I like to sit with the children and partake in whatever they are doing, and I have noticed that this promotes their interest in the activity at hand when they see a teacher is doing it too. It also builds their confidence and critical thinking skills when I ask them questions about their work, as well as when I offer them specific compliments, such as "you do an excellent job at drawing such accurate, detailed fish scales".

It is also my responsibility to help them navigate interpersonal experiences. We are taught how to help them develop communication skills by asking them to try using their words rather than shout, cry, or show aggression. We do not condemn emotion, as emotion is part of the human experience, but we try to provide children with the words and motivation to express their emotions civilly. Through this, I've observed that the kids can discuss their needs more efficiently. We also promote self-reliance and autonomy. At that age, kids sometimes fall into circumstances where an adult must physically intervene, so we make sure to ask or let them know before we do so. For example, if a child is refusing to put on their coat before going outside on a cold day, I tell them that they can either put on the coat on their own, or I can do it for them because I don't want them to freeze. I've noticed that this is extremely effective because children will usually choose self-reliance, and it teaches them that they sometimes have to prioritize health and safety, even if they don't feel like it.

Aside from my paid work at The Children's Center, I have also volunteered at Avanti High School. I volunteered at a high school because I wanted to gain familiarity with a spectrum of age groups in the school setting. I volunteered at an event called "Haunted School" where the students create their own scary characters and bring them to life in a haunted house around late October. I helped by guiding groups of patrons through the experience, and assisting students with whatever they might need. I got to observe the creativity of the students when provided with the materials and support to carry out their imaginations. Also, the fact that students at that age enjoy the independence and freedom to run an event like that.

It has been so much fun working and volunteering in these settings, and I could truly see myself committing to this field for the rest of my life. It is hard work, but with great reward.