

The Heartbeat

EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF POLK COUNTY NEWSLETTER

WHY EARLY EDUCATION TEACHERS MATTER

This month we look into another perspective of this topic with two new teachers who are greatly drawn to early education and are considering furthering their own education to become preschool teachers. Here's why!



Mikayla Green, Assistant Teacher for 2-year-olds, **Phoenix Christian Academy**

(has been teaching for 3 months)

“People have always said that I’m good with kids. I know that their brains are developing fast and there’s very little time to develop their tiny minds. So, it’s nice to know that one person can make such a big difference in a kid’s life. At first, I thought this would be a job I would do until my kids were old enough to find another job but since I’ve started here, I’ve changed my mind. I can remember when I got pregnant at 20 with my oldest. Life was difficult but after I had her my life flipped. Everything went uphill. My life was not just about me anymore. It was about this little girl. That’s how I see all the kids that I work with. I’m considering an early education degree now because of this.

In teaching children, I think social emotional learning is really important. Personally, I didn’t have a great childhood, but I want other children to have a better experience and to know that there is good in the world. Regarding technology, I’m in the middle with it. These days there are a lot of things that children should not be exposed to but sometimes technology can be used to help students advance their learning, such as with visual or hands-on learning. I consider music technology another good example. There are videos online where teachers sing to teach children. My own daughter has learned a lot through songs.”



Taisha Vaez, Co-teacher for toddlers, ***Phoenix Christian Academy***
(has been teaching for one year)

"My mother is my example because she taught me everything about education since she has been a teacher in Puerto Rico for 20 years. My goal is to learn more English and to go to college. I want to take the CDA (Child Development Associate) training and then become a preschool teacher. It's something that I've always wanted to be.

One of the most impacting things I've learned about children is that a one-year-old child and younger can talk and learn so much! For instance, when I'm teaching them the letter "A" I show them an apple and say the "ah" sound. When I hear them say it, I'm happy because I know they're learning and I'm so proud. They're also learning colors and shapes and I'm teaching them in Spanish too. I have one student who is a year and five months old and when he sees me in the morning he says "Buenos Dias" (Good Morning).

It's interesting to me how babies can also learn to be with others. They can learn to be respectful and I model it. If a child falls, I show them how to help the child up. If a child brings me a book, I bring them all together to include everyone to listen to the reading. It's important that they learn inclusiveness. It's important to me because when I was small I remember feeling excluded sometimes and I don't want them to feel the way I used to feel. Some people don't like working with kids but I love it. They're my therapy. When I'm with them I forget about all my problems. In ten years I see myself being a teacher and maybe having my own school."

ABC ACTION NEWS VISITS MI ESCUELA MONTESSORI



Mi Escuela Montessori in Lakeland was excited to receive a special visit from **ABC Action News** this month. The celebration began with a reading of the bilingual book *"I Have a Secret"* by Maritere Rodriguez Bellas which was selected by our Instructional Support Coach **Shanta Cooper**.

The story centers on a Hispanic student named Yunito, who is ashamed of his last name, which is Rodriguez. With the help of his teacher, he soon discovers that being bilingual is a special gift. At the end of the story Yunito is no longer ashamed and even teaches his fellow classmates Spanish words. An extension activity included coloring flags from various Latin Countries with the actual colors of the various flags.

Marc Hutek, Ed. D., CEO of Early Learning Coalition of Polk County believes that celebrating Hispanic heritage is important for preschoolers. "Interestingly, there have been studies that have shown bilingual children tend to demonstrate empathy better than that of their monolingual peers and have even shown accelerated progress when learning to read," said Hutek. "Not to mention, being a dual language speaker is certainly beneficial in the state of Florida!"

[Read the full story on ABC Action News](#)

[Book Reading of "I Have A Secret" on YouTube](#)

EMPLOYEE **SPOTLIGHT**

Natalie Todt



As a Professional Development Coordinator please briefly describe your role.

I am new to my role and tackle new tasks every day. In general, I manage the Training Incentive Program (TIP) and help providers register for trainings and courses. To promote the TIP program, I create flyers and communicate daily with teachers and directors at the centers. I also provide online virtual support for TIPS and Professional Development via TEAMS for childcare center directors and teachers.

As an educator could you share your background and thoughts on the beauty of a lightbulb moment when a student finally understands a lesson. Also, you've helped empower teachers by passing on your teaching skills and vast experience. Reflect on the impact you've had on your former students who are now teachers.

I have three degrees in education; a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, a master's degree in collaborative Instruction, and a doctorate degree in educational leadership. With over 20 years in education, still nothing compares to watching a student (child or adult) understand or get something for the first time. I became a teacher to instill the love of learning into the people I am blessed enough to teach and mentor.

After having taught at Florida Southern College for 11 years, many of the education students I taught and mentored remain in touch locally and through Facebook. I keep in contact with them and still help them when they reach out to ask questions. The biggest compliments I receive are from former students and parents of students who give me shout-outs during Teacher Appreciation or credit me for something great they accomplished. This validates why I teach, mentor, and coach-- to help others be successful.

What are your favorite things to do and are there some unique things about yourself that you would like to share?

I enjoy running, going to the beach, and sitting by the pool. I also love going on cruises and visiting theme parks. My son and I are “foodies” and enjoy traveling to places to try different restaurants. We discovered that Las Vegas has lots of great places to eat! I was born and raised in a suburb of Chicago and LOVE the Chicago Bears and football season!

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