

To Whom It May Concern:

It is difficult to pen just a few things that having access to the Early Childhood Development Scholarship has given me. Instead of describing it from my perspective, I'd like to tell you what it's given my students. Through the course work, I am a more competent, well-rounded individual seeking to provide a positive role model in a world that at times can seem dark and cruel. The scholarship has allowed me to expand my knowledge in the field while growing personally and professionally. One of my goals in my career is to show families, elected officials, or just the average Joe on the street that Early Childhood Educators are more than just babysitters. Our role is so much more vital and complex than that. Imagine if you will a building. Without a solid foundation the building will fall. But given the proper tools and resources, a building with a solid foundation can withstand the test of time.

Early Childhood settings are helping Kentucky's children establish strong, solid foundations that will last them a lifetime. That foundation is more than just letters and numbers. Daily, we as teachers develop and maintain safe, nurturing environments for children to explore, learn, and grow. We are their first true window to the world that promotes acceptance of diversity and a desire to think outside the box; all while encouraging healthy relationships and self-regulation. Those goals are achieved through the education that we receive as a result of the Early Childhood Development Scholarship. We are encouraged by our teachers to embrace this ever-changing field with a growth mindset. Education is not something that I lacked when entering this program. I have attended both undergraduate and graduate schools for history and political science. While those fields were challenging and demanding, aside from leadership skills and ethics, they did not prepare me for the career in which I find myself now.

This scholarship has allowed me to not only expand and refine my skillset but has fostered a supportive network of mentors and colleagues. In the fall of 2022, I finished my Child Development Associate or CDA and am now, through the generosity of the scholarship program, working toward my Director's Credential. Both things have already shaped my classroom in amazing ways by making my environment more child-friendly and a place that my students are proud to call their own. The coursework has provided me ways to objectively assess my students while giving them the freedom to be creative. My assistant and I strive each day to make sure our students know how much we love and believe in them. They are capable of great things. Our students are more than just names on a roster. They are incredible children that we are equipping to be life-long learners and, eventually, productive citizens of the state of Kentucky. While that may sound like a lofty goal list, it is one that I and many other Early Childhood Educators are equipping ourselves for through the Early Childhood Development Scholarship.

Sincerely,

Jenn Whitton

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