



Anastasia Payton Johnston, Iowa

Biography

I learned at a young age that teaching was my calling. My first job was teaching dance and tumbling. I taught elementary school in an after school program for the Des Moines Public Schools at age 16. Later, I coached power tumbling at a local competitive training gym. I took the position of preschool program director later that year. I attended Iowa State University during this time and received my Elementary Education degree in the Fall of 2001. I taught Pre K for Apple Tree Children's Centers in Johnston, Iowa for the last four years. I have really enjoyed teaching in the field of early childhood education and I have returned to Upper Iowa University to add an early childhood endorsement to my degree. I have found much success and fulfillment in my career as a teacher of young children. My student's success and life-long learning begins with me, a job I take very seriously and strive to accomplish with the highest standards.

Project-"Science Inquiry Through Dramatic Play"

Current research reinforces that physical and motor development is integrated with a child's cognitive development. Play engages areas of the brain used for problem solving, planning and sequencing. My project supports and encourages science inquiry through dramatic play. Two years ago I created a Construction Day. I decorated our classroom with caution tape and traffic/roadwork signs. I set up different developmental learning centers that the children rotate through centered on the theme. I invited parent volunteers to help me run the learning centers. Construction Day was so successful and enjoyable for the children, parents and me that I decided to create a dramatic play day for each monthly theme during the school year. Science is often abstract and early learners need concrete experiences. Dramatic play opportunities offer these concrete science experiences. My project creates monthly themed dramatic play days for the Solar System and Community/Occupations units. This award will allow me to purchase materials to complete the science learning centers that the children rotate through along with literacy, motor skills and other learning centers. In the science learning centers the children will explore size and distance, as well as scientific equipment and phenomenon. This award will also provide the children with astronaut attire, lab coats and goggles to increase the children's learning and engagement in dramatic play. These dramatic play days will allow me to scaffold the children's learning (guided participation) to help prepare students for success in science regardless of their developmental level. The award will also provide more opportunities for parent involvement and create experiences that make learning meaningful and enjoyable for all my students.

