



## **Sarah Westland** **Bethel Park, Pennsylvania**

### **Biography**

I have been in the early education field for nine years now. I received my elementary certification in 2001 from Nazareth College in Rochester, NY. My husband and I moved to Pittsburgh and I worked as a preschool teacher for three years with Crafton Children's Corner. I have been with Tender Care Learning Center now for five years and during my time I have had an opportunity to not only care for many different ages of children but to grow with them and their families. The children that I cared for as infants are now in the preschool room readying for kindergarten. I have had the pleasure to work in all three classrooms; Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers. Each age group had their challenges but always added fun and adventure to my day. I am now with the youngest toddler group. They learn and grow so quickly, it amazes me. I enjoy all of their sensory experiences from painting to puddles to eating pudding! I feel very lucky at this stage of my life to not only have cared for and taught the ages I have but to have worked alongside a variety of teachers. I have learned a lot and owe those teachers and my directors a great deal.

### **Project-"Bounding Into Books"**

Since moving into the Toddler Room, the area I have struggled with the most is literacy. Reading books to the children is sometimes hard because of their ages and attention spans. I have tried different ways to have them participate and become excited about the books we are reading. I read to them individually but there are a couple of children who show no interest in the books being read to them. As I was looking through catalogs, the literacy section caught my eye. Here was a way that I could bring those Toddlers into story time in a new and exciting way. As I was thinking about the different ages and interests in the Toddler Room, I also thought about the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards for Early Childhood. I looked at all the standards that related to emerging literacy. The Pennsylvania Standards give goals that children repeat nursery rhymes, request favorite books, make noises from the books, point to pictures, and use finger puppets. The items which are part of my grant represent all of these things. There are puppets that come with books, nursery rhyme books that come with CD's and sets of books that are Toddler favorites. In order to assist teachers like myself to become more energetic and interactive teachers, I chose a story telling apron that comes with different characters from stories. There are also several story props that will help the Toddlers become a part of the story and encourage some of them to tell their own story using the characters. I believe these added items to our literacy program will grab the attention of all toddlers not just the story lovers.

