

Shandeen Belanger  
ECED 265 Leadership & Professionalism  
Joelfre Grant  
Professional and Development Goal Plan

I didn't choose early childhood, early childhood chose me. I say that because I was unaware of what my path was before I became very interested in the role of an early childhood educator. I became a mother at a young age and I read everything that I could to help guide my parenting. I enjoyed noticing the basic milestones that I would read about, but it wasn't until my 3rd child that I became interested in volunteering in an early childhood setting. I would help with the toddler class and I realized how their happy and motivated energy was affecting me in a positive way. I was able to get a firsthand experience in their growth and goal reaching, I noticed how the activities they engaged in were building skills that I never even thought of at that time. It was like stepping into a world of discovery. They noticed everything that I thought was hidden inside of me and I look back thankful for the experience. Another thing that really brought me back was the staff, I didn't have a solid support system at the time, I had people see things in me that I couldn't see, such as my connection with the children and how teaching came naturally. It was a whole new world for me and it was something I wanted for myself to be a better parent for my own children. I was just beginning my education journey with no idea on what I wanted to do so I went to the new student orientation and met a teacher there that guided me to the education department. The feeling of wanting to be a better example for my children was strong and when I began teaching as a student I realized I needed to be a better adult for the children in my community as well. I had some personal issues affecting my ability to dedicate myself so I had to take a break from my education for a little while but I still held on to everything that I learned in that short amount of time. When the time finally came to get back into teaching I had the opportunity to fill a lead role until someone with the proper

qualifications came along, during that time I learned a lot about planning, assessing, documenting, individualizing and interacting with families. I feel like my own experiences gave me wisdom on how to guide and treat children and families with care. I learned that schedules and routines are vital to children's development, they also allow me to feel better organized. I use empathy to guide me when interacting with families and intent when thinking of how I approach teaching. I aim to improve children's development in the time they are with me, that means creating experiences and showing a lot of care in what I do.

The satisfaction that I get from working with children is seeing them persevere through every situation, they are so resilient. A successful day is when nap time goes smoothly because I know we tired them out. I love the routines and schedules that keep days predictable and the teamwork that goes into it. There are little ways to make activities feel magical to the children and the smallest gesture can make them feel so special. I remain genuine with my thoughts and actions towards the little ones and my coworkers because it makes moments with them so much more enjoyable. The biggest satisfaction though is when children start adapting to the classroom environment, they trust that they are loved and they are excited when they walk through the doors. Trust is built and they can really begin making strides towards goals because they feel safe and comfortable. Families feel confident that their children are properly being cared for because it shows when they're at home, a family member will begin sharing stories about something the child did that is related to what they learned at school. Some of the challenges I have faced though is when coworkers aren't on the same page and they feel like they know what is best for the child more than the family does. I've seen body language change when they begin feeling discouraged and they feel bad because they need to work and aren't getting that time with their own children. A struggle that I face is gaining my education to move towards a higher position so I can feel confident to make

certain calls when I see situations like that occurring. I feel like my performance in the classroom alone isn't good enough so I need to have an education to prove I have the proper knowledge to handle difficult situations. Something I need to focus on improving is my attendance. I have a big family myself and sometimes unexpected things happen, getting out of the door can be challenging so I run late occasionally. Another thing is improving my communication with coworkers and families about important dates and information.

My short term career goals are staying prepared for situations that may occur. I want to stay prepared so my coworkers have faith in me showing up on time to help prepare for the day. I want to improve my assessments of children throughout the day and have notepads ready for observation purposes, and also become better at communicating important information and dates to coworkers and families. Another short term improvement I aim to achieve is creating a work calendar to be prepared for important dates. My long term goals are gaining a bachelor's degree and having more experience in leadership roles to eventually be able to start my own program. I want to stay with the program I am working for to show some stability on my resume and make a positive impact on the community being served. I know the earliest years of life are the most important so seeing a child remain successful once they reach elementary will be a success in itself. I feel this can be achieved by creating a network of people that I can gain knowledge from and can call when I'm facing a challenge. Books also have a lot of valuable information regarding personal journeys, tips on personal growth, different ideas, ect so I want to read more and develop myself as a stronger competent person. I would like to attend conventions to listen to people who've had similar journeys and how they have overcome obstacles in their life to get to where they are, especially as parents themselves. I feel staying on the path I'm on now and being

prepared to take down any barriers that come up will help me succeed as an early childhood educator.

To conclude, It has been a journey so far to get to where I'm currently at. I've faced a lot of struggles but resilience has gotten me here which I feel has given me some effective skills when working with children and families. The satisfaction I get from this work keeps me moving forward and pursuing more knowledge regardless of the challenges faced. I have goals to become more reliable, be a better communicator, read books that will help me be more knowledgeable and prepare for unexpected situations. I have confidence building networks and continuing to educate myself will help me achieve these goals. Overall I have enjoyed what I have experienced so far, I love this journey. I didn't choose early childhood, early childhood chose me.