



South Central Early Childhood Sector Partnership

A Journey of Growth: How Abigail Cordova Found Her Calling in Early Childhood Education

When Abigail Cordova first walked through the doors of a bustling preschool, she wasn't just starting a new job—she was beginning a journey that would profoundly shape her life and the lives of the children she cares for every day.

Originally from Buena Vista, Colorado, Abigail's journey as an educator began unexpectedly but quickly evolved into a deep passion for teaching young children. What began as a way to stay close to her young daughter soon blossomed into a passionate career, driven by a deep love for teaching and a desire to understand the world of early childhood education.

“It was being able to stay with my kiddo that really motivated me to join the preschool and start working there,” Abigail reflects. “And now that she’s not there, I just fell in love with the job. It’s a great job.”

How Being Closer to Her Daughter Brought Her Closer to a Career in Education

She was initially drawn to teaching at the preschool for the practical reason of being close to her child after five years of being a stay at home mom. Then something remarkable happened: Abigail discovered a profound connection to the work itself. The joy in the children's eyes, the small victories in their development, and the opportunity to make a lasting impact on their young lives—all of it drew her in.

However, Abigail knew that to truly excel and make

the most of her role, she needed to deepen her understanding of early childhood development. When her boss Catherine Brown, from Son Shine Inn Daycare, referred her to the Early Childhood Professional Apprenticeship program at Pueblo Community College (PCC), she saw it as the perfect opportunity to grow both personally and professionally.

Overcoming Challenges While Growing Into Her Role As an Educator

Balancing her roles as a full-time teacher, mother, and student, Abigail faced significant challenges in managing her time and responsibilities. Her daily routine involved working full-time, caring for her daughter, and attending to the demands of the apprenticeship program. Additionally, writing papers and completing assignments presented difficulties, especially given her past struggles with academic writing.

Despite these obstacles, Abigail remained motivated, driven by the belief that the program's outcomes would add value to her new role as an educator.

"It helped me understand more about my job, what I do, how children work, and the ways you kind of have to adapt to their learning needs," she says, explaining

how the apprenticeship has transformed her approach to teaching.

The program didn't just provide her with more knowledge—it gave her the tools to see the world through the eyes of her students, to appreciate the unique ways they learn, and to adapt her teaching methods to meet their individual needs.

For Abigail, this deeper understanding has been nothing short of life-changing.

"It just helped me understand kids more," she shares. "It helps me understand the way that they learn, it helps me understand why and how they do the things they do. Their background plays a lot in a kid's life."

Abigail's Apprenticeship Experience

Abigail's experience with PCC's apprenticeship program was transformative. The apprenticeship provided her with a deeper understanding of child development, teaching methodologies, and the impact of a child's home environment on their learning. Through the program, Abigail learned how to adapt her teaching style to meet the diverse needs of her students, a skill she found invaluable as both a teacher and a mother.

"It's important to understand that each child is different, and you have to meet them where they are," says Abigail.

"And it's the little things, like when a child finally grasps a concept they've been struggling with, that make this job so special."

The program also offered practical benefits, allowing Abigail to complete her observations and assignments during her work hours, thanks to Catherine's flexibility. Weekly Zoom meetings, lectures, and group discussions were integral parts of the apprenticeship, providing Abigail with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in her role.

Gaining Support to Achieve Her Goals

Abigail credits much of her success to the strong support system around her. Catherine Brown, her boss and mentor, played a pivotal role in encouraging Abigail to join the apprenticeship and provided unwavering support throughout the program. Catherine's understanding of the challenges Abigail faced, both at work and in her personal life, allowed Abigail to balance her responsibilities effectively and grow. Dr. Verderaime, a volunteer at Son Shine and another key supporter, offered guidance and assistance, particularly with academic challenges, further empowering Abigail to succeed.

Abigail's family also played an essential role in her journey. Her husband, who shares an equally packed schedule as construction worker, took on additional responsibilities at home in her year with the apprenticeship, such as preparing dinner and taking care of their daughter during Abigail's class times. Her parents, who live nearby in Salida, offered emotional support and celebrated milestone achievements like making the Dean's List.

Continuing Her Teaching Success With Son Shine Inn Daycare

Abigail's journey is far from over. As she continues to explore the intricate world of early childhood education, she remains committed to the children she teaches, using every lesson learned to enrich their lives and help them thrive. Her story is one of growth, discovery, and the power of education—not just for the students, but for the teachers who guide them.

"Working here has taught me a lot about patience and the importance of being present," says Abigail.

Abigail's participation in the apprenticeship program has had a lasting impact on her approach to teaching. She now has a greater appreciation for the role of home life in a child's development and is more attuned to the individual needs of her students. The program also introduced her to various educational philosophies, such as Montessori, which she finds intriguing and hopes to incorporate into her teaching practices.

"Being part of their early education journey is something I'm really proud of."

Abigail's journey through PCC's apprenticeship program exemplifies the power of perseverance and the importance of a strong support system.

With the help of her mentors, family, and the resources provided by the apprenticeship, Abigail has grown both personally and professionally. Her story is a testament to the impact that teaching programs have on aspiring educators, which, in turn enriches students' lives and the continuous learning efforts in the field of early childhood education.

Abigail looks forward to continuing her work as a Co-Lead Teacher, inspired by the knowledge and experiences gained through the apprenticeship program. She is currently working with young children at Son Shine Inn, a Christian faith-based Daycare center in Salida, Colorado.

About South Central Early Childhood Education Sector Partnership

A regional initiative dedicated to enhancing the quality, accessibility, and support of early childhood education (ECE) in the South Central region. The partnership unites local educators, childcare providers, government agencies, businesses, and community leaders to address the growing need for early childhood education resources.

