**Location**

The University of Northern Iowa Child Development Center is located in the Nielsen Field House.

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**The Cubs Room**

There are 10 toddlers enrolled in the Cubs Room. Their ages range from 0-2 years old. Our student to staff ratio is 1:3. We refer to the students as "friends."

In the Cubs Room we provide a stimulating environment for the cubs to explore. The activities in the room are based on developmental needs and interests.

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**Work at the UNI CDC**

I am employed at the University of Northern Iowa Child Development Center as a student staff. I work as a child care assistant. This is a paid part time position where I work 12+ hours a week.

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**Mission Statement**

“Our mission statement is to provide a nurturing and safe environment for the families and students of the University.”

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**My Duties**

There are duties assigned to us in our shifts. These duties involve changing diapers, overseeing tooth brushing, and being chef. Mealtime is a social process for the friends as much as it is a physical one. It provides time for them to use their language skills and engage in social interaction. It’s also a time to practice self-help. Being on chef duty provided me an opportunity to engage in this social process. Children will use their language skills with me to tell me they want more food or are all done. If they are yet to develop these language skills they will utilize sign language to communicate these words. Often times during meals they emphasize what they’re saying by using sign language simultaneously. I’ve learned it is essential that a child learns to communicate their needs. So, when they are all done at the table and refuse to communicate it, we may do hand over hand to sign it.

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**Learning Environment**

The learning environment in the CDC is child directed. Learning is teacher guided, involves hands on experimentation, and explores areas of social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Through child directed learning we facilitate a child’s learning rather than dispense knowledge directly to them. The CDC follows Iowa Early Learning Standards or IELS. These standards emphasize on content that is developmentally appropriate for a child’s curriculum. Through instructive activities incorporated in our schedule and lesson plan we are able to promote the children’s learning of these standards. Learning activities involve experiences with peers, teachers, language, movement, water, sand, nature, art, blocks, dramatic play, etc. to enhance their environment.

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**Routine**

It is important to have an established routine when working with children. I find this nurtures a child’s sense of stability and security. I’ve noticed the children become less anxious and calmer in demeanor once they’ve accustomed to the classroom routine. The schedule in the Cubs Room is predictable with adequate timing in between transitions. It is also flexible and responsive to a child’s individual needs. The daily schedule involves meals, naptime, free choice play and motor activities.

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**Advice for Future Employees**

My advice for future psychology major employees at the CDC is to genuinely take the experience as a learning opportunity. You will be able to gain insight in developmental psychology and enhance your knowledge of psychology. Not only that but it is a very rewarding experience to build a bond with the children and watch them grow. There are times when things can become overwhelming, so make sure to prioritize yourself as well and take a break or ask for help when you need to.

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**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank lead teachers, Tera Weber and Melita Rizvanovic who’ve made working in the Cub Room an incredible experience.

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**My Training**

As an employee at the CDC, I was required to complete several trainings. These include: CPR and First Aid Training, OSHA, (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) training, Mandatory Reporter of Child Abuse training, Civil Rights training, Nutrition, Essentials Child Care Preservice training, and a physical. These trainings are essential in understanding how to better protect children. Through these trainings I learned the appropriate responses to a child’s physical, emotional, or social needs. I also learned how to identify cues in a child’s behavior that may indicate happenings of abuse or other troubles.

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**What I learned**

Work at the CDC largely improved my knowledge of child development. I have a better understanding of how children learn throughout developmental stages. I also had the opportunity to apply classroom learning to real life experiences. For instance, I was able to identify and observe children who were in the sensorimotor stage. This involved them relying on their senses and trial and error to gain knowledge. Aside from this I learned how to efficiently communicate with children and their families, as well as how to properly respond to individual needs and encourage healthy expressions of communication. In all, I’ve found this to be a great experience as I plan to be a school psychologist. It involved the combination of educational and psychological knowledge that I will require to be further concerned with young people and their families. In all, I feel more confident and prepared in pursuing school psychology with this experience.

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