

We, the Village - Day in the Life Blog:

ECACE & Early Childhood Providers and Educators

We, the Village asked early childhood providers who have received the **Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE)** scholarship what a day in their lives looked like while continuing their education, and how ECACE has helped make their career goals a reality.

Read the blog below to learn more about why we all must be **#ALLIN4ECACE!**

(Are you an ECACE recipient and interested in sharing your story? Send your answers to the questions below, along with a headshot or photo of yourself to be included with the blog, to **Celia.Bartel@actforchildren.org**)

Day in the Life: Alexis Smith, Early Childhood Educator and ECACE Recipient

- **What does/did a typical day look like for you, and how do/did you manage balancing your responsibilities as an early childhood educator alongside your college coursework?**

I balanced my days by making my appointments, putting them in my telephone, and setting my alarms. I had children sometimes and sometimes I didn't. I set my alarm for half an hour before it was time for my appointments with my tutors during the week. When doing housework, I would set my alarm for the time I felt it would take me to an area or a room. I would also set my alarm for whatever time I was going to study so that I would get my homework done and turn it in on time.

- **What inspired you to go back to school or pursue your degree in early childhood education?**

What inspired me to go back to school and pursue my bachelor's degree in early childhood education was my grandmother. I came home one night, and my grandmother was sitting at the table, and I asked her what she was doing. She told me she was doing her mail order interior decorating homework. I made a statement about her age, and she told me you never get too old to learn. She had me promise her that I would go back to school and finish my education, no matter how long it took

- **How has receiving the ECACE scholarship impacted your educational experience, and what does it mean to you personally?**

Receiving the ECACE scholarship has impacted me by giving me the opportunity to go back to school to earn my bachelor's degree in early childhood education. It also made it possible for me to fulfill my promise that I made to my grandmother. I never thought I would be able to go back to school and obtain my bachelor's, and graduate with honors at my age.

- **What impact do you hope to make in your community or classroom as a result of earning your degree?**

The impact that I hope to have on children's lives is the importance of going to school to get an education so they can make a good life for themselves. In my community, I have already started. I volunteer in the food pantry when I can and I am a Sunday school teacher working with toddlers to three-year-olds.

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Day in the Life: Kindall Smith, Early Childhood Educator and ECACE Recipient



- **What does a typical day look like for you, and how do you manage balancing your responsibilities as an early childhood educator alongside your college coursework?**

As an early childhood educator pursuing my college degree, each day is a carefully orchestrated blend of dedication, structure, and passion. My mornings begin early, typically around 5:30 a.m., giving me time to reflect, pray, and mentally prepare for the day ahead. By 7:00 a.m., I am usually on-site, greeting my students with a warm smile and preparing the classroom environment to ensure it is welcoming, engaging, and developmentally appropriate. These early hours are crucial—they set the tone for the day and allow me to double-check lesson materials, adjust the schedule if needed, and respond to any immediate communication from families or school administrators.

From 8:00 a.m. to mid-afternoon, my focus is entirely on my students. I lead structured learning activities centered around literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional development. I incorporate play-based learning, sensory exploration, and storytelling to support my

students' developmental milestones. As every child is unique, I remain mindful of their learning styles, needs, and cultural backgrounds, ensuring my approach is inclusive and responsive. I use observational strategies to assess learning and document student progress during transitions and free play. Additionally, I engage with families regularly, offering updates and encouraging partnerships to support children's growth at home and in the classroom.

By late afternoon, once the classroom is clean, materials are stored, and daily reflections are noted, I transition to my college responsibilities. I typically allocate two to three hours each evening to attend virtual lectures, complete readings, or work on assignments. Time management is critical—I use planners and digital calendars to track work-related and academic deadlines. I often prioritize tasks based on urgency and impact, breaking larger assignments into manageable pieces to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Weekends are essential for catching up on coursework, conducting research, or working on projects. However, I also carve out time for self-care, church involvement, and rest, recognizing that maintaining my well-being is essential to being an effective educator and student.

Balancing these dual roles is not without its challenges. There are times when the workload feels intense, especially during report card season or midterms. However, my love for teaching and commitment to lifelong learning keeps me grounded. Every assignment completed and every lesson taught is a step closer to my goal of becoming a more effective, knowledgeable, and impactful educator. This journey is not just about fulfilling requirements—it is about modeling resilience, excellence, and purpose for the children I teach daily.

- **What inspired you to go back to school or pursue your degree in early childhood education?**

My decision to return to school and pursue a degree in early childhood education was rooted in personal passion and a deep sense of purpose. For as long as I can remember, I have been drawn to the growth and development of young children. My journey began in the church, where I volunteered to teach Sunday School and lead children's ministry programs. In those sacred, joy-filled spaces—filled with laughter, learning, and curiosity—I discovered the influential impact educators can have on shaping the hearts and minds of children during their most formative years.

As I continued working with children, particularly in underserved communities like the one I grew up in, I saw firsthand the difference a nurturing, knowledgeable, and intentional

educator can make. Early childhood education is not just about teaching letters and numbers—it is about building confidence, instilling a love for learning, and laying the foundation for future success. The more I taught, the more I recognized the need for highly trained educators who understand young learners' developmental, cultural, and emotional needs.

Returning to school was a personal and professional commitment to be that kind of educator. I wanted to deepen my understanding of early childhood development, learn best practices, and equip myself with the tools necessary to serve children and families excellently. Pursuing this degree is also about representation—showing young Black boys and girls that someone who looks like them can lead, teach, and inspire.

Ultimately, I went back to school not just for myself but for every child who deserves a champion, every family who deserves support, and every community that deserves access to quality education. My goal is to be more than a teacher—I aim to be a change agent, a mentor, and a voice for equity in early education.

- **How has receiving the ECACE scholarship impacted your educational experience, and what does it mean to you personally?**

Receiving the ECACE (Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity) scholarship has been a transformative milestone in my educational journey—practically and personally. Before receiving the scholarship, I often found myself juggling the demands of teaching and coursework and the financial strain that comes with pursuing higher education. The ECACE scholarship relieved a significant burden, allowing me to focus on what truly matters: growing as an educator, deepening my knowledge, and pouring into the children and families I serve without the constant worry of tuition payments or student debt.

Financially, this scholarship opened doors that I did not think were possible. It allowed me to take a full course load without hesitation, access academic resources, and attend professional development opportunities I would have otherwise had to pass up. With ECACE support, I can stay on track toward completing my degree while continuing to work in the classroom and apply what I am learning in real-time. The balance between theory and practice has strengthened my confidence and improved the quality of care and education I provide to my students daily.

However, beyond the finances, this scholarship means something much more profound to me personally. It represents recognition—it tells me that my work in early childhood education matters. It affirms that my efforts, calling, and desire to grow in this field are seen and supported. As someone from a historically underserved community, this

scholarship feels like an investment not just in me but in the generations I aim to impact through teaching, mentoring, and leadership.

In many ways, ECACE has helped me reclaim the power of possibility. It reminds us that we can overcome barriers and achieve our goals with the proper support, dedication, and heart. This scholarship is more than financial aid—it is a lifeline, a push forward, and a symbol of hope for a brighter future for me and the children I serve.

- **What impact do you hope to make in your community or classroom as a result of earning your degree?**

Earning my degree in early childhood education is more than a personal accomplishment—it is a promise to my community and a commitment to transformation. I come from a place where access to high-quality education has not always been guaranteed. Many of the children in my neighborhood, much like myself growing up, face barriers that extend far beyond the classroom: poverty, lack of resources, and limited exposure to early learning opportunities. My goal is to be a beacon of change in those spaces—to help rewrite the narrative and ensure that every child, regardless of their zip code, has a strong educational foundation.

In the classroom, I want to create a learning environment where children feel safe, seen, and celebrated. I want to model what it means to be a compassionate, culturally responsive educator who teaches academics and life skills, emotional intelligence, and confidence. I plan to use developmentally appropriate practices, trauma-informed strategies, and inclusive materials to meet the needs of diverse learners and empower them to take pride in who they are and where they come from.

Beyond the classroom, I aim to be a community leader who advocates for early learning resources, mentors future educators, and helps families navigate the education system. With my degree, I want to open doors for myself and others. Whether through creating programs, writing curriculum, or eventually opening a school that centers on Black and Brown excellence, my vision is clear: to build a community where education is a right, not a privilege, and where every child has a real chance at success.

Ultimately, the impact I hope to make is one of legacy—where the seeds I plant today as an educator grow into a forest of opportunity for generations to come.