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VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Creating a Legacy in Early Childhood Education

Q & A



with Sarah Reyes of
Seeds of Jesus Daycare

What comes to mind when you think of the word “legacy?”

“When I think about legacy, the first thing that comes to mind is what I leave behind for our children. Unfortunately, the world is marked by social, cultural, and economic disparities. But what if we teach our children at an early age faith and cultural values?”

Can you give an example of the impact of your work as it relates to legacy?

“My mission is to teach our children values that exemplify the Bible's golden rule about love and respect for others, as Jesus commissioned to all of us. That is how Christian and bilingual education evolves as part of my professional mission and goal in early childhood. In our program, children learn to appreciate differences of cultures, races, languages, and faiths. I want to leave a legacy of Christian values, Spanish language acquisition, and culture to young children.”

Provide background on how you chose early childhood as your profession. Were there other family members in the field who influenced your work?

“My paternal grandfather was a significant influence in my childhood years. In my native Puerto Rico, my grandfather was our neighborhood guitar teacher. The neighborhood residents, specifically young children and youth, respected him as an instructor. His teaching skills and passion captured my attention and admiration. He was a role model who left behind a legacy of musicians, singers, and a community that shared its culture throughout younger generations. He was a model of education and cultural legacy to me.”



“Arely is one of my family daycare students, now an adolescent. I love Arely because she has been a miracle baby since birth with Moebius syndrome's, a rare neurological disease.”

Image provided by Sarah Reyes



Sarah and Arely (first on the left, pink shirt) at her program when Arely was a student in 2010. Image provided by Sarah Reyes.

What keeps you motivated to continue serving young children?

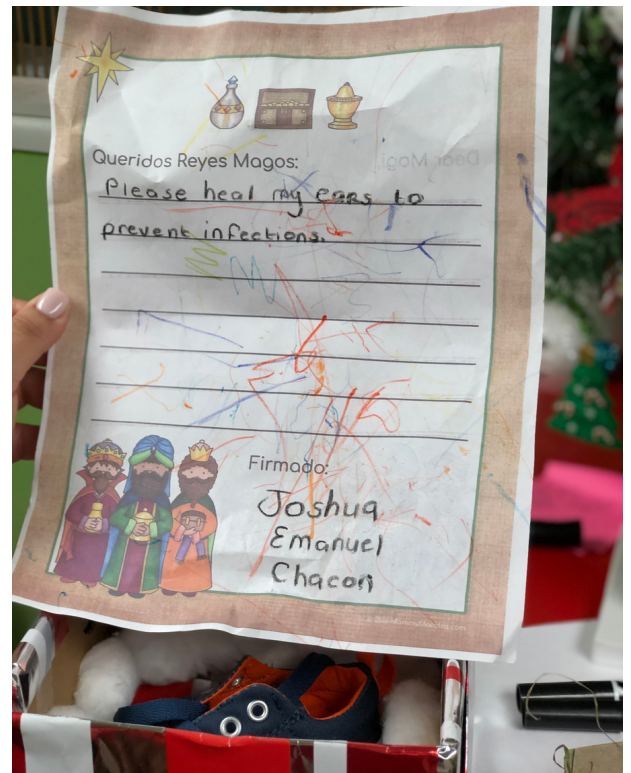
"I find my inspiration in my children. Because I was concerned about the quality of early childhood education for my children, in the spring of 2004, I decided to quit the art teacher position to become an early childhood professional as a family daycare. The acceptance of our diverse community has been my engine to continue with the mission of leaving a faith, cultural, and linguistic legacy to our young children. At present, I have expanded the school to a child care center where I continue providing quality education to young children. "

When your current children are adults, what would you like them to remember about their experience in your care?

"I want my students to make kindness, love, and empathy part of their lifestyle. My desire is that faith values and cultural legacy pass from generation to generation."

If you could go back in time and give your younger, professional self a piece of advice related to leaving your mark/legacy on the field of early childhood, what would that be?

"If I could go back in time, one piece of advice I would give myself would be to leave behind my insecurities. Teaching Christian values and culture has been one of the most valuable and rewarding professional experiences in my life. Maybe I can't eradicate the world's inequalities. But I can empower our children to be the change we all want for them. That is my legacy to future generations."



"In some Hispanic countries, the children collect some hay or grass in a small box and put it under their bed for the Three Wise camels as they come overnight to bring presents to children as they did with baby Jesus. In some other countries, the children write their wish letters to the Three Kings and put them inside a shoe under their bed. In our center, we teach about Jesus' birth to the children. The children decorate a box, get some grass for the camels, and write a wish letter for the three wise kings as a family project. On January 6, the parents and their children bring the letter and the box with grass to the center where the children get the presents after their nap. In the pictures, the letter and the box with the shoe belong to Joshua, a child who got sick from his ears often. His parents prayed and wished for Joshua's healing."

Image provided by Sarah Reyes