

Career Connections

Early Childhood Development

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

Do you have a special interest in young children? Do you feel energized and excited by the curiosity, freshness, and possibility that children bring into our world? Have you enjoyed being with younger siblings, nieces, nephews and/or babysitting? Do you gravitate to young children whenever you are in situations where various generations are together? If you answer “yes” to these types of questions, you might want to focus on early childhood development as an area of vocational interest. Even if your career goals are not directly related to this area, you may be able to develop connections to early childhood as a volunteer.

The Early Childhood Development Career Connections program gives you support and guidance in your thinking as you learn about and experience various opportunities related to young children. Regardless of your major, this Career Connections will help you to clarify how you can build upon your interest in working with young children.

There are a variety of career options in early childhood development. These include kindergarten teacher, preschool teacher, child development specialist, early intervention specialist, infant/toddler teacher, early childhood development professional, Montessori teacher, advocate for children through work in a not-for-profit or government policy organization, author of books for children, children/youth minister, teacher aide, teacher assistant, developmental psychologist, or child psychologist.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Exploring Options

The Career Center on the second floor of the Campus Center is a good place to begin your exploration of early childhood development. The Campbell Interest and Skill Survey and the Myers Briggs Type Indicator are excellent resources for gaining information regarding personal preferences, necessary qualifications, and average salaries for specific positions. The Career Center conducts a variety of workshops, career exploration panels, and individualized career guidance, all of which can help you in your exploration. The Career Center can also help you make contact with Hanover College alums who are currently working in fields related to early childhood development. You can find books in the Career Center that will help you to further research this field such as *Careers for Kids at Heart and Others Who Adore Children*, which outlines many different settings that employ individuals interested in working with young children, and *Education Career Directory* that explains to you what to expect from a career in education, typical career paths, and what employers look for when interviewing applicants. There are many different individuals with whom you can talk both on- and off- campus to gain information about this field. A good starting place is the Education Department faculty. These professors have contacts with many of the organizations and institutions that work with children in the Hanover/Madison area. The Education Department faculty can help you determine whether the Teacher Education Program is of interest to you. They can also assist you in discovering other ways to be involved with children.

The director of the Hanover College Center for Child Development would be useful in your explorations. It may be beneficial for you to do an informational interview with the director and/or members of the staff or to spend a day job shadowing with them to get a sense of what a typical day is like. The College has two child care centers on File Street. One is for infants and toddlers up to age three, and the other is for preschool and kindergarten-aged children. Both Centers are open from 7:30 A.M. until 5:30 P.M.

Assisting in one of the local kindergarten classes or helping in a preschool would be additional options for exploring your interest in early childhood development. Pope John Elementary School has a preschool and daycare that is open all day and offers a good setting for observation and participation. The Presbyterian Church Cooperative Preschool is close by and offers programs for 3 – 5 year-olds. Headstart, a federally funded program for preschool children, has locations in both Hanover and Madison. First Steps Infant and Toddler Program operates a location in Madison. There is also a special education pre-school at Madison Junior High School.

Montessori Education is a model that is highly recognized in Europe and is increasingly popular in the U.S. Montessori is a method of observing and supporting the natural development of children. These educational practices help children develop creativity, problem solving, and time-management skills. To learn more about Montessori education, visit the American Montessori Society's website at www.amshq.org. There are several Montessori Schools within easy driving distance of Hanover (Columbus, Indiana, Cincinnati, Ohio, and New Albany, Indiana).

Waldorf education focuses on rich artistic experiences and demanding practical work with rhythm, song, color, dance, painting, poetry, storytelling and drama woven into academic subjects. There is a Waldorf-inspired magnet school in Louisville, KY that offers a nearby location through which Hanover College students could explore this unique educational model.

There are also many other avenues you can use when exploring this career field that are easily accessible in your spare time. Ivy Tech in Madison offers an associate degree of applied science in Early Childhood Education, and there may be resources and information available there to support your interest in young children. Another way to explore the field of early childhood development is to make contact with professional organizations such as the National Association for Education of Young Children (www.naeyc.org), the National Association for Family Child Care (www.nafcc.org) and the International Nanny Association (www.nanny.com).

Academics

While there is no specific required major for this field, many Hanover College students who have an interest in early childhood development decide to major or minor in psychology, sociology, or other academic fields and apply for the Teacher Education Program. The elementary education major focuses on children between kindergarten and 5th grade. This course of study offers many opportunities to observe and participate in local schools. Young children in the U.S. are served by both accredited childcare/pre-school programs and by pre-school programs that are more informally governed and are not accredited. Obtaining a license in elementary education would be necessary to teach in most accredited pre-schools (regulations vary from state to state). Psychology majors might be interested in going on to graduate school to specialize in work with children via a masters in social work, a clinical doctorate, or a doctorate in developmental psychology.

Several Hanover College courses specifically relate to early childhood development and would be helpful suggestions for your academic work.

- PSY 244, Childhood and Adolescence examines the growth and transformation of basic psychological processes from prenatal development through adolescence. (Prerequisite: PSY 111 Basic Principles of Psychology)
- SOC 225, Marriage and Family investigates systems analysis of marriages and families; diversity of family types; mate selection processes; changing family functions, structures, and roles; socio-legal issues; elements of healthy and dysfunctional families; family break-up and reconstitution. (Prerequisite: SOC 111, Introduction to Sociology or permission.)
- EDU 340, Early Childhood Learning and Social Theory investigates approaches to studying young children; the physical-motor, psychosocial, cognitive, language and literacy development; and the home, school and community influences on a child's life. (Prerequisite: EDU 221, Foundations of Education.)
- EDU 457, Internship in Elementary Education offers an opportunity to develop an internship in preschool or kindergarten education.
- EDU 471, Independent Study is a chance to develop an independent project related to early childhood development.

Co-Curricular Activities

There is much more you can do while at Hanover to help prepare for a career in early childhood development than just academic work. The activities suggested in this section are where you can really get the feel for whether a career in early childhood development is right for you. There are too many possibilities for one person to do all of them, so you may want to pick and choose those that best meet your particular interests. It may be beneficial to think of three different ways that on- and off- campus activities can be helpful to you. First, they can supplement the knowledge that you are getting in the classroom. Second, they can give you first hand exposure to some of the activities that will be a part of your working experience. Third, they can provide you with an opportunity to be involved in work related situations that will be invaluable to your career preparation. Not all of these activities will provide you with all of these benefits, but a thoughtful selection of the following should provide you with the skills and experiences you need.

On-Campus Activities

There are a variety of campus activities that can provide you with a great opportunity to gain experience in early childhood development. Participation in the Indiana Student Education Association (ISEA) offers many opportunities to gain experiences with children and education. You could also consider joining College Mentors for Kids! (CMFK), an organization on-campus that helps local school-aged children by promoting mentoring relationships between elementary and college students. Love Is Needed by Kids (LINK) is a big brother/big sister organization for school-aged children in the surrounding communities who may be less fortunate and in need of more attention; LINK offers another avenue for gaining valuable experience while contributing to society. The child care facilities on campus offer great opportunities to gain experience.

Volunteers are needed throughout the day to help at playtime, with art activities, music, outdoor recreation and reading stories.

Off-Campus Activities

Volunteering in the community can help enhance your understanding of what it is like to work in the field and also provide a service to the community. Many local churches need volunteers to teach Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. Some need childcare workers during worship either from volunteers or from college students who are paid for this service. The Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches in Hanover all provide after-school programs for elementary-aged children. Volunteers are needed to help with many aspects of these programs. Church-sponsored preschools, the preschool program at Southwestern Elementary, and the Pope John Elementary Preschool are locations where volunteers are always needed and appreciated as well. Tiger Cub Scouts and Daisy Brownie Scouts are programs for young children interested in scouting, and offer many opportunities, such as volunteering as a troop leader or during the summer at a day camp. The Big Brother/Big Sister program in Madison offers a wide range of programming, and volunteers are involved in many ways. The public library is always looking for volunteers to read books to children as well as to assist with the various programs they offer.

Work Experience

On-Campus Jobs

There are several excellent work opportunities on-campus available to gain experience with early childhood development. The Hanover College Center for Childhood Development occasionally has paid positions available, and they are always looking for volunteers. There are often opportunities to do babysitting, childcare, and home-schooling for the children of faculty and staff.

Related Jobs and Internships

There are a number of opportunities to gain work experience in the field of childhood development off-campus during breaks from Hanover as well as while school is in session. Southwestern Elementary School offers an after school tutoring program which pays Hanover students that tutor the children. You could also consider working as a nanny during the summer. Every year, the Career Center hosts a Summer Camp Fair during which summer camps from the surrounding areas recruit for positions such as camp counselors. There are also often positions with organizations like the YMCA or Boys' and Girls' Clubs to teach swimming or other sporting skills to children. Daycare centers, Head Start programs, and preschool summer programs also offer positions to college students looking for paid work experience in the summer months. Another option would be to substitute teach at area schools when your schedule allows for it. David Harden, Internship and Career Connections Coordinator, could also help you find internships that meet your specific interests.

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