

DAILY TITAN

Jumpstart students join new preschool program

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Jumpstart students at Cal State Fullerton are taking time to help serve children in local low-income neighborhoods.

For the past 13 years, Jumpstart has been guiding about 45 students each year to succeed within their field while trying different teaching techniques to increase the learning process for local children in low-income communities.

"We (Jumpstart) are the top one or two in the nation for impact on the preschoolers that we serve," said Dawn Macy, director of CSUF's Center for Internships and Community Engagement (CICE).

This year, CSUF's Jumpstart has been one of the five sites to pilot the new preschool curriculum.

"In the past, the Jumpstart curriculum focused on a lot of different skills that would prepare children for the demands of kindergarten," said Katie Herbst, program coordinator for CSUF's Jumpstart. "This switch they are making focuses more on oral language development and social-emotional awareness."

Without a strong foundation of oral language and vocabulary, it would be hard for the children to truly succeed in other subjects, Herbst said referring to the research Jumpstart has done.

The Jumpstart members have the opportunity to take this curriculum to local preschools, test it out and see if there is anything else that could be added or taken from this new pilot.

Hailey Shenk, a senior child and adolescent development (CHAD) major, has worked with the program for two years.

"Last year was my first year doing it and my first year being in the classroom," Shenk said. "We were with the same kids for the whole year and at the end of it, we give them a backpack that has all of these school supplies that they get to take for the next year. That was such a rewarding experience to do because they were just so excited."

Shenk said the program is a big commitment but completely worth it. Students in the Jumpstart program must go into classrooms twice a week, for a minimum of 300 hours for both fall and spring semesters and complete their lesson plans each time.

"We definitely work as a team throughout the internship, but again, a lot of us are super busy students; we work, we take full-time classes," Shenk said. "So, it is very difficult at times, but I think it is probably a little more rewarding than the average internship because of the connection that we get to make in the classroom."

Although CHAD majors receive internship credit, this program is open to all majors. Mathematics, geology, and health science majors have been involved this year.

Herbst said the new curriculum has been going well with many students and is excited to work hard to ensure this new program will be successful.

"Just seeing the investment that the college students make into the children, into the community, how attached they get and how much they really care for the children and want to see the children grow is really encouraging for me," Herbst said.