

I have been around people with disabilities since I was young. My first experience that I remember is when my cousin was born with Autism. He is very high functioning to the point that many people are unaware and don't put together his behavior with his disability. As I grew older, I would see children my age with disabilities around my school. There were very rarely times when they were integrated into my general education classes, they were often in their own room away from the rest of the students. As I moved into high school it was similar, but there were greater attempts to include the children with disabilities with the rest of the students. We would often see them at lunch or in the hallways when they were walking in their group with a teacher present. As I grew older and decided on my major of CSDS I was determined to find a way to be around more children with disabilities more because I knew I would be working with them in the future.

My junior year of high school I found a Speech Pathologist who agreed to let me shadow her for a few days. She worked in a private practice and worked with children individually. While shadowing her I learned about multiple disabilities that I was unaware of, which grew my interest and love for the profession. I was allowed to interact with some of the kids and after being given instruction I was even given the opportunity to take the lead on a few activities. This opportunity made me 100% sure of my career choice and extremely excited for my future. I truly enjoyed working with each of the kids and getting to know their individual personalities. What I really fell in love with was the range of interventions used for each of the children. It often depended on what the child wanted to do that day and all of the children seemed to thoroughly enjoy their time with the therapist. I am very glad I found this opportunity when I did because it has largely impacted many of the choices I have made and will continue to make. I am always

looking for opportunities similar to this one and had a great one the summer of my freshman year of college.

During the summer of 2020, I secured an internship that allowed me to help run a camp for occupational therapy. They had just recently added a speech pathologist to their team, so I wasn't able to work with her just yet. I decided to still do the internship with the occupational therapist because it allowed me to interact with children with disabilities. Many of the children I met actually needed both occupational and speech therapy. I was able to work hands on with the occupational therapists and create relationships with each of the children. Similar to my previous opportunity, this opportunity made me extremely excited for the future. What I realized, however, during these opportunities was how little I knew about each of the disabilities and the history of these occupations.

In this class I hope to learn about the history of special education and how it applies to the occupation of Speech Pathology as well as the best way to create and apply individualized plans for each of my students.. Reading about the history within the first couple chapters of our textbook was really interesting to me and I was able to find many connections to my major just throughout those first chapters. I am excited to get deeper into how to create an IEP as I know they will be used a tremendous amount in my future. I hope to become more confident in myself when working with children with disabilities and be able to find the best ways to help them. I hope to be working in a private practice, which I know will be very different than working in the schools. However, I still believe a lot of what we are learning will apply to my future in many ways.