

Danny Vasquez

DANNY VASQUEZ is a lead teacher at ACCA Child Development Center, in Annandale, Virginia.

TYC reader since: 2009

My teaching style in three words:
Compassionate, fun, creative

Favorite children's book: *Where the Wild Things Are*, written and illustrated by Maurice Sendak

What I'm reading now: *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind, Survive Everyday Parenting Struggles, and Help Your Family Thrive*, by Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson

Words of inspiration: "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."—Dr. Seuss

How I take care of myself: I train in Muay Thai kickboxing. Not only does it keep me physically active, it disciplines my mind and acts as a form of therapy. When I push my limits through focus and practice, I can go farther than I thought I could. This helps with my teaching.

Why didn't someone tell me? The majority of the time, when a child does not understand something, it is *the teacher* who has to figure out another way to communicate the information or the question to the child. Understanding that all children learn differently will help you improve communication and develop a better relationship with your students.

My two cents: Always try your hardest to be there for *all* of the children. Teachers need to understand that some children with challenges will require extra attention and a lot more work. Although it might be difficult to balance giving individualized attention with meeting the needs of the other children in your classroom, never give up on any child who needs you.

Proudest accomplishment: Hearing from the parents of my first student with challenging behavior that what I do in the classroom has changed their experience at home. Receiving their feedback about how my approach with their child improved their own approach reassured me that what I was doing was for the right reasons.

When I knew I had to teach: When I was a kindergarten teacher's aide, I used to spike my hair up with gel (I know...). I noticed that more and more kids started coming to school with gel in their hair—even the girls! I discovered then that I could have a great influence on children's lives, even when I wasn't trying to. That realization helped me see that I have to be intentional about how I act and what I do in the classroom. **TYC**

Future goal: I am currently working toward my bachelor's degree in early childhood education. I plan to continue my education by pursuing a master's degree and mentoring other teachers along the way. Direct interactions with children will always be my main focus.