

PSYC390

Engaged Learning Internship

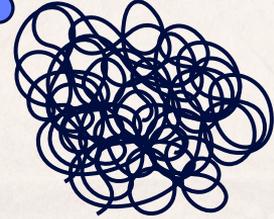
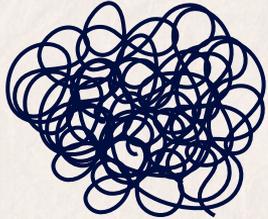
Gabriella Piscopo – [ASPIRE](#)
Scholarship Spring 2023



Who Am I?



My name is Gabriella Piscopo, and I am a senior psychology and Italian studies major. Currently I am taking Psyc390 which is a capstone course for psychology majors in which we are able to use all the skills we required in the classroom in a real-world setting. This past semester I have been interning at Family Empowerment Center as an after-school program assistant.

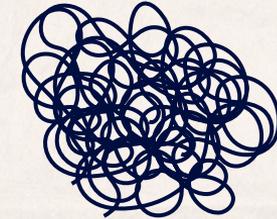
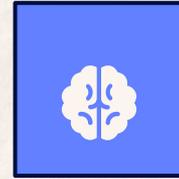


What is the Family Empowerment Center (FEC)?

The Family Empowerment Center (FEC) is a place located in Rogers Park, that focuses on providing opportunities and resources to people and families who are under-resourced. They offer a variety of programs and resources to Chicago community such as : after-school programs for CPS students, adult ESL classes, a food pantry, religious services, and more.



What is the afterschool program and my role?



S.A.Y Yes! After-school Program

The "S.A.Y Yes! After-School Program" is a CPS safe-haven program. The program focuses on academic enrichment, character and spiritual growth and development, and providing a safe and nurturing environment to the children.

My Role

My job is to assist the staff with maintaining these goals through mentoring and tutoring, leading life-skill activities and games, and creating a fun and secure place for all kids.



My Learning Project

- ❖ As part of the curriculum for PSYC390, all interns are required to do a 'learning project'. The learning project can be whatever we chose, it just has to positively help or better the business that we are interning with
- ❖ At the after-school program, each week is dedicated to a life-skill topic where we spend time everyday doing activities or discussing said topic. Some examples of previous life-skill topics are stress management, cooperation, money management and entrepreneurship, etc.
- ❖ Therefore, I decided that for my learning project I would create and the topic, activities, and discussion for the life skills activity for one of the weeks. Based off my major, background, and past courses that the topic would mental health and emotional intelligence



Why did I choose mental health and emotional intelligence?



Well, besides for the obvious fact that I am a psychology major on the path to a career in school psychology, I chose mental health and emotional intelligence because I believe that understanding your own mental health and growing/developing high emotional intelligence is crucial to development. I believe it is one of the most important things that often gets looked over and having a . I think that the earlier you educate kids about understanding mental health in general, their emotions and feelings, and how to be in control of their own mentalities, the less mental health issues they will develop and the more they will be in-tune with themselves and with those around them.



Learning Project Outline

Monday: What is Mental Health

Activity: Have kids draw their “brain” and write or draw things inside it...they could draw whatever they like it is more of an opportunity for them to reflect on their own thoughts.

Materials needed: blank sheets of paper, paper with outline of brain so kids can trace it, markers, crayons, colored pencils

Things to talk about and questions to ask:

- Ask kids what they think mental health is. How do they define mental health.
- Explain that mental health is emotional , psychological, and social-wellbeing. so how we think and feel .
- Explain how our mental health is very important as it effects who we are as people, like how we think , act, our friendships and other relationships with people, and how we live our lives.
- Explain how maintaining a good mental health is important for us to live our lives to the fullest.
- Ask kids if they have any questions about mental health/answer any questions they have.

Tuesday: Moods and Emotions, what are they and how to deal with/understand them

Activity: Have kids watch clips of each emotion from the movie Inside Out

Materials needed: computer and screen to show the clips

What to talk about and questions to ask:

- Talk about how all emotions are important and helpful at times, and it is important to feel our emotions.
- Explain how we can have more than one feeling about an event.
- Explain how emotions like sadness is important and can foster connection with other people.
- Explain that feelings about past, current, and future events can change over time, emotions are not linear or simple thing.
- Explain that expecting someone to be happy all the time is impossible, and it is okay to have moods where you don't feel super happy but
- Explain that emotions may look a little different for each person, some people can be more emotional than others, it just depends on the person
- Explain how all emotions are valid however we should continue to make good choices with each emotion even when the emotion or mood we are feeling is angry, sad, etc.

Ask them which emotion they feel the most, when do they feel certain emotions, which emotion they don't like to feel ecc.

Ask them to separate good moods and bad moods, and what emotions they feel doing these moods .

Learning Project Outline

Wednesday: Mental Health and Nutrition

Activity: Yoga and maybe a healthy snack that they can take home (if I'm allowed to bring them stuff if not just the yoga)

Materials needed: nothing

What to talk about and questions to ask:

- Explain that the food/drinks you eat affect your neurons and cause inflammation too your brain and when you eat too many unhealthy foods/drinks this can affect how your brain works and this can affect your mental health
- Explain that all foods can be good in moderation and that your brain needs all kinds of nutrients to work well, good nutrition and exercise can decrease anxiety and stress, increase happiness, memory, wellbeing, etc.
- Explain that along with keeping good nutrition, exercise helps your brain and mental health because it releases hormones that are help improve your overall mental and physical health.
- Explain that there are many ways to exercise your body, sports, walking, yoga, etc.. moving your body is good and important!
- Ask them if there are any foods that make them feel good after they eat them or if there are any that make them feel not as good or tired, lazy, etc.
- Ask them how they feel after the exercise or play sports
- Answer any questions they may have and then give them the healthy snack

Thursday: Healthy Relationships

Activity: Kids play the game "telephone"

Materials needed: nothing

What to talk about and questions to ask:

- Explain that the purpose about playing telephone is to show how words and things get twisted and that at this age/in life gossip and poor communication is something that can affect friendships/relationships and mental health
- Ask kids/talk about the characteristics of a good relationship/friendships (general relationships not just romantic), ask kids/talk about the characteristics of a bad relationship
- Explain how relationships can impact mental health in bad and good ways, bad ways like when you are in a fight with someone or one of your friends does something that hurts you, good like when your friend is there for you in a hard time or when you and your friend have a really great day together and they make you feel happy





Learning Project Outline



Friday: Self Love and Appreciation

Activity: Each student writes their name on the center of a blank piece of paper and then they write positive words or affirmations about themselves.

Materials needed: blank papers, markers, crayons, colored pencils

What to talk about and questions to ask:

- Explain that it is important to be nice to ourselves, there is only one us so we should treat ourselves with kindness!
- Explain that we should love and appreciate who we are, what we look like, what we can do, etc.
- Explain that thinking positive thoughts and writing down affirmations/nice things about ourselves can help one's mental health, self-esteem, etc.
- Explain that it is important to do "self-care" and take care of ourselves
- Ask the kids what their favorite things to do for themselves are



Reflections

- ❖ I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to intern for the FEC, to be able to educate the kids about mental health, and to watch the kids grow throughout the semester.
- ❖ I think I have successfully reached my learning goals of the semester which included:
 - strengthening my intrapersonal and communication skills with kids of all different ages and backgrounds
 - enhancing my time management skills
 - increasing my independence and ability to take initiative in the workplace
 - heightening my understanding and of each specific child's needs whether it be academically or socially.
- ❖ This internship has reiterated to me that I truly enjoy working with kids and watching them develop and that I am headed toward the right career path.

