

The Learning and Belonging (LAB) Preschool

Edited by Emily Pritchard

Kristin Dahl Horejsi, Director/Early Childhood Clinical Specialist at the Learning and Belonging (LAB) Preschool, is excited to bring UM interns into their preschool program to promote lifelong learning on both sides. "Getting high-quality field experiences is paramount to success in the early childhood and all other human sciences fields."



LAB staff members from left to right: Cassie Jones (Early Childhood Specialist/Morning Lead Teacher), Sarah Crotteau (Early Childhood Specialist/Afternoon Lead Teacher), Kristin Dahl Horejsi (Early Childhood Clinical Specialist/Director)

Tell us about LAB Preschool.

The Learning and Belonging (LAB) Preschool is a nationally accredited, multi-age early childhood preschool program that invites children of all abilities and their families to participate in a caring community designed to promote life long learning and the joys of belonging. LAB offers morning and afternoon sessions during the academic year. Small class sizes and high adult-child ratios provide individualized education experiences available to all children between the ages of 3-5 within the greater Missoula community.

How do interns fit into your organization?

Student interns fit naturally into our program. LAB is a model field-experience site that provides academic course support, resources, mentoring, and key practicum learning experiences for students enrolled in teacher education and other human science degree programs at the University of Montana.

Are intern schedules fixed or flexible?

"Scheduling is determined on an individual basis at the beginning of the term per student goals/objectives, interests, course requirements and the LAB's current needs/restrictions.

Preschool class sessions run Monday – Thursday from 9-12 and 1-4. It is preferable for students to commit to the morning or the afternoon class and be able to arrive 15 minutes before and stay 15 minutes afterwards for pre and post-session processing and reflection.”

Are there special trainings or other activities available to students during the internship?

“Typically the LAB is not able to finance outside trainings for students. However, training is embedded and ongoing in their daily experiences. Depending on their course work and needs students may have opportunity to participate in Friday seminars that would further their knowledge and expand upon their experiences.”

“Our facility is well set up for student (and faculty) research projects. We welcome early childhood related proposals and follow University of Montana and IRB research protocols.”

Did you do an internship as a student? How did this experience guide your career?

“My experiences as a practicum and assistantship student in a variety of settings were all invaluable. They provided hands-on learning and guidance in safe environments. Those experiences gave me the confidence to seek employment in the early childhood field. Throughout my career I have reflected upon the guidance and feedback I received early on from my supervisors. Clearly, those experiences led me to the work I do and love now!”

What advice do you have for students interested in early childhood development careers?

“Getting high-quality field experiences is paramount to success in the early childhood and all other human sciences fields. I would encourage all to seek experiences that reflect the work they are interested in. Be prepared daily and ready to jump into any task. Ask questions. Challenge yourself to implement what you are learning in your course work. Seek feedback. Don't be afraid of constructive criticism. Respectfully offer your ideas and suggestions. We learn just as much from our students as they do from us!”

Are the internships limited to specific majors?

“Most of our students come to us based upon course requirements within the Curriculum and Instruction department. However, we are open to students from a variety of departments across campus. Intern student numbers could vary from semester to semester.

Are the opportunities paid? Where do you advertise these positions?

“We do not offer paid opportunities. Though if a student is interested in employment and qualifies for Work Study money we occasionally have positions open and advertise on the UM

website.”

Where can students go for more information?

Please contact Kristin Dahl Horejsi, (406) 243-4262, kristin.horejsi@umontana.edu

LAB is located at the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences,
University of Montana