

## MEMBER PROFILE

### Jima Monson: “I really, really want” a college degree

Jima Monson, an associate teacher at the Concord Child Care Center, was not sure how she'd take all the classes she needed for her AA degree—and she was sure she would flunk some! Then she heard from her supervisor and the California Child Development Corps about a program that would team her up with other early childhood education students for mentoring and support. “We support anything that allows access to higher education and training for teachers who want that,” says Susan Jeong, policy associate for the Corps.



Jima Monson with her baby.

JIMA MONSON

#### Group support

Monson and 10 classmates (grouped into a “cohort”) studied together, tested each other on vocabulary words, and occasionally did homework together. “It was such a nice group for me, a really great experience because everyone has been so helpful,” she says.

Monson speaks English, Tagalog, Malaysian, some Spanish and Locano, but the thought of taking English classes terrified her. “Because I’m multilingual, I was sure I would end up failing English. But my cohort helped me understand the teachers are there for me when I need help.”

“The cohort class helped me get more self-confident and now I feel 100 percent certain I’m learning the material,” she says. “If there’s ever anything I don’t understand, my cohort team is there to help me.” And she’s even more motivated to study, she adds.

#### Juggling act

But it’s still “really, really hard” to juggle work, classes, and taking care of her 19-month-old daughter, she says. After work, Monson feeds her daughter before the babysitter comes, then she goes off to class. After class, she puts the baby to sleep, does housework, and goes to bed. Sometimes she brings the baby to class or study sessions. “It’s not impossible,” she says. “It’s something that I really, really want.” Monson expects to finish her degree next year.

Students sign up for the cohort program through their community college professional development advisor. Classes, books, and even parking on campus are free and students can get intensive tutoring at least once a week.

The cohort program helps teachers and providers continue their education in a supportive environment and gets them “in the same room together, talking about issues that are relevant to them,” says Debi Silverman with First 5 Contra Costa. The program is funded by First 5 and open to 90 students a year.

—Claudia Miller

#### DEC 5:

Child Development Corps will attend the **Child Care Work Group Meeting**—an annual opportunity to discuss professional and workforce development with other early care and education groups and legislative staff in Sacramento.

Contact Susan Jeong at 415-808-4312.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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