

Often early education programs are short-staffed and have many needs for an extra pair of hands. Western Christian Schools in Claremont, California, has a “gold mine” in the services of Mr. Carl Hayes. He describes his current position at Western Christian, Claremont, as his “retirement job.” Mr. Hayes, fondly called Mr. Carl by the boys and girls, has an impressive résumé. He holds an undergraduate degree from Northwestern College and a master’s degree from Biola University. He also graduated from Dallas Seminary. Carl served with the English Language Institute/China (ELIC) in Taiwan for eight years and returned to the United States with his wife and two children to continue serving by mentoring other missionaries preparing to go overseas. When ELIC moved to Colorado, Carl and his wife decided to stay in California. He prayed for the next juncture in his life and decided to once again go back to school. This time he received 12 units in early childhood and continued until he obtained an associate’s degree in early childhood education.

I met Carl last year when I was visiting early education programs in California. I was immediately impressed to see his engagement with the children on the playground. Recently, I interviewed Carl to find out what draws him to the early education classroom.

**Sara:** Carl, I saw the love and passion you have for young children when visiting Western Christian Schools, Claremont campus. What drew you to serve as an early educator after serving the Lord as a missionary and a mentor for so many years?

**Carl:** After I finished my time at ELIC, I prayed and asked the Lord how he wanted me to continue to serve in His kingdom. I went back to school for an early childhood degree as I was motivated to teach young children when I recognized the impact negative teachers have on children. I decided I wanted to make a difference in children’s lives by giving them a wonderfully positive experience!

**Sara:** So how did you get started in your early childhood career?

**Carl:** I first started at Western Christian, Claremont, as a volunteer by giving the teachers a break. After a time, I was hired as the outdoor activity director. I create themed weekly lesson plans for outdoor time that are biblically integrated and that complement what is being taught in the classroom. I use an acronym called the SPLICES scale to help me determine in which area of development each child may need help.

**Sara:** Can you share the SPLICES developmental scale with us?

**Carl:** S—spiritual development, P—physical development, L—literacy and language development, I—intellectual development, C—cognitive development, E—emotional development, and

S—social development. This scale allows me to evaluate the children’s growth and progress each day. I also occasionally lead chapel and teach the children the “ABCs.” A—attitude should be positive and Christlike, B—blessed to pray and be a blessing to others, C—confidence and courage.

**Sara:** How do you see yourself making a difference in the lives of young children?

**Carl:** In our culture today, boys and girls need strong, loving male figures who love, care for, and teach them from a biblical worldview. I consider it a privilege to be called “Papa” by many of the children. Often the children will ask me if I can help them. I strive to get down on their level to intently listen. I make it a point to sit with the children on the playground and love them as Jesus would show them His love. I want the children to grow up to be ladies and gentlemen, and I use those words for guiding children to become respectful of one another.

**Sara:** What is the Lord teaching you through this experience?

**Carl:** I am learning to be more sensitive to the boys and girls. The Lord is teaching me to be more like Jesus to the children. I am convinced if boys and girls have experience in attending a quality Christian early education program they have a greater chance of growing up to be strong, godly, constructive members of society, finishing their education and going on to have successful marriages. The Lord is teaching me that I can make a lasting impact in the lives of young children and their families.

**Sara:** Do you have any wisdom for retirees looking to find a useful place to serve the Lord?

**Carl:** Don’t be afraid to use your past experiences to try something new. Listen to the Lord. People who have retired still have much to give, and loving children and teaching them about God’s Word and world makes a lasting impact for eternity.

Christian early education programs would be blessed to seek out Christian retirees as potential staff members. Our seniors have rich and vast experiences to share and the patience to love like Jesus loves. Carl Hayes is a wonderful blessing to the children and families at Western Christian Schools in Claremont, California.



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