

Go the Distance

Student life

Episode 9: Projects - Truddy EXTRA

I'm doing a BA Honours in Children's Education. I'm currently studying children's literature: it's my final year of studying.

I work as a teaching assistant, and also I work with children and I do literacy with them, so it was important for me to understand how literature impacted on their learning and understanding. I have been studying for seven years.

My job is very interesting; no one day's the same. You've got the daily routines of changing books, talking to parents, but in terms of support and planning and learning, it's very different and on a daily basis.

My studies have been very beneficial to my work. I think it's important for you to understand children, and if you do understand the children, you can deliver your lessons and planning in the way that really get the best out of the children. For example, one of my modules was working with children and families. So, it's not just the child you're working with, but the parents and carers as well. And what it gave me was an overall perspective on being empathetic, being sympathetic and also having an eye out for safeguarding issues and how to support parents who are having difficulties. So, it has been really useful - some of the modules - to my work.

I suffer from sickle cell disease. It does impact on my life on a daily basis, because I'm constantly out of breath. I'm anaemic: it makes me very tired. I haven't got an immune system because of that, so I tend to spend a fair bit of time in hospital if I have an infection. I take my books with me so that I don't fall behind with my assignments. Sometimes, I do ask for a time extension for my assignments whilst I am in hospital, which is understandable.

Distance learning has been good for me, because it has reduced that travelling to university, and because you can learn within your own space and time. The advice I would give to anybody with a disability is to go for it. Your disability shouldn't limit you. So you're here to dictate to that disability, not the other way round.

The project I did, as part of my distance learning course, it's about children's literature - say - from the beginning of when people started to write for children, and how it's evolved over the years. You choose a question, and then you sort of bring together all the assignments that you've done. The length of the project is different from the normal assignments: it's twice the normal assignments.

It involved a lot of online research, a lot of group discussions and media research, which I find difficult. You get placed within a group and then you choose a book, you choose a contemporary book, and then you discuss it. If you choose a book that's been made into a film, you also have to look at the film, look at the reviews and the criticisms it's had. And then you compare and contrast it. I did an online research on various criticisms. Different newspapers had reviewed it and critiqued it, and some were positive and some were negative. My strategy has always been to write it in bits, and bring it together and that's what I did.

I will say that I have made good use of the dictionary this year. Some of the words were new to me, and so it made understanding the module quite difficult.

Studying has made me manage my time effectively; it's made me persevere and say, you know, "Actually, I am going to do it, regardless of whether I'm in hospital, or whether I'm at home." It's given me a good understanding of children, which is beneficial to me as a mum and in my professional role, and hopefully it will help me go on to get the best outcomes for not just my children, but children that I come in contact with in general.

I hope to make my children proud, and I have made sure that they value education, and I value education. When we go for that graduation ceremony, I think it will be a proud moment.