

Dear Mr Zander, I got my A because although I was never sure of what I wanted to do as a career I was never afraid to try. Since leaving school I found myself engaged in a range of different job roles, some I feel were beneficial, and others not so much. However, when I first started as a teaching assistant, I finally felt as though I got some real enjoyment out of my working day, and I quickly became very eager to develop my skills and progress within my new found career interest.

At first there were feelings of uncertainty – how do I apply for an education course? Are my previous qualifications valid? Is it possible to study alongside working full-time? Fortunately, upon enrolling on the inclusive education, I experienced feelings of relief as I discovered that there were others in a similar position to myself. I knew I had experience which was relevant to the course after having worked within a school setting for some time and I definitely used this to my advantage throughout my studies, applying valuable knowledge, taking on board the advice and support of other teaching staff, and pushing myself to my full potential, both in my employment and in my studies.

I was ambitious, I kept reminding myself of my end goal, which is graduation and receiving my very own cap and gown. I knew that the hard work would pay off. The more I learnt during my lectures and completing my assignments, the more confident I became as a learning support assistant. Likewise, the more time I spent working with various children and staff within the school, the more equipped I felt in my ability to succeed in the course.

I wasn't always perfect throughout my degree, more importantly I persevered. I challenged myself to overcome my urge to procrastinate and instead I learnt that it was far easier to keep on top of my workload as I went along – it was never fun to reach the deadline in a panic that assignments were yet to be completed. I am now confident that I can organise and prioritise, skills that will definitely remain useful throughout my career and likely applicable to any other career I may venture onto in the future.

My confidence has grown tremendously, I used to stay in my comfort zone as I often found myself afraid of failing. Now I am grateful for the position I am in, I feel fortunate to have come a long way and I am proud of myself. I no longer put myself down as I know that almost everything in life is a learning curve, I don't need to get everything right the very first time, it is important to learn from my mistakes. No one is perfect, I don't want to be perfect, I want to be better than I was yesterday, or last year. Now I know that it is me vs me.

Another part of my journey to getting my A was, I knew I had to make sacrifices, and I had to keep myself motivated whilst doing so. On the days where I wasn't so enthusiastic about completing my assignments, I reminded myself that it would all be worth my while, sort of adopting the idea of swallowing the frog. "If you know you have to swallow a frog, swallow it first thing in the morning" (Mark Twain). Essentially, I quickly realised that it was better to get the hard work completed out of the way, as the best is yet to come. I am left with more time for the things I enjoy, and I am one step closer to obtaining my degree. "If you work now, you'll play later. If you play now, you'll work later." (Dee Dee M Scott).

Zander Letter Reference List

Mark Twain, Swallow The Frog Method (date unknown)

Dee Dee M Scott, Work now, play later (date unknown)

Seren Elli Sleep

Address: 39 Hooper Way, Tonna, Neath, SA11, 3FB

Contact Number: 07502814356 Email: e.sleep@sky.com

Career Focus

I am a final year student at Trinity St David's University studying the Inclusive Education Foundation Degree, predicted to graduate with a 2.1 degree. I have 3 years experience as a teaching assistant within Primary schools, and have supported children in the early years, through to the juniors.

I would describe myself as a highly motivated, caring and ambitious individual. I have gained valuable class management, organisational and academic skills over the past few years, and I am always striving to learn, develop and improve on my occupational ability.

I am now exploring positions within an educational institution or within a rewarding, caring occupation which will encourage my nurturing ethos, while also promoting my organisational techniques and academic abilities allowing myself to help pupils or other individuals to grow and strive to reach their full potential, whether it be educationally or personally.

Education/Qualifications

2022-present: Foundation Degree Inclusive Education, UWTSD (Results Pending, predicted a 2.1) The course has developed my knowledge and skillset in terms of education and development, exploring a range of teaching techniques and resources, interesting relative psychological theories, and focusing on students who may have additional needs. These are all valuable attributes for progressing in my chosen career.

2018-2019: 11 GCSE's at Dwr Y Felin Comprehensive School, Neath (Grades A*-B) Includes Maths and English at B grade, and Triple Science ABB.

Vocational Training and Qualifications

Sensory circuits training course

Safeguarding training

Autism awareness course

Employment

Paid: 2023-present: Teaching Assistant at YGG Castell-Nedd. Duties include: Working within a classroom alongside other staff members to prepare and set up lessons/activities, sensory circuits, reading with or to the children, supporting them with their work, leading arts and crafts, engaging in physical education sessions, supervising at lunch time and on the yard, sometimes helping to mark pieces of work, being an accessible adult for any emotional or safeguarding concerns, being a good role model, teaching through the medium of Welsh and assessing various developmental skills. Also often worked as a one-to-one with children who have ALN, sometimes shadowing within the class, or often taking them out to the sensory room to calm them. Often taking groups of 10-20 children on my own for periods of time.

2022-2023: Teaching Assistant at Ysgol Y Cwm Bonymaen. Duties include: Similar to those above, however with a younger age group, therefore less academic responsibilities and more so keeping them safe, observing their communication and play skills, helping to put on/take off coats, helping with toilet duties/accidents, promoting

messy play, teaching very basic maths and numeracy skills, or speech and language (Welsh language) singing and dancing and general early year care.

2022-2022: Teaching Assistant for IntroTeach Agency based in Gorslas. Duties include: Similar duties, however due to moving from school to school after a period of time I was required to quickly adapt to a new environment and get to know a range of different children over time.

Unpaid: 2017-2017: Volunteer at Trem Y Glyn Care Home in Glynneath. Duties include: Opportunity to interact with elderly residents, playing board games, painting nails, being a friendly face to talk to, sometimes organising entertainment e.g. quizzes or shows, a very rewarding experience working with a totally different age group.

2018-2018: Volunteer Assistant at Brownies Kids' Club in Glynneath. Duties include: A great opportunity to work with children of all ages in one session, helped with a range of activities, sometimes prepared school, was a lovely experience working with children outside of a school setting as an extra-curricular.

Skills Education/Teaching Related

- Supportive and able to build positive relationships with pupils

Pupils respond positively to me and make good progress in all aspects of their learning and development in my care. Recently I have been trusted to carry out PPA with year 2 class which has boosted my class management and discipline skills. Enjoy working as a one-to-one with challenging pupils.

- Setting up and ensuring a positive learning environment

I always help to keep the class neat and organised so that pupils can feel ready to learn. I love creating displays for the walls which are personal to the class and are fun and eye catching.

- Lesson planning and organisational skills

Often help to create fun activities or pieces of work for the children to complete. Ensuring that all work is up to date and cater to the needs of each individual. Keep on top of maintaining a high standard in every work book.

Skills Other

Award for outstanding achievement in GCSE results.

Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award (2018) at Dwr Y Felin Comprehensive School.

Bilingual: Fluent in both written and spoken Welsh.

Referees

Addresses available upon request.

I have always had a strong ambition to be a primary school teacher. I always enjoyed my school years and definitely feel that my teachers, in both primary and secondary played a big role in this, which is why I would like to have a positive impact on students experiences and education. I would particularly like to work in a primary school because I feel that the crucial years of learning are at a very a young age first starting school and preparing students for the rest of their lives, leading up to secondary school. As young children the brain absorbs everything and it is vital that they are always encouraged to pick up new skills.

In school, I completed my Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award, where I was able to learn and develop a number of new skills e.g. teamwork, endurance and fitness. As part of the Award I volunteered for a number of months in a Brownies kids club. This again allowed me to interact with very young children and help the other staff there to carry out fun and educational activities including crafts and cooking. This also strengthened my desire to help people.

After leaving school, I did start studying in Neath College, my chosen A Levels were Biology, Psychology and Religious Studies, however, unfortunately I found it very difficult to learn online after we were put into lockdown due to Covid, and made the difficult decision that I would prefer to try an alternative, more hands on route to achieve my goals and work towards a career. This has definitely paid off, and I would personally say it has been more effective for myself.

My understanding of the teaching profession has been increased through working for an agency as a teaching assistant in primary schools. I later gained long-term work placements at two different Welsh medium primary schools. I have really enjoyed working with the children, and have found it rewarding that, the better I get to know them and their individual needs and learning habits, the more I am able to connect with them and help them with their work. The long-term involvement with the school has given me a better understanding of important issues such as the long-term delivery of the curriculum and strategies for managing the classroom so that over time the children become increasingly effective learners. I currently continue to work in a Welsh medium school since I enjoy making full use of the fact that I am fluent in both written and spoken Welsh.

Working in a primary school and getting a real insight of the day to day structure and responsibilities has been very enjoyable and I've always found it very rewarding to feel as though I can make a difference to young lives, especially those with additional needs or a less fortunate background, and I have already proven to myself that I have a good mannerism with these pupils and I can build a good relationship and gain their trust. I also am responsible for leading activities or lessons with sometimes an entire class or a group of children, which has really boosted my confidence and taught me great organisational skills. I love having creative freedom and planning and preparing a wide range of activities that the children enjoy and get to learn from.

Although I have done a lot of work within the classroom, I have also gained experience working on a more one-to-one basis with more troubled students or those with learning difficulties. This has definitely been very eye opening and the most important thing in my opinion is helping them enjoy school, ensure that they feel safe, and always catering to their individual needs to the best of my ability.

With everything being said, I am also aware that I still have a lot to learn with regards to becoming a teacher, and I am grateful to be studying for my foundation degree at the present, predicted to graduate with a 2.1. I will also always ask for help where I need it and learn from those who are more qualified than myself and try to pick up good habits through observing their teaching. I think that studying Inclusive Education will accelerate my learning and allow me to work towards my goals and I am eager for my future career in teaching.

