

My early education journey began in high school. I taught after-school in my church child care in a low-income area of Indianapolis. Each age group brought different adventures. I enjoyed babysitting, but this was different. I enjoyed the energy, curiosity, individuality and eagerness that each child brought. It motivated me. Every day I came with a song, a dance and extreme enthusiasm. I started college, majoring in social work, still working at the center. One day, my director said she wanted me to get a CDA... I found it was perfect for my career. The Child Development Certificate inspired me and changed my professional aspirations. I applied my knowledge in the classroom and became a lead teacher. As my first year of college ended, I had no financial aid left and knew social work wasn't for me. I got married and my priorities changed. I quit school. I wanted a career, a family, a degree, to feel accomplished, but I had no idea how to make it happen... My plan was to graduate with a degree in Social Work in four years, start my career, get married, start a family and begin a fairy tale life. I felt like I let my parents down, because education was always very important in our household... I continued working at the church child care, and while I enjoyed it and went from lead teacher to secretary/manager, it wasn't fulfilling.

I researched, but there weren't many schools offering early education degrees. I remembered the great experience at Ivy Tech, getting my CDA. I reenrolled, but how would I pay for it? We were newlyweds, trying to make a family and I didn't have my priorities straight... I never let go of the goal I had after high school. I wanted a bachelor's degree, period! I remembered my aunt telling me, "it doesn't matter how long it takes, get your degree." I desired school but not debt. My school advisor introduced me to T.E.A.C.H. This seemed perfect. My director was on board. I believe I was the first at my center to pursue a degree with T.E.A.C.H. I started taking classes online and everything was going great until my husband and I made poor money decisions and ended up moving in with family.

Again, my priorities changed. I didn't have time for school and my grades were falling because I couldn't focus... My husband and I had to figure out how to get out of personal debt and back on our feet. I called my T.E.A.C.H. advisor and she assured me that everything would work out. When I was ready, T.E.A.C.H. would be there. Within the next two years, after working at the child care center for 10 years, I started working at Wayne Township Preschool as a teacher's assistant. In six months I was promoted to lead teacher. I took a pay cut, but it was more professional and had proper materials to support early learning. I asked the principal if they would be willing to do T.E.A.C.H. with me. I had started taking classes using student loans, but it was expensive. They hadn't done T.E.A.C.H. before... but they said yes! It was such a relief. I was doing better in my classes, I was almost at the end and knew a practicum was coming. I wasn't sure how to fulfill the hours because I had to be at another center as much as a normal employee, without pay. I couldn't afford to not work full time. So, I pulled on information from my T.E.A.C.H. advisor and my school advisor and finally we had a solution. I was off work in the summer and completed my practicum then. In 2013, after 6 years, I received my Associate Degree in Early Education.

Getting my associates pushed me closer to my goal of a bachelor's degree. I began at Saint Mary of the Woods College with help from T.E.A.C.H. What was supposed to take me two years took four years. I remember trying to figure out how to do student teaching for my teaching license. I knew our home would not survive with half of our income for three or four months. My husband saw my struggle and said, "That's all you have left to do? Just do it. We'll be fine, I promise." That's all I needed. I completed my bachelor's, but wasn't able to pass the Math of the Pedagogy (I'm still working on that). Every time I came back to T.E.A.C.H. they took me on, with welcoming arms as if nothing wrong had ever happened, as if I was right on track, my own track. My T.E.A.C.H. advisor, Mrs. Dunlevy, played an essential role in my achievements. She never made me feel bad about stopping when I needed to. She encouraged me to take one step at a time, taking as little or as many classes as needed. I couldn't have asked for a better support system. T.E.A.C.H. helped me financially, mentally and educationally in ways that can't be described. I completed my bachelor's and am working on my master's in leadership. When I earned my bachelor's in 2017, I was working in a Head Start program as a lead teacher and knew I was destined for more. I tried being a center director briefly and it didn't work out. I wanted to do more for educators like me. T.E.A.C.H. gave me the opportunity to give someone else what was given to me. I believe everything happens for a reason and God allowed everything to bring me to T.E.A.C.H. I will forever be grateful. Through all the decisions I've made, participating in the T.E.A.C.H. program has been one the most beneficial and rewarding. Without my faith, family and T.E.A.C.H. I don't think I would've made it.

Miracle Brame
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Miracle Brame is a T.E.A.C.H. Counselor. Her career path started in high school as a part-time afterschool floater and included lead teacher, teacher's assistant and center director. She earned her Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education from Ivy Tech Community College and her Bachelor's Degree in Education Preschool-Grade 3 from Saint Mary of the Woods College, both with T.E.A.C.H. scholarships.