

## Diego's Story

As the Executive Director of SSP, I wish there was a way to capture the sounds I hear from my office each day. There is the sound of families arriving and saying their goodbyes when a mother parts from her little one and heads to her own classroom down the hall. There is the sound of staff speaking with one another about lessons or testing. There is the sound of chatter by the coffee pot where many of our adult students gather during their morning break time. But my favorite sound of all, is hearing the gleeful laughter and squeals of the children when something excites them. The sound of joyful enthusiasm is present every Monday and Wednesday when I hear "*Diego!*", which signals that our favorite (and only) intern has arrived.

Diego Ramos was born and raised in South Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley. He credits his parents for the person he is today, and for instilling in him their own values, joy, love, and wisdom. He also says it is because of his positive upbringing that he developed a passion for teaching and the desire to share knowledge and happiness with others, especially the families at SSP.

Diego's commitment to the SSP community is evident by his efforts to connect with our little learners through a variety of positive and fun learning experiences. He helps the children understand gardening by providing them with engaging activities, and giving them ownership of the small SSP garden. He plays classical music for them daily. He praises effort, and offers encouragement. But most of all he takes the time to get to know his students, their families, and their interests.

Diego shares the following about his experience at SSP:

"A reason that I strongly believe in SSP, and its presence in the community, is because while children are learning in English in their classrooms, their parents are simultaneously attending English classes to empower themselves and to help their children succeed in an English speaking community. I believe the three-pronged approach at SSP is an effective form of building up the non-English speaking communities that are part of our American society.

My time as a volunteer at SSP has been a great experience because it has opened my eyes to the significance of having a quality education...Every time I go to SSP, one of the things I reiterate in my head is "How can I help these children understand the full picture?"

The children at SSP have had a significant impact on me, and the thing I look forward to most each day is coming back to the center to see all the friends I have made in the classroom I teach in. I hope to stay connected with the families I have met here for many years to come. This has been my greatest educational experience because of them. And most importantly for me is that my experience at SSP has helped me reevaluate what is truly important to me in an educational setting."