THE JOB

I worked with children with autism, ages three-four, so my responsibilities got to involve both work and play. Each day I taught the kids a little bit about their world, different foods, the animals, body parts, basic life skill and other things that children at that age should learn. When I was not teaching, I was singing, playing and dancing with the children.
Outside of the classroom, I created lesson plans which the teacher then used to teach the group lessons. I also assisted the leaders of the school with translating and explaining important documents such as the ADOS-2 and ESDM. Direct translations are often confusing and inaccurate, so assisting with these tasks allow the Center to implement a better system then the one it currently uses.
There are so many things that you gain from this experience. For me, one of the most rewarding experiences was when one of the children I taught was able to recite everything that I taught him, and he explain it to me showing me that he understood what I was telling him. On the left is a video of my testing Bao’s, a student’s, ability to recognize, replicate, and create shapes.
ADVICE

– It’s important to remember that this experience is what you make it. If you see something that needs fixing, or someone who needs help, you can take the initiative and fix or help the person who needs help. If you see something that’s wrong, you can change it yourself. The responsibilities that you set before your IIP would remain, but you can take on other projects while you are there. Do not feel limited to what was agreed upon in the contract.
Career Goals

– This IIP influenced my career decision in many ways. It was a further affirmation that I want to go into medicine and autism studies. I was also able to learn from the ways in which autism was dealt with in a very culturally different, compared to the U.S.A, country. Lastly, my main take away from this IIP was a greater understanding of the autistic children, especially non-verbal ones. Being in a country in which I could not speak or understand the language made me even more sympathetic towards non-verbal children who spend their lives communicating/trying to communicate.
Vietnam and other homogenous societies are very hard for Westerns to live in, especially when you very obviously do not have any resemblance to the people of the land. As a minority in America, I am used to being stared at or treated differently based on my exterior present, but in Vietnam, people would follow me, touch my hair or me, stared and talk loudly, cat call me, ask to ride with them, try to take pictures of me, and more. It was very uncomfortable and I felt as though my humanity and personhood was being degraded and withered into nothing more than a spectacle for their amusement. But, after being there for so long, I learned to filter out these annoyances and became less and less annoyed by their actions and focused more and more about why I was there and what I was doing.
TRAVEL AND HAVE FUN

– Lastly, although this is an internship and your work is your main focus, don’t forget to travel and have fun! Throughout my time here, I went to the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, and throughout the northern to Central part of Vietnam. Each part of Vietnam was different and had something unique about it and I was so lucky to be able to experience it. Thank you IIP for the most incredible summer of my life!