

Good evening, my name is Alexis Taylor, and I have the honor of introducing, L.J. Werner and Amy Thrasher, that lead the Child Learning Center, also known as CLC, an inclusive early childhood learning toddler and preschool classroom. My daughter, Piper, who has physical and developmental disabilities, has attended the CLC for the past two years and will attend this upcoming school year. As a parent of a child with special needs, it was overwhelming and terrifying thinking of sending Piper to school. I was worried about how her needs would be met in a school setting and how she would be included in the classroom. Since Piper started at CLC, the entire CLC team has exceeded my expectations meeting her needs and including her in classroom activities. My husband and I are relieved to know that she goes to school in an environment where she is loved, celebrated, encouraged, and recognized as a unique and integral part of the classroom. Each day when I drop Piper off at CLC, she races to the classroom in her walker and greets her peers and teachers with a huge smile. She couldn't be happier to go school and we are grateful knowing that she is in the best place she can possibly be.

Whether Piper is leading the line in her walker, ringing the bell for her classroom job, or taking turns with her peers on her assistive technology device, Piper is happy and involved, interacting with her friends in a positive, inclusive setting.

Amy Thrasher beautifully summed up what CLC's core values are in an article she wrote regarding the benefits of an inclusive preschool for typically developing children: She noted, in an inclusive preschool setting: 1) all children have value, (2) everyone has strengths and challenges, and (3) all children can both teach and learn.

CLC loves and celebrates all children, encourages all children, challenges all children, supports all children, and includes all children. In a perfect world all schools would encompass the inclusive nature that CLC manifests every day. While the world is not perfect and all schools are not inclusive, CLC will help pave the way in being a shining example of inclusivity for all.

Now on to the great women that lead the CLC team.....

LJ Werner is the Early Childhood Special Education Teacher and Director of the CLC. Her first experience at CLC was when she was a graduate student at the University of Colorado Denver and CLC was her practicum site. The philosophy and practices of the CLC program deeply resonated with her and she took those values into her work throughout the front range. Following the philosophy of family centered-practices, quality inclusion, and the Storybook Journey Curriculum, LJ opened an inclusive preschool in Nederland named Over the Rainbow and incorporated these practices at TLC (formally known as The Tiny Tim Center) in Longmont and other local preschools. LJ's passion is to teach and she finds joy in working with children, families, and other early childhood providers on creating inclusive classrooms, whose priority is social-emotional development, positively guiding behaviors, and supporting all developmental areas based on each child's individual strengths and interests. When she is not at CLC, she is out in the community training and coaching others on these practices. She feels honored to have landed back at CLC, to be able to immerse herself in a truly inclusive program and to be a part of the CLC team, which makes this program a true gem!

Amy Thrasher is a speech-language pathologist, who studied at the Child Learning Center in her graduate program at CU Boulder. After carrying on the values and practices of inclusion in

Denver at Sewell Child Development Center, she is honored to have returned to the Child Learning Center as Clinical Assistant Professor and supervisor of the graduate students in the Preschool and Toddler Group for the past fifteen years. Amy is passionate about sharing child and family centered practices, communication development and the development of friendships with the next generation of service providers. She loves working with her CLC team who join together in their commitment to inclusion!

It is my great honor and pleasure to introduce L.J. Werner and Amy Thrasher....