



## STUDENT PROFILE

### STUDENT NAME

Yoonjin Jang

### NATIONALITY

South Korea

### PROGRAMME

Graduate Diploma in  
Teaching (Early  
Childhood Education)  
(Level 7)

### MODE OF LEARNING

Centre-based learning



# YOONJIN'S STORY

## NZTC Student Success Story

### About me

Hi, my name is Yoonjin, also known as Gina. I'm a registered early childhood teacher currently working in a nursery room (0–2 years old) on the North Shore, Auckland. I came to New Zealand on my own as an international student when I was 16.

### Background of choosing the Graduate Diploma

I majored in Chinese and Japanese at university, so it might seem unexpected that I chose to study early childhood education. I made this decision because of my long-term goal to open an international kindergarten in my home country, South Korea, where young children can learn and experience a variety of languages and cultures. I don't just want to be a multilingual school owner; I aim to create an environment where children can explore diverse cultural customs while learning multiple languages. To do this, I believe it's important for me to learn and understand how to foster inclusive, multicultural environments from an early age. New Zealand, with its diverse population and strong focus on equality and inclusion in early education, felt like the perfect place for me to learn how to bring this vision to life.

## Why I chose NZTC and why I recommend this school

NZTC's Graduate Diploma in Teaching ECE was a perfect fit for someone like me who didn't major in education at university. The course leads to teacher registration with the New Zealand Teaching Council, allowing me to become a registered teacher in 1.33 years. What I appreciated most about NZTC was the 100% practicum-based curriculum combined with online theory courses. This structure gave me the flexibility to study at my own pace, fitting into my schedule. The chance to gain hands-on experience through practicum was very useful. The program's structure, which includes 16 hours of field experience each week and four times of full-time practicum placements helped me grow into a professional who not only understands the New Zealand ECE curriculum but is also able to apply my learning in real-world settings before graduating.

During my placements, I had the chance to meet many other student teachers from different schools. I noticed a significant difference between them and myself, especially in terms of the sense of belonging that NZTC fosters through its "home center" system. A lot of teachers didn't have this which made it harder for them to connect with their centres, fellow teachers and children. Without this sense of belonging, it was more difficult for them to build relationships during such a short period of practicum. I believe that staying in one centre for a while, learning how to connect with the people there, and become a "familiar face" is crucial in this field. NZTC's "home centre" system gave me the opportunity to practice this and succeed. I also noticed that many teachers I met in the field were NZTC graduates, which shows how the school's curriculum supports students in building connections and forming networks through field experiences and placements.

## How were the online theory classes, assignments, and practicum structured?

I completed a total of 10 courses, which included submitting essays and one personal online presentation. On my first day at school, I was able to check all the assignments and deadlines for each course on the student portal. Each course begins with an explanation of what we'll be learning and what the essay requirements are. Each section contains relevant topics, readings, videos and explanations. I engaged with the course materials, did the readings and completed the essays based on my own schedule, submitting them by the deadline. Before starting my course, I was informed that the school tracks the hours spent on the student portal, so it was recommended to put in a certain amount of study time each week. Each essay is graded as "Pass," "Merit," or "Distinction", and if you don't meet the required standard, you're given a chance to resubmit your work.

A discussion forum opens on the first of each month related to the course topic. In this forum, you can share your ideas and thoughts on the topic and interact with fellow students. It's also part of your assessment, where you need to explain how you contributed to the discussion and attach it as the first part of your assignment. The discussion forums are led by NZTC lecturers and a different lecturer runs them every month. I found it really useful to engage with other students in the forum and share ideas.

As an international student, I also had an online tutorial every two weeks. While the tutorial wasn't always directly related to my course, it provided an opportunity to ask questions or share thoughts with the lecturer and fellow students.

Throughout the assignment process, I could get help either through the discussion forum, tutorials or by emailing lecturers. They also offered students the chance to check a portion of their writing before submitting, guiding us in the right direction. All the assignments, readings and courses were helpful in supporting my practice during field placements and they're still useful now when I'm writing documents for the children at the centre.

## How is field placement structured?

Field placement is divided into two main components: Field Practice (FP) and Field Experience. During your study, you'll complete four Field Practice placements with two taking place at the home centre and two at out-of-home centres. Each FP placement lasts for four weeks with 6 to 8 hours of work per day. One of these placements must be in a room with children aged under 2 years. For the out-of-home centre placements, the school will send a placement form and you will select two centres or areas where you'd like to be placed. The school will do its best to match you with one of the options you have selected.

Field Experience is every week practice, requiring to complete a minimum of 16 hours per week at the home centre from the start of the studies until graduation. This placement is not graded, and you will contact the centres yourself to arrange your home centre. It is usually flexible to negotiate the hours and days as a student teacher. These placements often lead to future job opportunities, such as reliever positions during studies or full-time roles after graduation. Therefore, it's important to take time exploring different centres and choose one where you feel comfortable, building a positive relationship with the staff. For the Field Practice assessment, you will submit all your evidence to an NZTC visiting lecturer and a trial meeting will be held at the centre with the Associate Teacher (AT) and the NZTC lecturer. The final assessment for the field practice is based on the submitted assignments and includes an in-person meeting with both the NZTC lecturer and the Associate Teacher. The relationship you build with your Associate Teacher is key, as their feedback plays an important role in the assessment.

## What was the hardest part of Field Practice?

The hardest part during my field practice was getting to know a new centre philosophy, curriculum, routine, and rules while also try to connect with the teachers and children, and writing my assessments at the same time. Even though the field practice lasts 20 days, the trial meeting and lecturer visit usually happen in the third week or the beginning of week four. So in reality, I had to quickly adapt and learn everything while also become a part of new environment, preparing activities, and write quality evidence for the new children all in just 10 to 15 working days. It was definitely a challenging and fast-paced experience.





## Tips for getting a job offer

I actually received three job offers before graduation. I think the key to getting a job offer is how proactive you are during your placement. During my both Field Practice and Field Experience, there were moments when I questioned if it was worth putting in so much effort especially since it was an unpaid experience. I also saw other student teachers who mostly stood back and observed the children for the whole day. But in the end, all the job offers I received showed me that what matters most to centre teachers is student teachers who integrate well into the team and take on responsibilities as if they were already part of the staff. Even now, after becoming a full-time teacher, I see that the student teachers who get job offers are the ones who are busy, ask questions and try to be part of the team.

If you're not sure how to start, try my trick: learn the small tasks you can do first and do them before anyone else. These could be things like noticing where the sanitizers and cloths are kept and use them to cleaning tables before and after mealtimes, making children's beds or sanitizing and tidying up toys. When there's a quiet moment, instead of standing around, you could ask if anyone needs help with something or if there's anything you can do. You can also take the chance to ask questions about the assignments or anything you're unsure about. Learning from the team and asking for advice. Make your time valuable by using every opportunity to improve your practice!

## Final goal

My ultimate goal is to open a one of a kind international kindergarten in my home country, South Korea. While there are many early childhood centers in South Korea where children can learn English, what I aim for is a place that helps children naturally embrace different languages as well as diverse cultures. It will be a space where children grow up without prejudice or discrimination toward other nationalities, cultures or languages and learn to view the world with an open mind and deep thinking.

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