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Volunteering Reflection

The first time I walked into a middle school after seven years was something I didn't know I would fall in love with until I did. On October 18th, that was the first day of volunteering at Marshall Middle School. My current teacher helped us to get in contact with a school and the area we want to teach in. I want to be a math teacher and an EL/ML teacher. I was connected with Megan Rodriguez who is the EL/ML teacher at Marshall. The first day was just observation, getting to know the students, getting to know the school, and getting to know the classroom. The students were very welcoming which allowed me to become confident and they were also full of questions.

One of the first students I got to meet was Josue. He is a sixth grader who just arrived back to Washington State and came from Mexico. He is learning English as a second language and also struggles with how math is taught here. For myself, wanting to be both an EL/ML and math teacher, Megan saw an opportunity for him to get help and for me to get experience of what it is like to help one out of who knows how many students I will have in my class in the future.

After a while I started to notice that he knows the concepts of math but struggles with the vocabulary. He was doing multiplication, division, even fractions without breaking a sweat but when I asked what he did and to explain it to me in English, he would look at me confused. As a Spanish speaker when I explained what he had to do in Spanish, he understood perfectly but when I explained it in English, I would notice that it's the language that's causing that barrier. The whole time he knew how to do math but the vocabulary is where we can help him. That is

only one of the experiences that made me want to be a teacher. He made me want to advocate for those students who never get the correct resources needed. Who are never checked in, asked how they are doing, or even at least felt like they mattered in a classroom.

I know math is a very difficult subject and some students tend to lose track but I also have another student named Peter who I go with him to his math class every other week. His math teacher looked at me and said “if you can get Peter to finish a worksheet, I’d be impressed.” I know Peter tends to dose off in class but when it comes to math even I realize that the courses are not taught to include communities, cultures, anything. It's all based off of a curriculum that doesn’t connect students with the subject like other classes do. Peter is very determined to guess my age which I told him every three questions on the worksheet, that are correct, I would give him a guess. His friends joined in too and all together they finished that worksheet and are miles from how old I really am. They had fun doing the worksheet and the reason why I wanted them to finish it was not because I wanted to prove to the teacher that Peter could finish it but it was a study review worksheet for their test the following Friday.

It's these simple connections that I get to build with students plus the observing and learning from different teachers and classroom environments that make me feel like I'm ready. Everyday gets me more and more excited to be a teacher, to advocate, to help, to give the students the attention, resources, and care that they need in order to succeed. I want each student to be the best version of themselves. That to me is how much volunteering has made me want to be a teacher.