

How has your time volunteering and observing informed your decision to be a teacher?

Through my experiences working and observing in various classrooms and youth programs with community based organizations I have fostered my passion to teach youth of diverse backgrounds the joys and skills of reading and writing to empower them to understand the world they live in and to communicate effectively. The fulfillment I find in teaching youth is opening their minds to wide-ranging perspectives, assisting them through difficulties, inspiring in them a curiosity about the world, and helping them reach their potential. My decision to become a teacher has been influenced by how I've observed the impact of allowing youth to explore connections between the learning and their own experiences, and also by how a supportive community in the classroom positively impacts the learning environment.

What has largely led to my decision to become a teacher are the times I've engaged students' curiosity and creative expression. When an assignment engages a student's imagination, or something they care about they are much more engaged in the work. When assignments encourage creative expression in the classroom they foster learning that leads to a deeper understanding of complex themes and connections between self and society. When implementing teachers' lessons and creating my own throughout my time working as a substitute teacher I've been inspired by how helping students create personal connections between the various texts and the world they live in motivates deeper learning. I observed that when students make connections to the texts they are reading, it helps them to make sense of what they read, retain the information better, and engage more with the text itself. It's been inspiring to see how when a teacher makes authentic connections with their students, not only is there increased engagement in the learning, but there's a better chance that students feel comfortable sharing their perspectives with the class.

Another factor that has led to my decision to become a teacher is how cultivating a supportive community in a group, or classroom increases participation and collaboration. If students feel confident and safe in their learning environment they'll be more open to sharing their perspectives and be more apt to discuss challenging questions. I've observed how community agreements, icebreakers and collaborative activities infused in the curriculum helps build a positive classroom climate. To foster a positive classroom community I want to be a teacher that is personable and approachable, so students feel comfortable asking for help. In my experience I have observed and practiced the value of building relationships with all students and to respect and celebrate their diverse backgrounds. Implementing assignments that encourage students to explore and share their personal history and by broadening various texts beyond the United States to include the world are examples of how a teacher can practice cultural awareness in the classroom. Incorporating diversity and community in these ways not only helps students with diverse backgrounds connect to lessons, but it also teaches and encourages diverse perspectives and fosters an open mind approach to learning.