

How my observation, volunteer work, & sub work has informed my decision to become a teacher.

Being a stay at home mom afforded me the opportunity to watch my own children learn and grow, and also to be an active volunteer in my children's schools. I have always loved getting to observe the teacher's classroom management, the excitement of the kids when they are getting ready for a field trip or special project, and seeing a child's enthusiasm and curiosity sparked when introduced to a new idea or concept. I loved being able to work one on one with students. Being able to help them learn new skills, has been rewarding for me. You can actually see a light in their eyes as their confidence grows. When the pandemic struck and kids got sent home to continue their learning online, I got to observe first hand the impact it had on my four children. The effort that teachers were making to support families, with not only educating their children, but also supporting children emotionally and socially in an online environment was inspiring.

When schools reopened and the district was short on substitutes and para educators, I decided to jump in and help. I became certified to substitute teach and began taking regular teaching and para educator shifts at Lincoln Elementary School. I got to observe the aftermath of COVID first hand. I recognized that many children had fallen behind in basic skills, many were having a hard time interacting appropriately with their peers, and many were having challenges adjusting to the rules and expectations of being back in the classroom. It was clear that children needed even more support than ever before.

My own first grade teacher was amazing. She was supportive and encouraging. She made me feel good about school and excited about being a learner. Because of her example, I have always wanted to teach first grade and have wanted to impact children as she did for me. As a para and a sub, I worked in every grade level classroom. I believe this was a huge benefit for me. I got to see lots of different teaching styles and classroom management techniques, and how they could be customized to accommodate varying grade levels. Furthermore, I got to see the progression of instruction from kindergarten and first grade classrooms that were focused more on learning social skills through structured play time. Building on those skills in second and third-grade allowed more focus on academics because they had a good foundation of self-management skills. The fourth and fifth graders were excited learners that used all of their previously learned skills to ask big questions and explore new ideas. I also got the opportunity to work in a 4th and 5th grade classroom where the children needed a lot of support. The impacts of COVID and not being in a classroom setting was evident. I learned a lot, and it was rewarding to be able to support the kids that were needing it the most.

Being able to work in classrooms of all elementary school grade levels made me realize that I'm not just interested in being a "first grade teacher", but that I could see myself supporting children to become learners at any age. I got to see that each grade level has their pros and cons. I have seen firsthand, both as a student and then through my work in schools, how a teacher can inspire lifelong learning and light that spark of curiosity that encourages even more questions. I feel very fortunate that through my volunteer work, para educator work, and substitute teaching that I have had the opportunity to observe the various teaching styles of some extremely dedicated, hardworking, amazing teachers. It has inspired me to strive to become one of them. Thank you for considering my application.