

Service in Teaching

Teaching is both a career and an act of service. Perhaps, the best way to get a first-hand feel for the profession of teaching is through education-based volunteering. Beginning with being a volunteer in the Big Brother program and seeing incredible progress while working with students in a one-on-one capacity, the desire to serve was instilled in me at a young age. I've been fortunate to be able to give my time, knowledge, and experience within the fields of art, outdoor education, and sustainability to diverse groups of students. These volunteer experiences have helped inform and prepare me for the challenges and opportunities that come with being an arts educator.

One distinctly memorable experience was volunteering with Acorns NW Forest School, a nature and earth-based experiential learning program for students under 12. The curriculum at Acorns fosters sensory awareness, self-awareness, community, nature fluency, curiosity, creativity, play, and sustainability knowledge. It was a pleasure to take students on exciting forest walks and answer their questions regarding native plants and animals. Through this experience I gained a new understanding of the transformative potential for outdoor-based education to engage and enlighten students with knowledge of the natural world and of themselves.

In the field of community arts volunteering I was a co-founder of the Raccoon Arts Collective. Together we organized multiple neighborhood arts walks. We made sure to

have events for all age groups such as musical performances, art showings, poetry readings, or plays. The venues would be at private homes often in the westside neighborhood of Olympia and maps would be provided ahead of time listing all of the locations and activities. These art walks became an excellent gateway to foster tighter community and to bring art into the intimate spaces of our everyday life.

My volunteer experience with students and their instructors in the classroom has been instrumental for my understanding of the importance of student collaboration. Before the pandemic, I volunteered with Komachin Middle School theater club to help with set design projects for school plays. I enjoyed this opportunity to guide students as they worked with others to design and construct the appropriate backgrounds, props, and costumes. Set construction and play production gave each student an obvious sense of accomplishment and a feeling of team success when they saw their designs and ideas come to life on the stage.

Recently, I was fortunate to be hired as a long term substitute art teacher at River Ridge High School which has the most demographically diverse student body in the Olympia metro area. This experience helped me to cultivate my skills in classroom management, student engagement, and creative development. This position gave me the confidence to work with students of varying abilities, backgrounds, and temperaments and to meet these students where they were at in their educational development. As I continue to progress and grow on the educator's path, it's my hope to incorporate all of these

lessons into my own classes in the near future.