

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

I am incredibly thankful that I have had the opportunity and time to volunteer as much as I have in the past 9 years. Although I have always had a passion for guiding and helping kids develop into thriving teens and young adults, I particularly appreciate witnessing the positive effects I have imparted upon these individuals.

I especially enjoyed tutoring and subbing for math and science classes. I would see a middle school student struggle with a math problem and I would feel inspired and ready for the challenge. To be able to show the student the different ways to solve the problem and witness the understanding in his eyes can be really satisfying. After the understanding, comes increased confidence; and it just builds from there. I have consistently believed that there is always more than one way to solve any problem, not just math problems. It's very motivating to watch middle schoolers go on to high school and grasp problem-solving in all aspects of their adolescent lives. I have received feedback from several of my old students who verbalized their appreciation for my time in helping them with not only math but the ability to look at any problem and know there is always more than one path to the solution.

I was also extremely blessed very recently with volunteering for the high school boys' soccer team. Helping out with the Spring Break Soccer Camp gave me the opportunity to interact with both high schoolers and elementary/middle schoolers. Although I was not actively playing soccer with them, I was still interacting with all of them both on and off the field. Chatting with the high school players prior to camp, meeting the younger soccer players during check-in, and then walking around the field monitoring and encouraging the young players on the field as they learned from the high schoolers was very rewarding. I was able to set an example for high schoolers on encouragement, patience, and guidance for our young athletes. And I was also able to build confidence in the younger players as they progressed during the week. I believe that building respectful relationships, with boundaries, between students and mentors is vital for creating a favorable learning environment. Several high school soccer players have voiced their appreciation and are now considering working with young kids more, either as a volunteer or career field. In fact, the high school goalkeeper is now working with my husband in training young soccer players.

Although these are just a couple of examples of how volunteering has informed my decision to become a teacher, the primary driving factor has been seeing the positive impact on the several students I have had the opportunity to interact with. I believe that every student has the desire to learn something new, sometimes we just need to help guide them in finding that passion.