

## **Vitoria Fonseca - Prompt B**

As a Peace Corps Health Educator in Guatemala, my cohort and I completed intensive pre-service training that covered cultural knowledge and essential teaching skills. Working alongside local grade school teachers, observing K-8 classrooms, and conducting mock lectures taught us various instructional methods, educational tools, and classroom management strategies. After eight weeks of training, I began working with grade school teachers to integrate various health topics into the curriculum while leading health classes at public schools, primarily K-5, and co-facilitating health workshops at the local health center. Realizing that kids had diverse ways of expressing themselves and learning, I began implementing unconventional teaching methods, like play and movement, which increased student engagement, curiosity, and creativity. With limited resources available, I learned to be flexible and dynamic in the classroom to meet students' needs while promoting cultural relativism.

My experience as a volunteer for the Children's Education Program at the B.O.Y. Garden further strengthened the skills needed for teaching elementary education. Running this program requires organizational and planning skills while also communicating with the garden's organizers, other volunteers, and children's families. Working with a group of children of varying ages in a distracting environment has taught me how to better engage students' attention through creative mini-lessons.

While my professional experiences have equipped me with strong technical skills to teach elementary education, my personal experiences have strengthened my interpersonal skills needed to connect with students. As an immigrant from Fortaleza, Ceará, an impoverished state in Brazil, I have experienced the systematic barriers that marginalized groups are forced to

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overcome to receive proper education. Attending a predominantly white institution as a low-income first-generation student further amplified my understanding of disparities in education. These challenging personal experiences emphasized the importance of equity in education and representation in the classroom.

Finally, my curious nature and passion for learning are powerful tools for teaching elementary education. My sense of awe and wonder about the world and everything in it has fostered curiosity, creativity, and innovation in my life, helping me realize the importance of nurturing this in kids. This unique perspective allows me to better engage and connect with elementary students as well as present more creative lessons that make harder concepts more accessible.

Though my unique life experiences have equipped me with several technical and interpersonal skills needed to teach elementary education, I lack formal classroom teaching experience in an American public school. However, I will gain this experience as I complete the required classroom volunteer hours in both Florida, where I currently live, and Washington, where I plan to become a certified teacher. Additionally, having classroom experience in two very different states will give me a broader perspective of the education system and the effects of local politics in the classroom.

To conclude, my next steps involve completing a Master's in Teaching program to be certified to teach elementary education in a public school in Washington. My goal is to nurture kids' innate curiosity to foster creativity and a love for learning through a multidisciplinary lens.