

## **Vitoria Fonseca - Prompt D**

Though I traveled to Guatemala as a Peace Corps Health Educator to gain more experience in community health, I unexpectedly fell in love with teaching. While teaching health classes at public schools, I noticed some students thrived with traditional teaching methods while others appeared unengaged. Curious to uncover their interests, I tasked my grade school students with creating a presentation on their favorite health topic. One student used photos to share how she uses indigenous plants to make healthier meals. In contrast, another student took a more hands-on approach, leading the class in various physical movements, from stretching to basketball drills, to emphasize the importance of exercise. Encouraging these students' creativity and unique learning styles led to more student engagement and a more meaningful teaching experience. Though I loved noticing students' "aha" moments, watching their confidence build over time, and observing them relate the curriculum to their lives, witnessing their unique and creative minds is what truly sparked my passion for teaching.

Reflecting on Sir Ken Robinson's famous TED Talk "Do Schools Kill Creativity?", which highlights the neglect of curiosity and creativity in education, I recognize these qualities' crucial role in our lives and society. Although I acknowledge the importance of core subject matters, I believe the role of education in society is to nurture young minds to contribute to society. To do so, we must educate children's whole beings, including their curious and creative nature. After all, curiosity and creativity lead to innovation, which is critical at a time when the future of our planet is uncertain.

Wanting to explore this teaching philosophy further, I began volunteering as a community engagement volunteer at a community garden where I established a Children's Education

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Program. This program utilizes the garden's natural processes and unconventional teaching methods to spark wonder and encourage kids' naturally curious and creative minds to explore plant and soil knowledge, environmental awareness, and our interrelationship with the land.

Through working with youth in a natural environment, nature proved to be a powerful educational tool. Because of this realization, I want to be a teacher specifically in Washington where I can harness the educational power of the state's many natural wonders to nurture children's curiosity and creativity.