

My journey to becoming an educator has been profoundly shaped by my experiences in the classroom, particularly during my time volunteering in a second-grade classroom at Sheridan Elementary in Tacoma. Growing up in Tacoma, I have always valued the richness of cultural differences in my educational experiences. However, it was my direct observations in the classroom that allowed me to witness the unique challenges and strengths of multilingual learners.

One of the most impactful experiences at Sheridan was working alongside Ms. Dunn, a dedicated educator who effectively supported her multilingual students. She fostered an inclusive environment where every student felt seen and valued. One of her most innovative practices was called Author's Chair, where students wrote stories about topics that mattered to them. They invited family members and friends to watch them read their stories aloud, celebrating their unique voices and cultural narratives.

Through this practice, I witnessed the incredible strengths of multilingual learners. Students brought diverse perspectives and cultural experiences into their storytelling, which engaged their peers and deepened classroom discussions. Many presented portions of their stories in English while transitioning to their native languages to ensure their families fully understood their narratives. This ability to express complex ideas in both languages demonstrated their language skills, creativity, and understanding.

Ms. Dunn's use of bilingual resources and visual aids made complex lessons accessible to all students. I admired how she engaged multilingual learners through collaborative activities that honored their linguistic backgrounds. These observations taught me that effective teaching involves more than delivering content; it's about creating connections and recognizing the strengths each student brings to the classroom.

Growing up in a family where my parents didn't have the opportunity to attend college often left me uncertain about my own path. Despite this, I always felt a deep passion for education and its transformative power. Working alongside Ms. Dunn reinforced this passion, as her commitment to creating an inclusive environment showed me the profound impact a teacher can have on young lives. She inspired me to believe in my potential to make a meaningful difference, motivating me to pursue a career in education with greater determination.

These experiences have significantly informed my decision to apply to the Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway. I want to develop strategies that build on students' linguistic and cultural strengths, allowing them to thrive academically and socially. I am particularly interested in creating inclusive lesson plans that reflect the diverse backgrounds of my future students.

As I reflect on my classroom experiences, I am eager to focus on supporting multilingual learners. One of my main goals is to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that encourages students to explore their passions and interests, not just academically but holistically. I am excited about the possibilities that teaching holds, and I am committed to pursuing this career path with passion and dedication through the Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway.