

I have never met two students who were exactly alike. Every student that I have worked with has had fears, insecurities, difficulties, and strengths that are completely unique to them. I have worked with students from ages 6 to 19; students that speak English, Spanish, and Q'eqchi'; students who have lived across the world. I am applying to The Evergreen State College's Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway so that I can more effectively teach diverse youth like the ones I have taught before.

My first experience working with youth was at Thurston Together! Clubhouse, a nonprofit after-school program at Lydia Hawk Elementary School in Lacey, Washington. These students ranged from first to fifth grade, and many of them were bilingual and split their days between English- and Spanish-speaking classes. In this position, I designed and implemented lesson plans in subjects including language arts, math, and science. I taught these lessons following a popular model of education and altered the content as needed for each grade level. Every lesson plan felt like a puzzle – I pieced together what my students already knew, what their interests were, how they would react to activities, and how I could encourage them to support each other in their learning.

A large part of engaging students was incorporating language and culture into lesson plans. One student I worked with was resistant to following instructions and had difficulty interacting with her peers, but as soon as you invited her to dance, cook, or sing -- anything related to her Mexican heritage -- a smile would peek through. It felt rewarding to see students who were normally reserved light up when lessons integrated their family's culture, or when they were able to teach their classmates words in their native language. This provided a learning experience for me, as well; my bilingual co-teachers supported me in effectively incorporating Spanish into my lessons.

The students I currently work with at Olympia High School are older, and rather than being linguistically marginalized, a majority of the students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Plans to help them manage accessibility needs in the classroom. This experience has given me the opportunity to learn about different teaching styles and ways that I hope to one day provide accommodations for students with disabilities in my classroom. I have seen students with incredible skills flounder because of the demanding pace of assignments, and I have seen the same students flourish in classrooms utilizing inclusive teaching strategies. Many of the youth I work with are also students of color, come from low-income or single-parent families, or deal with mental health issues. My goal is to acknowledge when students are experiencing marginalization and support them in overcoming those barriers through self-advocacy and community support. A change in academic environment or strategies that

teachers use can allow a wider variety of students to succeed using strengths that were previously overlooked.

The Evergreen State College's Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway will prepare me to be an adaptable educator and teach accessibly to as many students as possible. Every student deserves an equitable opportunity for success, regardless of their abilities or where they are in their academic journey. My previous experience at Thurston Together! Clubhouse and Olympia High School has made me certain that I want to be a positive part of students' journeys, and completing the Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway will make me more effective at teaching in diverse classrooms.