

When I started college, I planned to follow a traditional teaching program. However, as the social and political landscape shifted during the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing calls for social justice, my path took a turn toward Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. There, I gained a deep understanding of systemic oppression, intersectionality, and efforts to uplift marginalized communities. This new direction not only broadened my perspective but also reignited my long-standing passion for teaching, especially in under-resourced, diverse environments.

My time with City Year Philadelphia provided me with firsthand experience in a public school serving primarily Black and Latinx students. Many of these students spoke Spanish as their first language, and I quickly realized the importance of offering both academic and emotional support to multilingual learners in ways that honored their cultural identities. Collaborating with teachers, I introduced culturally inclusive content, such as books rooted in Spanish-speaking cultures, and incorporated Spanish-language items (like elote and horchata) into my tutoring sessions. These efforts aimed to connect students' cultural backgrounds to the classroom. To assist with language barriers, we also used pictures, diagrams, and visual cues when words were unfamiliar or challenging. This experience reinforced the importance of creating learning materials that are accessible and inclusive for all students, particularly those facing language barriers.

These experiences with multilingual learners deepened my commitment to pursuing the Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway. I am eager to build the skills necessary to provide more effective support for students who speak multiple languages. By joining this program, I aim to gain the tools to create learning environments where multilingual students not only thrive academically but also feel empowered to embrace their cultural identities.

I am also drawn to this pathway as a way to provide the best possible education for students, regardless of where I teach. Alongside my goal of becoming a culturally inclusive educator, I aspire to continue my exploration of different cultures by traveling the world. Exposure to diverse educational systems and cultural perspectives will help me better understand the needs of multilingual learners and grow into an educator who can make a positive, global impact.

Additionally, my role as a caregiver and early childhood specialist at Merakey has expanded my understanding of the unique needs of students from diverse backgrounds. Working with children from a variety of life experiences deepened my empathy and taught me the importance of flexibility, patience, and understanding when connecting with students. This role helped me recognize the critical need to honor each student's individual experiences and tailor my approach to their unique needs. As I pursue my goal of becoming a multilingual educator, I am committed to continuing to build my ability to support and connect with students from all walks of life.

Through my classroom experiences, caregiving work, and exposure to multicultural environments, I have gained a deep understanding of the challenges and strengths of multilingual learners. I am excited to continue learning how to create inclusive, supportive

spaces where all students can succeed. The Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway represents an invaluable opportunity to advance my growth as an educator, forge meaningful connections with students from all backgrounds, and contribute to the success of multilingual learners.