

## Wren Gauthier: Personal Statement

From the very beginning of my observations in the classroom, I was immediately conscious of how different language backgrounds alter students' experience in school. The levels of student engagement can be seen as clear as day when the educational environment is supportive of Multilingual Learners. Through my experiences inside the classroom as an observer and mentor, and my studies in my undergraduate program, I have become inspired to apply to the Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway in the Master's in Teaching program. I believe it would support my goals to become a dedicated educator who celebrates linguistic diversity as the true asset that it is.

One experience that exemplified the importance of Multilingual Language trained educators was when I was a mentor in a Language Arts classroom. Many of the students I was working with were ELLs, and because of the teacher's methodologies (multilingual glossaries, graphic organizers, and other visual aids) each student was engaged and comfortable. The teacher also continuously encouraged students to work with their peers, and assigned various group work tasks that got everyone to participate and collaborate.

In the same classroom on one of my first days, I was working with a student who was having difficulties understanding a text. I was trying my best to help, but I felt unprepared and was unsure on how I should approach the situation. At first I remember trying to ask questions about what they understood, but I was met with a frustrated shrug. I then tried going through the text sentence by sentence with the student, but again, just a shrug. I felt rather embarrassed

because I was supposed to be supporting the student and I had absolutely no idea what to do. I took a step back from the text and just started talking with the student. I told them a bit about myself and then they told me a bit about themselves. After a few minutes we had broken the ice enough to even tell a couple jokes. After that, we redirected back to the text. While the student was still confused about the material, they were more willing to engage with it. In the end, we brought over the teacher who first asked a series of yes/no questions. Then after that, a series of more complex questions which led us to completely understand where the students' first line of confusion began. That interaction alone taught me so much about working with not only ELLs, but students in general. In this case, I represented the material to this student. I was also a stranger and they could probably tell I was unsure of where to start. However, once I showed myself as just a person to the student, they felt comfortable enough to do the same. Then we were working as two individuals together to understand the materials, rather than the student feeling smothered from both sides. This interaction also provided me with the opportunity to see some techniques for working with ELLs in real time, and their effectiveness.

Another reason why I am particularly interested in this program is because of one of my previous courses, Teaching Writing in the Secondary Classroom, and Teaching Grammar in the Secondary Classroom. In these courses, we took special time discussing the particular struggles that ELLs can go through during this process that often get ignored. One of the most common problems is teachers talking with their students like they are unintelligent because of language barrier issues. As Tracy Henniger-Chiang, the Director of Global Language Institute, says, “English language proficiency does not indicate intelligence or ability level.”

My linguistic courses have also shaped my understanding of language and furthered my curiosity on how humans use language, and the complexities of balancing more than one. The fact is, being bilingual is a huge asset and bilingual brains are generally healthier and more flexible. Unfortunately, ELLs are deemed in a negative light and not systematically supported or viewed in the way that they should be. This furthers my commitment to be an educator that promotes an equitable, and inclusive community dedicated to the encouragement and cultivation of a linguistically diverse classroom.

The priority of equity and community creates an effective and positive classroom environment. These are the most important values that I have as a future educator, and lucky for me, so does Evergreen. If admitted to the MIT program, I would be ecstatic to explore and learn from experienced educators, engage in the community, and apply research-based practices in real classrooms. The Multilingual Language Learner pathway is the ideal next step for me to cultivate my dedication to become a teacher who fosters collaborative environments where students feel valued and empowered by their linguistic backgrounds.