

Personal Statement

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All our lives we are spent observing k-12 classrooms, at least until we reach the age of eighteen. We are thrust into an environment unlike our familiar homes and families we see every day. The Multilingual Learner Pathway has been paved by experiences and observation, pulled from different and diverse k-12 classrooms including my own. It's not as simple as a singular "ah ha" moment and decision but rather a gradual view, one that never really stood out until I entered college and began to learn more about youth and justice, and student rights. Through that I was able to pull the understanding that education systems are in profound need of educators who can close the gap between languages and learning, as well as adopt inclusive and equitable environment for all students and event staff to learn and grow in.

My initial exposure to the trial and tribulations of multilingual learners came from my own classrooms. I grew up in Arizona and with the boarder of Mexico being a brisk two hours away from my hometown lots of families immigrated from Mexico. In the classroom there was children who knew Spanish and English but there were the few students who only knew Spanish with a small repertoire of English words. The help of our fellow students in communication and understanding fell to us students, and for a while the gap felt small and easy to manage, as we grew up so did our vocabulary and understanding. My limited Spanish I knew was very unhelpful and the gap we saw as small as kids grew to an imaginable size in high school. Every day I saw the struggles of my friends who grew up speaking Spanish in the home and for me I felt a sense of distant from my culture as my family elected to teach me more English to stay caught up with k-12 curriculum.

When I reached college and began learning more about the divide in classrooms for students who spoke a different language and their struggle in understanding what they were being taught. It wasn't until then did I actually realized how language and even culture can vastly separate students from their peers and from their success. Language critically plays a role in a student's educational journey. It was in my own college classrooms and the rooms before me that I learned the urgent need for educators who can navigate this complex problem and landscape of multilingual classrooms.

My experience with this extended beyond classroom walls, my sophomore year at Arizona State University I was involved with project cities. A yearly project to research and address how certain communities can gain information they need when they aren't necessarily getting the information. During my time in that research project, we had asked families in the community of Peoria if they have been receiving certain information about their community and certain resources they can utilize if they need the help. When we asked these families these questions, I also asked if they were receiving information in the right language that pertains to the primary language spoken in the home, about 70% of families said no. My conclusion of asking this led to me pondering and wondering if the information being given isn't being received in languages spoken in the home, then how it in classrooms? Which led me to learn more about students' rights and youth in justice, classes that were taught at Arizona State University.

It didn't stop in college, as I graduated Arizona State, I moved to Washington to start my adult life, I became a one-on-one paraeducator, and as luck would have it my student was also Hispanic just like me. As I got to know him and his needs, I got to ask him if Spanish was spoken in the home, and he indicated yes to me. While my student has no super harsh struggles with English, the words he struggles with I knew, and the gap became small again. Although my student was lucky enough to have a para like me who knew a small amount of Spanish to get her

and him by, I came back to wonder how students without someone like me make it in a school that looked predominantly white to me, and in a community that was also predominantly white. I felt a sort of a call of duty to become the educator these students may need. As well as closing the gap in language and education, I want to be that teacher to help shift the next generation to success. With my generation's wave of educators, I hope to see them encourage students and their peers to inflict change within their schools. If they can inflict change in their schools to bring equity to learning for all kinds of learners then imagine what they can do with their local community, their government, and their world. I'm a sole believer in the education system; it takes one person to spark a fire, and I want to be a part of that spark and fire that turns into a blaze.