

My decision to apply to the Multilingual Pathway has been influenced through my experience as a Youth Development Professional (YDP), where I get to work with youth from second to fifth grade and who are both English proficient and English Language Learners. Though my experience as a YDP is not formally in a K-12 classroom, I have seen the importance of integrating strategies that support ELLs. In my position, I am the lead staff in the art room at my local Boys and Girls Club where I program activities that the youth will find exciting, keep them engaged and activities they can develop positive peer to peer relationships. I have observed that using peer activities, visual aids and clear, precise instruction are some of the most effective ways to engage youth that are ELLs as well as English proficient.

As I mentioned above, peer activities are an important aspect of learning for all youth and are also a way to develop positive peer to peer relationships. When students engage in peer activities they are able to teach and learn from one another, and for ELLs, they can further develop their use of speaking and listening in their second language. In a classroom setting, pairing students up in small groups gives them the opportunity to develop positive relationships. In the art room where I work, I have seen youth help each other understand a project and share new ideas among one another. English-proficient and ELLs work together to decode and develop an understanding of what the projects consist of. Among their groups, they also practice speaking and listening to one another, offering any feedback that may help one another learn or understand the activity better.

When preparing engaging activities for the youth, I not only integrate activities that are collaborative, I also try to provide clear precise instructions that are supported through a visual representation. Visual examples help both the ELLs and English-proficient to better understand the project and task at hand. If they can see a visual representation of a project, the better they can create their own version of work that follows the guidelines given. Having visual aids to support a lesson is also important and can help deliver a clear message to the youth. When instructing ELLs and other youth, it is important to give clear instruction, while even providing opportunity to have given instructions in ELLs first language. Along with visual aid, verbal support is also helpful. Verbal support can be the written instructions in first language or even the practice of speaking and listening in ELLs second language through the peer to peer activities or small groups as previously mentioned.

When observing and reflecting on my experience as a YDP, I have seen the importance of integrating strategies that support ELLs. It has helped me better understand that each youth works and learns in their own way, and to better support these youth we should implement these strategies in our work. Whether we integrate peer to peer work, visual aids and verbal support, it is important that all youth are seen and supported, and that each youth is given the same opportunity as the next. This is why I have made the decision to apply to the Multilingual Pathway, to further my knowledge and experience working with ELLs and English-proficient youth.

