

My experience growing up in a school district that contained students with multiple different first languages was very eye opening to me. For example, I can recall growing up through elementary school and seeing children who spoke Spanish, Vietnamese, and Cambodian be left behind as the school had few (if any) resources devoted to assisting in their learning experience. I think I was struck most by this when assigned to do pair reading in a 5th grade class setting, where a classmate I was friends with who spoke Spanish in the home had difficulty reading through a picture book aloud while working with their paired 2nd grader. For a long time, I was unsure how to feel about this, as I was only a child and didn't understand the wider forces at work in the educational setting. However, looking back on it, I see that these students who made up a minority in a white-majority classroom were not given things like dual-language books, posters, or word cards.

This was a trend that continued when I volunteered as a TA for 9th grade English during my senior year of high school. There, we had the resources to assist ELL students in reading and writing assignments, but it was truly shocking to see what their previous experiences were like and the level of education they reached our classroom at. Many of these students were driven to learn and appreciated the help, which made it all the more distressing that as a TA I only had some much time I could give to help and guide them in their educational journey.

Although I did not end up pursuing English as my primary major, instead going for History and Social Studies, I will carry the things I learned from that experience forward with me into my lessons. One of my goals is to become a Civics teacher, and in that field I see one of the most important crossovers between ELL and education. As a result of having families from other cultures, it is very possible that ELL students will not know about their civil rights and responsibilities. Having multilingual resources for things like first-time voters guides can help steer these young Americans towards the things that let them be heard and recognized.

Especially in a time and world where more and more find themselves immigrating to places with stable food, water, and government, it is in all of our public interest to have integrated multilingual resources in every classroom. There is no half-measure that can make the classroom a safer experience for ELL learners. If the school has resources but the teacher does not have the knowledge or experience to access them when needed, the student will be under-supported; vice versa, if the teacher requires the resources to support these students and cannot get them, the students will be equally as unsupported. With that in mind, Evergreen is a place that I know is forward-thinking and will support me and all learners who wish to reach every student we meet, no matter what.