

I didn't always want to be a teacher. In high school I had other aspirations. Frankly, though, I was not on track to graduate: my grades were poor, I skipped school often and I never took anything seriously. It wasn't until an intervention from one of my teachers that I snapped out of it. He went to bat for me, going far out of his way to make sure I had every opportunity to get the help I needed. If it wasn't for him, I don't think I would have graduated high school—I would have been stuck in my hometown, destined to be a logger. However, fifteen years later, I've graduated college and now have so many opportunities ahead of me, all because of those who believe in me. I want to become an educator so I can help students like I was to prepare for their life ahead and succeed.

I now currently work for Oakland Bay Junior High, and my experiences and observations in K-12 classrooms have been pivotal in shaping my decision to apply to the Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway. I've also worked for the Shelton School district for multiple years, a district with a high immigrant population. I have witnessed firsthand the diverse needs of students, particularly those who are multilingual learners, and how essential it is to foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment that acknowledges and values linguistic diversity.

As a paraeducator in several classrooms, I observed the challenges that multilingual learners face, from struggling with language barriers to feeling disconnected from the curriculum due to the lack of culturally relevant content. However, I also saw the immense potential in these students when given the right tools, resources, and support. Teachers who were able to integrate multilingual strategies into their teaching practices not only helped students understand content more clearly, but also built a sense of belonging and confidence within the classroom and out in the world outside of class. These techniques not only help multiple language learners, it also fosters a connection between them and their classmates whose language is primarily English. Showing a way to make these connections between peers, fostering understanding and friendships between them.

These observations have reinforced my belief that every student, regardless of their linguistic background, deserves the opportunity to succeed in an educational environment that is responsive to their needs. I realized that I want to be part of a system that not only addresses the academic needs of multilingual learners but also celebrates their cultural identities. The Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway offers a unique opportunity to build upon my experiences, equipping me with the knowledge and skills needed to support multilingual learners in a holistic way.

By applying to this pathway, I am seeking to deepen my understanding of bilingual education strategies, language acquisition, and culturally responsive teaching practices. I am committed to being part of a community that prioritizes equity and inclusion and am excited by the prospect of contributing to an educational environment where students can thrive, no matter their background.