

*How has your experience and observations in K-12 classrooms informed your decision to apply to the Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway?*

During my time as a long-term substitute teacher at the Academy for Urban Planning and Engineering (AUPE, a NYC public school) I taught 10th grade world history for 4 months and 12th grade economics for 5 months. For both subjects I taught standard, Special Education (SPED), and English as a New Language (ENL) versions of the class. For the latter two I was supported by SPED teachers, and Mary Couri, an ENL teacher, respectively. My multilingual learners were some of the most inspiring to work with and the experience of co-teaching them with Couri is why I am applying to the Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway.

I quickly observed dramatic differences in each class. It was clear that the time of day, the number of students in the classroom, the presence or absence of friends, the behavior of student leaders, and the student's rapport with my co-teachers all affected student behavior and learning outcome success. As time went on my own rapport with students became a driving factor in my success. The difference in the classes I want to highlight though, is the impact that being placed in a class designated as needing additional support *and receiving that support* had on students. The students in SPED or ENL classes were generally more receptive to feedback, redirection, and being offered assistance. It seemed as though acknowledging that these students had additional hurdles to overcome (*and providing them with additional support*) played some part in motivating them to make an effort to succeed.

This was most pronounced in the ENL 10th grade history class I co-taught with Couri at the end of each day. The class consisted of roughly 28 students, many of which were 1st generation immigrants, primarily from Ecuador. Seeing these students learn history, connect big ideas to events, and do so while learning a new language was the most inspiring experience I have had teaching. Despite being visibly exhausted from 8 or 9 periods of school, once class started they were actively taking notes, asking questions, and grabbing Spanish-English dictionaries whenever they hit a language barrier. No other class was as intent on having myself or Couri check their work so they could make adjustments before turning it in, which frequently meant assigning themselves extra homework so they could be confident in their work. Those students truly put in the work to succeed at school and it showed. Almost every one of them who took their New York State Regents test in history that semester passed.

As inspiring as those students were, none of that would have been possible without Couri as a co-teacher. First and foremost, she bridged the language barrier that would have prevented any of my own teaching efforts from being successful. Her encouraging,

gentle but firm teaching style was one of several effective methods that I observed at AUPE and the one that resonated the most with how I hoped to work with the students. Later, while co-teaching economics, it was at her encouragement that I developed an alternative module to the off-the-shelf curriculum we were using, a part of teaching I would not have experienced otherwise. Couri's impact on her students and myself cannot be overstated.

Non-native English speaking students face many hurdles in the United States in addition to language barriers. From my own observation they disproportionately had additional responsibilities outside of school, whether taking care of siblings or having to work in the afternoons and evenings. Many of them had parents who did not speak English, which could impact their ability to receive help with their studies at home. In some cases, as with one of my students, they face deportation and the dramatic disruption that creates in one's life, the least of which is creating large gaps in their education. Everyone deserves a stellar primary education, much better than I believe most public schools are equipped to offer. Programs that provide additional support to classes of students such as those with learning disabilities or non-native English speakers are critical to raising the floor of what schools provide their students and I would like to be equipped to provide that kind of support.