

Lily Raznick

10/09/2024

MiT, Personal Statement

The unique contemplative education I experienced at Naropa University suited me well. Each course included at least one mindfulness component, providing endless opportunities for deep self-reflection. This emphasis on depth supported me in identifying my strengths and my passion for helping others. Through this process, I found a calling for interpersonal connection and a desire to support others utilizing a holistic approach. I want to help people help themselves to live their best life. This is why I'm drawn to teaching.

This program's focus on multilingual education is a powerful continuation of each seed I have planted and nurtured along my journey. While gaining my Bachelor of Arts degree at Naropa University, I was able to experience a semester abroad in Paro, Bhutan, studying at The Paro College of Education. Learning in this third-world country was completely new and rewarding. It expanded my cultural experience, improved my coping skills, and exposed me to a primary language that was not my own. Finally, it provided a perspective for greater empathy for others.

Life experiences will shape my work as a graduate student and future educator. I believe it is of tremendous benefit for a teacher to have an education in multilingual learning. Understanding the specifics of ELL education supports the shared knowledge that no teaching/learning style fits everyone. This expanded education supports deep engagement for a variety of students. Accommodation, recognition, openness, and inspiration are crucial in the classroom and create a supportive community. I remain humble in my teaching journey and do my best to return to a "beginner's mind," checking and rechecking gained understandings, to serve my students and peers with clarity.

My observations in K-12 classrooms have informed my decision to be a teacher in many ways. I have spent most of my teaching experience educating preschool and kindergarten-aged children. They inspire me daily to problem-solve under many circumstances, find limitless creativity, do all I can to be my best self and maintain safe, supported spaces in the surrounding environment and community.

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I have seen children who struggle with sharing and communication blossom as they learn about empathy and become eloquent in expressing themselves through combinations of gesture and speech. I am endlessly inspired by the development of strong resilience in children, and yet my experience shows me that without strong support, this resilience can dwindle or even grow dormant.

I witnessed adolescents and young adults rekindle their resilience and enliven their spirits through motivation, support, hard work, and art at a continuation high school in Thermal, CA. While observing classes, Creative Entrepreneurship and Ceramics/Advanced Ceramics, I observed two groups of students inspired by their teacher and projects.

The Creative Entrepreneurship students were applying the finishing touches on their business proposals, complete with color schemes, fabric swatches, and decorative logos displayed on three-panel poster boards. I walked around and discussed the details of these businesses and their significance with several students. For some high schoolers, this might be just another assignment, but for a group of students who were committed to completing their final year of high school despite some personal challenges, many of these projects became manifestation vision boards or even roadmaps. This class was taught by a teacher whose connection with the students was strengthened by her unwillingness to patronize students with easy assignments or good grades for mediocre work. I observed a teacher who has clear expectations of her students no matter their backgrounds. Established safety and trust allowed students to experience a sense of belonging and trust.

Seeing an 11/12th-grade group in contrast to my preschool/kindergarten group revealed some contrasts, such as the level of student engagement and language used, and quite a few similarities. Even in their earliest academic years, young people face many obstacles while navigating school. Sometimes these obstacles are familial, social, interpersonal, physical, or scholarly. With ample support, students can find their passions and interests to carry them through graduation. I have the privilege of observing very young children choose to solve their conflicts peacefully and effectively daily. Sometimes they need extra support, which I provide

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and teach happily. I was inspired to watch the humor and respect of this teacher toward her students. The combination of these two attributes supports student achievement and self-determination.

I want to be a teacher to support human growth. I want to be a teacher because I know I am a safe space for folks to show up and be themselves. I want to be a teacher so I may pursue a meaningful career that always challenges me to grow and learn. Through my teaching, I will guide students toward agency for self-reliance, compassion, and curiosity to support learning throughout their lives.