

Aaron Stables

Personal Statement

Throughout my career, I have intentionally pursued roles that enable me to engage with and support diverse populations. Whether in K-12 classrooms, social work programs, or corporate education, these experiences have deepened my understanding of language acquisition and strengthened my ability to provide high-quality, tailored education to multilingual students. My commitment to supporting these communities has driven me to continually expand my knowledge and refine my approach to meet their unique needs.

For nearly five years, I worked as a Learning & Development Specialist for a tech company, conducting training for newly hired employees, including virtual sessions with partner sites in Guatemala and Poland. During these classes, I often polled participants about the number of languages they spoke. Almost everyone could speak at least three, while others spoke five or six. Meanwhile, the vast majority of the U.S. based employees knew only English. This highlighted the stark contrast in multilingualism across cultures and reinforced my desire to support multilingual learners in educational settings that embrace their linguistic diversity.

In college, Spanish-speaking immigrants were an integral part of the community, which influenced my interest in learning how to communicate effectively with them. In addition to taking four years of Spanish in high school, I studied the language for three more years at the university level and attended a language immersion school in Chiapas, Mexico for four weeks. The immersion experience was invaluable. I struggled to keep up with the rapid pace at first, but peer-to-peer interactions really helped me learn, and I began to appreciate how important it is for students to interact with native speakers and practice in real-world settings. I now see how these techniques can be incredibly beneficial for multilingual students in English-speaking classrooms.

This experience also revealed how challenging and frustrating language acquisition can be, especially when your well-being depends on your proficiency in that language. It gave me a deeper understanding of what it's like to try to learn a new language, which motivated me to learn more about the experience of English language learners (ELLs) in the U.S. and how I could better support them.

I am driven by a sense of purpose and want to be an agent of positive change, which led me to pursue a degree in social work. One of the major tenets of social work practice is cultural competence, which includes understanding how someone's native language and culture informs their experiences and perspective. Utilizing the Spanish I learned, I worked as a case manager for Spanish-speaking families and as a leader of after school programs for Spanish-speaking youth in St. Louis, Missouri. All of the children in the programs spoke Spanish at home with their families while receiving instruction in English at school. Through leading social growth and development groups as well as individual tutoring, I integrated aspects of their language and culture into our activities, which helped them to better comprehend and connect to the material.

Currently, I work as a paraprofessional at an elementary school, leading reading groups and evaluating students for additional support based on regular progress monitoring. I also directly support a student on the autism spectrum, using visual aids to help them understand concepts, which greatly increases their comprehension. While assisting this student with these learning strategies, I've observed how visual components would reinforce concepts and increase engagement with other students in the class. This experience has shown me the importance of differentiated instruction, especially for diverse learners who need different strategies to succeed.

Additionally, I spent one year as an ELL paraeducator at a middle school in Lawrence, Kansas. This particular school did not have the personnel, training, or resources to adequately

address the needs of the multilingual students. Due to lack of adequate instruction time tailored to ELLs, students struggled to improve their testing scores throughout the year. This experience motivated me to learn methods and strategies that would more effectively support these students and meet their academic needs.

My personal experience with learning a second language, supporting Spanish-speaking youth and families, and working in K-12 classrooms has led me to apply for the Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway. My goal is to gain a deeper understanding of evidence-based teaching methods that will help me support multilingual learners, particularly at the elementary school level. As a current and future educator, I am committed to creating and advocating for an inclusive environment in my classroom where all students can thrive. By building on my previous experiences and expanding my knowledge of multilingual learner principles through this program, I will be well-equipped to make a lasting, positive impact on the lives of multilingual learners, fostering both their academic growth and their sense of belonging.