

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

The bulk of my experience is not in the K-12 classroom, but the college classroom. Making the switch from college professor to high school teacher will be significant, but I have already had several experiences working with students in middle and high school throughout my career.

As an Air Force meteorologist stationed in Arkansas, I often found myself with weekdays off. I took a part-time job as a substitute teacher with the Pulaski County Special School District, which is comprised of five high schools and an enrollment around 12,000 students. Though I was young (23 years old) and didn't even have a college degree at this point, I found myself enjoying my time in the classroom.

Years later, I found myself in a similar situation. I had accepted a college teaching position but wasn't going to start for nine months. This time, I was in a state with slightly more regulation, so I attended a 20-hour substitute authorization course and found myself frequently in the Carlisle Community School District, often in their middle school. I found myself able to thrive in a middle school setting since I knew enough about most subjects to get through a lesson plan and this time I was equipped with at least a nominal amount of information on classroom management.

Finally, as a professor I was asked to work on all of our programs with high school students since I was the only one with any real experience. I put on presentations that explored public health as a career to middle and high school students. I also worked with upper-level students on plotting different paths through college and discussing aid.

This begs the question of how these experiences have brought me to the Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway at The Evergreen State College.

My interactions with middle and school students have all been snippets, brief moments in time where I have been unable to build lasting relationships. However, I have worked with international students at the college level and understand they have a different set of needs.

Every teacher needs to integrate learning activities for English language learners (ELL) into their curriculum while creating it. Maybe not all sections will have ELL students, but the tools are still effect for native speakers, particularly between students who have wide achievement gaps.

My background in public health has given me a broad perspective on how different factors impact people's lives. I taught three classes that, in part, discuss the challenges faced by

non-white, non-English speakers: Social Determinants of Health, Health Care in Diverse Communities, and Global Health. I understand that language barriers are often tied to other challenges, like socio-economic issues, which can affect how students perform in school. For example, students from multilingual backgrounds might face extra hurdles outside the classroom that impact their learning. This insight has made me more committed to finding ways to address not just their academic needs but also the broader issues affecting them.

The Integrated Multilingual Learner Pathway seems like an ideal opportunity for me to build on what I've experienced so far. I'm excited about the chance to learn more about effective strategies for language instruction and creating a learning environment that is accessible to everyone. I hope to find ways to help every student, regardless of their language background, to succeed and feel included in the classroom.